

**FRIDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER**

**Professor Michelle Martin**, Beverly Cleary Endowed Professor of Children and Youth Services, iSchool, University of Washington

**Mildred Taylor: combatting "the danger of the single story" through the Logan family novels**

In Chimamanda Adichie's 2009 TED Talk, she reflects on growing up a middle-class Nigerian child on a university campus with a steady diet of British and American children's books. When she began to write at an early age, despite her background, she wrote about white characters who played in the snow and drank ginger beer—concepts she had encountered only in literature. But lacking reflections of Nigerian culture in the books she read, she didn't realize that her own stories and the stories of her own people mattered. She had, in short, fallen prey to "the danger of the single story."

Throughout Mildred Taylor's Logan Family novels and novellas, beginning with her award-winning *Song of the Trees* in 1975, she unearths stories that defy stereotype and that reveal honestly the particularities of living through the Depression as a land-owning Black family in Mississippi.

This keynote will contextualize Mildred Taylor's works among her 1970s writing peers, address the significance of her historical fiction on this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, and will discuss how this novel and all of Taylor's works resist "the single story."

**SATURDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER**

**Dr Gabrielle Cliff-Hodges**, University Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Cambridge

**Past histories/contemporary texts: what young readers learn through engaging with rich narratives about social justice and human rights**

In her talk, Gabrielle will consider the continuing importance of Mildred Taylor's novel 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry', especially what young readers may still learn from it about past histories such as people's resistance to human injustice in 1930s America. She will argue that teachers have a vital role to play in helping readers to engage with this particular novel as well as with other related rich narratives, whether through high quality whole-class textual study or independent reading for pleasure. She will share research methods which can be used in English lessons to encourage students of all ages to make their personal reading histories visible, highlighting their preferences and reflecting on their reading trajectories. She will suggest how such research methods help teachers deepen their understanding of students as readers and allow them to see where further recommendations for independent reading might take root. Throughout her talk, Gabrielle will also discuss a variety of contemporary texts related to 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' – for example, short stories, novels, graphic novels and auto/biographies – particularly texts which broaden readers' horizons and develop empathy through their depiction of different cultures, social justice and human rights.

Visit <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/events/conferences/rollofthunder40/> for more information and booking.