

**Children's Literature as Scholarship/Discipline:  
Articulating Support for Scholarly Endeavors in the Field**

*The following ideas were generated by various individuals over the past 3 years as they considered ways to articulate the Scholarship of Children's Literature as Scholarship. Realizing that the area of scholarship overlaps and intersects with the focus on Children's Literature as a Field of Study, we highly recommend that individuals seeking to be more informed about framing one's work in the field as scholarship visit <http://www.childrensliteratureassembly.org/teacher-education.html>.*

*We welcome any additions to this, especially specific phrases, paragraphs, and enlightening approaches to articulating the field in a way that authentically illuminates the significance, rigor, and ongoing inquiries that interface with contemporary issues and arenas of study.*

*Please send any additions to this document, especially the last item where we share documents or portions thereof that describe our own scholarly work or the work of others to [Janelle.mathis@unt.edu](mailto:Janelle.mathis@unt.edu). We will see it is added to our resources.*

**The following suggestions are provided to assist in understanding and articulating the scholarly field of children's literature and the work of individuals who are engaged in such.**

1. Familiarity with the NCTE Resolution/2006 Position statement—"Resolution on the Essential Roles and Value of Literature in the Curriculum." This statement is included on the CLA website (<http://www.childrensliteratureassembly.org/resources.html>).
2. Familiarity with other NCTE Position Statements sponsored by CLA (<http://www.childrensliteratureassembly.org/resources.html>).
3. Children's Literature as a Discipline: If a discipline can be represented as a knowledge structure deserving of research and inquiry, then the discipline of children's literature has a record of inquiry within the literary arts, within the close and discerning inspections of information science, and within colleges of education as teachers learn to support literacy and literature instruction with the best of children's books. (N. Roser)
4. Journals in the field—considerations to include in support of the journals most associated with children's literature.
  - a. As most universities do consider the impact scores and acceptance rates of journals, a description of children's literature journals may require situating journals' impact, acceptance, or distribution.
  - b. Inclusion of acknowledgement that methodology is consistent with research methods highly acknowledged in other fields of study may be helpful.
  - c. A statement of why particular articles are making contributions may be influential in helping those outside the field realize their significance.
  - d. A statement of the quality of the reviewers of these journals also helps to substantiate the rigor of the journal.
  - e. See CLA statement regarding our work and journals that support the work in teacher preparation, classrooms, and research.
  - f. In addition to articles in research journals, such as *Journal of Literacy Research, Language, Literacy and Instruction*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*, as well as journals specific to a field of study that deal with early childhood education, multiculturalism, social studies education, among others, the following are highly regarded as informing the children's literature field of scholars and teachers:
    1. *Children's Literature in Education*-- speaks to an international audience and represents a blend of "Education" and "English" based approaches to/perspectives of children's literature.

2. *Language Arts*--very accessible to teachers and researchers alike. The conversational tone and "research rigor" of the articles are wonderful partners that speak to teachers as informed educators who can read and engage in research but not necessarily assume a "voice" that distances themselves from others.

3. *The Journal of Children's Literature*—reflects the intersection of research and instruction in a rigorous yet aesthetic approach to inquiry and teaching.

4. *Bookbird*—Reflects the ongoing research and instruction globally; positions the work of US scholars within the global context of scholarship.

5. *The Reading Teacher*—highly accessible for educators at all levels with focus on classroom use of literature.

6. *The Dragon Lode*—disseminates the work of researchers and can be a potential literary scaffold for teachers who wish to publish.

7. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*—reflects the "see" power and positions of children's/adolescent literature in the scholastic lives of young adults and educators.

(adapted from a statement of J. Graff)

#### 5. Research in the field of children's literature.

A children's literature scholar conducts research with a variety of methodologies, contexts, and theoretical lens across a variety of topics that consider the literature directly or topics that use literature as significant aspects to answer other inquiry questions. This research is **to inform educators at all levels** as well as provide in depth insights to a field that is constantly evolving. Some of these methods are: Content analysis, reviews of books, ethnography, discourse analysis, teacher/action research (**to build theory**), review of children's and adolescent literature, interviews with authors (**to describe the creative process**).

This research is presented as research at conferences or as pedagogy that is grounded in research and theory. Conferences include highly research focused ones such as AERA and LRA as well as conferences that are characterized by the inclusion of instructional sessions.

*What are legitimate areas of inquiry in teaching children's literature?*

There are a host of areas in which the scholarship within children's literature rests: Children's literary meaning making, literary response modes, the teaching of literature, the exploration of genre, content analyses of children's books, the creative processes of originators of literature for children, examination of original manuscripts, visual semiotics, studying collections of literature as ways of understanding a history, culture, and much, much more. (N. Roser)

*What are the contributions of scholarly children's book reviews?*

Critical reviews inform the field of children's literature for teacher and researcher audiences alike—from theorists who write critically of the artistry and meanings of books, to librarians who discriminately select books for children, to educational researchers who study the discourses and learning that occur when children work to make literary meanings, to the classroom teachers who mediate between books and children toward guiding them to literacy. In practice, these audiences can (and often do) operate in different spheres, read different journals, and attend different conferences. The

field of children's literature crosses those boundaries. Thus, critical reviews form a central core of knowledge contribution in children's literature. (N. Roser)

*What are the tasks of reviewers?*

Scholarly reviews by children's literature experts require selection, critical examination, and theorizing about children's literature for a variety of audiences and through multiple outlets. Experts in children's literature conduct thorough inspections of thousands of children's books each year so as to identify those that exemplify the freshest and most original uses of language, the most engaging and accurate representations of content, authentic representations of cultures, and a myriad of aesthetic qualities. Reviewers read and reread from stacks of submitted texts toward producing clear, focused critiques that introduce the books' artistry to broad audiences. But knowing reviewers do something more: They help to alert all of us to texts that promote an understanding of diversity, including race, ethnicity, class and gender across ages. Experts in children's literature are not only cognizant of books, but the critical lenses through which books must be inspected so that of the thousands of books published yearly find teachers, children, and families to add their own purposes for literacy, learning, and appreciation. These reviews are certainly evidence of scholarship. (N. Roser)

## **6. How might we frame our evidence of the scholarship of the children's literature field?**

The work of E. L. Boyer (1997) has been highly acknowledged as a way to frame the scholarship of children's literature. His categories of discovery, integration, application and teaching allow for unique intersections and interfacing of the commonly considered areas of research, teaching, and service. He speaks of "creative contracts" that address quality teaching and individualized professional development based on what the scholar is most passionate about. While his frame can be uniquely used to describe the individual works of a children's literature scholar, and many universities use his frame as a model for their faculty to follow, the following ideas (adapted from S. Wilson, 2012) assist in the initial thinking around Boyer:

Considerations : (1) To what extent is any scholarship is creative, and at what points in the process is scholarship necessarily/expected to be creative. (2) To what extent is accessible for critique of peers and applications by peers in the field. (3) For all the types of scholarship dissemination to audiences in some form is a critical part of scholarship, however, the privilege given to any particular audience and the character of dissemination carries different weight. For example, a series of workshops with teachers is weighted differently from the scholar's publication of an edited book.

The categories below are not mutually exclusive and in describing the various categories, examples from clinical, experimental work, action research, content and discourse analysis, and qualitative research will reflect a range of illustrations of this scholarship.

**Scholarship of Teaching:** This scholarship is represented by activities through which the scholar promotes and presents practices in pedagogy, teaching and learning, and knowledge about pedagogy and teaching and learning. Scholarly teaching such as that in action research becomes scholarship of teaching when it is presented in peer-reviewed publications, manuals, workshops, colloquia, symposia, and discussions of innovative pedagogical practices. Scholarship of teaching is distinguished from scholarly, which might be considered the ways teachers engage in reflective, recursive practice. Does scholarly teaching becomes another kind of scholarship when it is disseminated in print, in media, and in presentations?

**Scholarship of Application:** Scholarship results in social action and knowledge is applied to consequential problems (Boyer, 1997). Perhaps here the example for the role of scholarship in enriching and refining teacher education is relevant. Nancy Roser has included as a scholarly role to “describe and defend the preparation of future researchers/teacher educators with deep knowledge of a field.”

**Scholarship of Discovery:** Such scholarship and creative work is the production and dissemination of new knowledge. Analysis of selections of literature, ethnographies of classroom studies, and quantitative studies of the effects of literature on students’ reading would be discovery. Much literacy research is of this kind. Another example might be that of critical content analysis which often provides insight to tacit stereotypes or inaccuracies that are critical to uncover as we advocate global teaching through literature.

**Scholarship of Integration:** Such scholarship involves the critical analysis and review of knowledge within disciplines, and the creative synthesis of insights contained in different disciplines of fields of study. Might we include here the use of literature across disciplines as well as in specifically described fields such as diversity, globalization, ELL instruction, or critical literacy, or theory driven arenas, as critical race theory?

Boyer, E. I. (1997). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The following two university websites offer brief descriptors of Boyer’s model:

<http://academicaffairs.unca.edu/sites/academicaffairs.unca.edu/files/BoyersModel.pdf>

<http://www.towson.edu/fcsm/faculty/ptrm/Boyer%20Model.pdf>

## 7. Examples of descriptions of children’s literature scholarly work

*Children’s literature is considered a discipline that has many aspects of research within the literary arts, within information sciences, and within colleges of education as supporting materials for literacy and literature instruction. Dr. \_\_\_\_\_’s research falls within the areas of critical analysis of text, children’s literacy/meaning making of both text and visual images, and inquiry into collections of literature as ways of understanding history, culture, and the sociocultural influences on literacy learning and identity formation of young readers. Each of these venues for research represents critical pieces of today’s perspectives on education. (shared by J. Mathis)*

*Critical reviews inform teachers and researchers in the field of children’s literature as they seek the best resources to prepare young literacy learners for their role in the global society. Such reviews are created both from a theoretical perspective to share critically the content of books and from an instructional perspective by educational researchers who study the discourses and learning that occur when children work to make literary meanings. The audiences for such reviews come from different positions and needs regarding the careful selection of literature for young readers. Critical reviews form a central core of knowledge contribution in children’s literature. Therefore, it is part of the role of a scholar in the children’s literature field to contribute to such reviews through selection, critical examination, and theorizing for a variety of audiences and multiple outlets. (shared by J. Mathis)*