

*Children's Literature Association Quarterly* Special Issue Call for Papers

“Questioning the Canon: Rethinking the Golden Age of Children’s Literature”

Edited by Jill Coste

The “Golden Age” of children’s literature, which features British and American texts produced during the mid-19th century into the early 20th century, introduced readers to enduring characters and situations that are firmly established in our cultural imagination. However, canonical Golden Age children’s books reveal a context that was rife with conflict and exclusion. Indeed, calls for diversity in children’s literature have drawn attention to the tendency to revisit the same famous texts when teaching and writing about the Golden Age, but these texts are only a small sample of the literature available featuring and written for children during this era. As scholars from Michelle H. Martin to Kate Capshaw and Anna Mae Duane have shown, children’s literature during this time period was not exclusively white-centric. Additionally, many contemporary revisions and adaptations now seek to provide new perspectives on Golden Age texts, addressing or amplifying voices that are missing in the source text.

This special issue, then, will interrogate and seek alternatives to canonical Golden Age children’s literature. We welcome submissions that question what lies beyond the canonical. Whose voices are missing from texts like *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wind in the Willows*, or *What Katy Did*, and where can we find these voices? How can we reconsider the canon of the Golden Age? Moreover, how useful is the term “canon” in an era when recuperative work and revision challenge prevailing perceptions of well-known texts?

Possible questions to explore include but are not limited to:

- What we call “the Golden Age of children’s literature” is really “the Golden Age of Anglophone children’s literature.” How might literature for children written outside the United States, Canada, Great Britain, or Ireland challenge and/or affirm hegemonic perceptions of the Golden Age canon?
- Similarly, how does the circulation of texts by Indigenous people and people of color during the Golden Age time period affect a hegemonic conception of 19th-century childhood?
- In what ways do 19th-century texts resist the valorization of the Romantic child?
- How do we best teach what is missing from canonical texts? Do we need to teach the source texts in order to teach the revisions?
- How do the characteristics usually associated with the Golden Age appear in noncanonical texts?
- How do contemporary revisions of canonical texts revise problems with the source material?
- What is the role of digital spaces and fan engagement in revising Golden Age texts?

- What makes these texts worthy of being deemed part of a “Golden Age,” and who gets to make that determination?
- What does the term “canon” mean for contemporary and future children’s literature scholarship?

Papers should conform to the usual style of the *ChLAQ* and be between 6,000 and 10,000 words in length. Please send questions and completed essays to Jill Coste (jill.coste@gmail.com) with “ChLAQ Essay” in the subject line. Essays must be submitted by June 1, 2022, and the selected essays will appear in the *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 48.2 (Summer 2023) issue. High-quality submissions that are not included in the special issue can be considered for future issues of the *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*.