

## **The Limits of Child Agency, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Late Capitalism**

Discussions of child agency are all the vogue now in children's literature studies, as scholars like Marah Gubar, Robin Bernstein, and Kimberly Reynolds are challenging the work of an older generation of theorists (Nodelman, Rose, Hunt, Zipes). As the academic pendulum swings from favoring constructs of the child as passive subject to favoring constructs of the child as active participant, it is important to stop to consider the larger political, social, and economic contexts in which both children and adults live. This presentation seeks to complicate current debates about child agency by considering them within the context of neoliberalism and global capitalism. It will look, specifically, at the ways the child and the adult reader, character, brand, and consumer are being depicted, marketed to, and constructed through mass-produced children's texts, which, I will argue, cleverly and ironically use the notion of child agency to cultivate both child and adult consumer desires and patterns of consumption.