

Throughout children's literature there is a troubling trend wherein child protagonists are asked to commit the same violent actions of their adult antagonist. The Baudelaire orphans must set fire to hotel, much like Count Olaf. Harry Potter must commit murder in order to save the Wizarding World from Lord Voldemort. In Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* his protagonist Nobody becomes just as violent as the menacing Jack of All Trades. And finally, in John Connally's *The Book of Lost Things*, his protagonist David steadily becomes more and more violent as he faces his foe, The Crooked Man. With children becoming increasingly more engaged in activism and empathy—what kind of empathy are children developing when they read about their favorite characters slipping into the same moral degradation as their antagonist? Are they learning that moral ambiguity exists in all characters? Or are they learning that violence is a legitimate answer to unfair power structures? As Mavis Reimer concludes “the reiteration in current public discourse of children as victims of violence—real and represented—and as perpetrators of violence is itself cause for concern. What unjust or unwarranted power structures are being hidden from view by such discourse?” (103). To answer Reimer's question, I examine *The Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Harry Potter*, *The Graveyard Book*, and *The Book of Lost Things* to suggest that children's literature currently hides an unjust power structure by communicating to children that violence is a natural response to conflict and to entering adulthood.

Works Cited

Reimer, Mavis. "Violence and Children's Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1997, pp. 102-141. EBSCOhost.

