

Sophister Option Description Template

Option Name: Children's Literature: Collections & Recollections

Option Short Title: Collections & Recollections

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester/Term Taught: MT

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Option Content & learning aims

This module explores the intersection of children's literature, collections, and memory in children's literature and invites you to investigate the relationship between collections and recollections.

The texts we will examine all feature collections – of poems, of souvenirs, of experiences, of objects. In some of these texts, the child character becomes a sort of archivist, in others, childhood itself becomes something to be recorded and preserved. We'll consider how children's texts collect and preserve memories of slavery or trauma, and look at how texts deal with disordered memories (and memory disorders like dementia), and examine the impact of war and colonisation on personal and public collections.

In our seminars, we'll gather together to share our thoughts and ideas about the texts we have read, and explore practical collection methods – through hands-on sessions with quilting and scrapbooking and journaling. We'll also have a chance to work with the collections of children's books in the Library of Trinity College Dublin and you will gain practical experience working with archives and catalogues of both named and legal deposit collections.

This module aims to introduce you to the theory and the practice of collection. As well as building practical and transferable skills, you'll engage with a range of critical approaches to collection including Susan Stewart's work on souvenirs and memory, Edmund deWaal's work on tracing family history through objects, and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of archives.

The module assessment is closely linked with the central focus on collections. Using an online space (Blackboard) students will create a digital commonplace book and reflect on the processes and theories that help to inform and organise their collection. The module essay allows students to work closely with the children's texts on the module and the critical and theoretical texts underpinning the module.

Key Reading

- Patricia McKissack, *Stitchin' and Pullin': A Gee's Bend Quilt* (2008) (a PDF will be provided) and Patricia Polacco, *The Keeping Quilt* (1988) (a PDF will be provided)
- Lucy M. Boston, *The Children of Green Knove* (1954)
- Tove Jansson, *Sculptor's Daughter* (1968)
- Julius Lester, *To Be a Slave* (1968)
- Nina Bawden, *Carrie's War* (1973)
- Penelope Lively, *The House in Norham Gardens* (1974)
- Sarah Crossan *Toffee* (2019)
- Katya Balen, *October, October* (2020)

Key secondary reading: Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library” (1931), Edmund deWaal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010), Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996), Lydia Ferguson, ‘Cultivating Childhood: The Pollard Collection of Children’s Books’ (2013), Suzanne Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* (2003), Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2002), Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (1984)

Reading list will be finalised before the start of term.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module you will be able to:

- Engage confidently with the archives and collections at TCD
- Identify items for your own collection and arrange these items within a digital space
- Demonstrate your understanding of range of key critical approaches to archiving and collecting
- Articulate responses to the key themes and issues of the module in connection to a range of primary sources
- Identify the aspects of the module that interest you most and undertake independent research as the basis for an essay
- Demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the material on the module and your confident engagement with relevant critical methodologies and theoretical frameworks in an essay

Assessment Details

Assessment for this module is in two parts:

- 1) Digital collection (2000 words – 40%). Create and curate a digital collection of items relating to childhood and children’s literature. At least one of the items must come from the Pollard Collection at TCD and you may include any other textual, visual, or material sources. You must provide brief reflections demonstrating your engagement with some theories about collections and archives covered in class.
- 2) Essay (4,000 words 60%)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.