

# Horse Tales: Writing the Equine in Children's Literature

A One-Day Conference at **Homerton College, Hills Road, CB2 8PQ**  
**09.00 – 18.30, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016, Mary Allen Building**

'As long as there are ponies in them...I don't mind how many adventures I have. Somehow when you've got ponies you always have adventures.'

**Ruby Ferguson**, *Jill and the Perfect Pony*

'I'd rather have a goddam horse. A horse is at least human, for God's sake.'

**J.D. Salinger**, *The Catcher in the Rye*

The body of the horse is fraught with competing anxieties. Associated with elitism on the one-hand and labour on the other, it is both a beast of burden and a symbolic site of freedom and natural power. The wide-ranging and often competing associations of the horse make it a vibrant imaginative symbol. It is perhaps telling that the most famous – although certainly not the earliest – animal autobiography is that narrated 'from the original equine' by Anna Sewell.



The fantasy of 'knowing the horse', of being able to speak to it and for it, is powerfully evocative. That *Black Beauty* itself is as invested in issues of gender, class and social reform as it is in issues of animal husbandry speaks to the complex associations and cultural anxieties that surround narratives of the horse.

The purpose of this one-day conference is to explore how the horse is represented and deployed specifically in fiction aimed at young audiences. The pony story is much maligned as an idealistic and ephemeral genre that capitalizes on a childish love of horses that is meant to be outgrown and which is highly gendered (i.e. overwhelmingly associated with the needs and interests of young girls). We will attempt to unravel and rethink this critical stance by taking a broader view of the role and function of the horse in fiction for young readers.

**Invited speakers include much celebrated and prolific writer of equine fiction K.M Peyton** (*Flambards*) **Meg Rosoff** (*The Bride's Farewell and How I Live Now*), **Jane Badger** (*Heroines on Horseback The Pony Book in Children's Fiction*) and **Susanna Forrest** (*If Wishes Were Horses: a Memoir of Equine Obsession*)

**Registration is now open at <http://bit.do/horsetales> Enquiries to: Dr Georgie Horrell ([gah27@cam.ac.uk](mailto:gah27@cam.ac.uk)) or Dr Zoe Jaques ([zj216@cam.ac.uk](mailto:zj216@cam.ac.uk))**

