

Ethics and Children's Literature: A Symposium

September 13-15, 2012

Hosted by The Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics
DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana

Deadline for 500-word Abstracts: April 15, 2012

Organized by: Claudia Mills, the Robert and Carolyn Frederick Distinguished Visiting Professor of Ethics, DePauw University

Keynote Speakers:

Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Newbery Honor author of *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* and *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group*

Claudia Nelson

Author of *Family Ties in Victorian England; Little Strangers: Portrayals of Adoption in America, 1850-192;* and *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857-1917*

Symposium Theme:

Even as children's literature has evolved from its origins in didactic Sunday School tracts and moralizing fables, authors, parents, librarians, and scholars remain sensitive to the values conveyed to children through the texts we choose to share with them. No field of human endeavor is exempt from some form of moral scrutiny, so ethical criticism of literature is in principle a viable approach, despite the worries it raises about censorship. Children's texts often explore value questions, depict moral development of their characters, and call into attention shared moral assumptions. This conference brings together children's authors, philosophers, and scholars of children's literature to explore ethical questions posed by children's literature and posed about children's literature, understood in the broadest possible sense.

Call for Papers:

Possible topics for papers include, but are not limited to:

- Ethics in fantasy versus ethics in "realistic" stories
- Values – concerning personal morality, social justice, or gender, race, and class – conveyed by any particular work or series
- How children's literature both reflects and shapes moral development
- The role of moral emotions in children's books (anger, resentment, forgiveness, etc.)
- Children's books in which generally admirable characters behave in arguably immoral ways (lying, cheating, stealing)
- Moral dilemmas faced by characters in children's literature
- Ethical criticism of children's literature
- Recent controversies over whether young adult literature is "too dark"
- How moralizing is handled in children's literature in different historical periods

Papers should be twenty minutes reading time (10 pages).

Send to claudiamills@depauw.edu

For more information, please visit eclconference.org.