

**Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione**  
**Laurea Magistrale in**  
**Scienze Pedagogiche e Progettazione Educativa**



***LINGUA INGLESE***

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# *Where have we gone so far?*

## Unit Six – section one Current Children's literature



- Introduction into children's literature.
  - General features of British children's literature.
  - Historical-literary origins of the myth of childhood
  - The Case of the Harry Potter series
  - Lemony Snicket article.
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# *Childhood in the British historical-literary tradition*

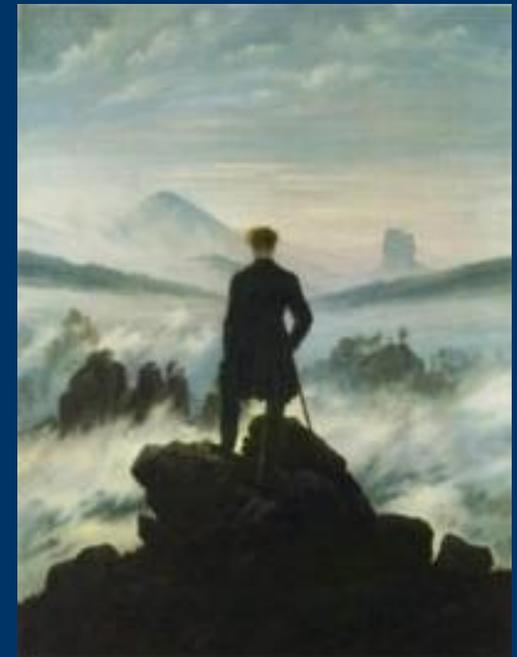
- In the Romantic Age, childhood was considered as superior to adulthood.
- A symbol for this Romantic idea of the superiority of the child is perfectly synthesized in William Wordsworth poem known as *The Rainbow*



In the poem the author describes the feeling of joy and happiness he experiences whenever he sees a rainbow. The feeling is the same he used to feel when he was a child and the poet wishes it could be the same in his old age, since there is a close relationship between the adult and the child, and through the child, between the adult (poet) and Nature (God).

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*It is in fact only in childhood that man finds a perfect communion with nature, which he later perceives die away as he grows up. But the happy moments of childhood can be brought back to him through the ecstasy he can feel for a natural event (such as a rainbow).*

*Bound together by memory and meditation (“emotions recollected in tranquillity”, Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads, 1800) they become the substance of his inner life. It is in this sense that, according to Wordsworth, “the Child is Father of the Man”, whose days, as a continuation of his earlier self, may turn into everlasting joy.*

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**The Child is endowed with a particular power of vision (the “inward eye”) that allows him/her to better understand nature and its divine essence.**

**The poet, who keeps this childish vision also in adulthood, is therefore closer to nature and God.**

**(see also Wordsworth's poems *Intimations of Immortality*, *Daffodils*, *the Solitary Reaper*)**

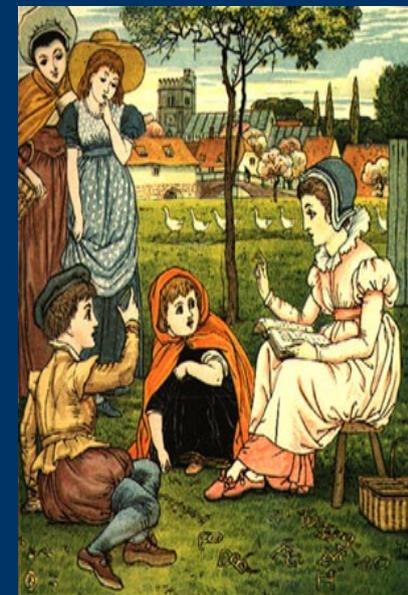
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# *The Philosophical Roots for this Romantic conception of the Child*

*are to be found in*

- ★ Pantheism
- ★ German Idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel)
- ★ D. Hartley (*Observations on Man*, 1749) an associationist philosopher who maintained that no ideas are innate in man, but they all derive from impressions of the external objects, which set up vibrations in the nerves.





Groups of vibrations become associated with particular simple ideas. Human beings are endowed with a “power of association” and they can therefore transform simple ideas into others that are more complex and organized.

### ***Three stages of mind's development:***

- Simple ideas, heart (*childhood*)
- Sensations, feelings (*youth*)
- Complex or organized ideas, mind (*manhood*)



# *The Romantic centrality of the child*

**VS**

*the so-called British Peter Pan complex  
as origin for such an attention on and importance  
of children in the reading/writing process*

- x Belief in children more than in adults*
- x Making fun of grownups, emphasizing their defects and hyper-rationality.*
- x Portraying children heroes as often endowed with special powers developing a parallel life in an imaginary world where they can escape everyday routine, adults' rules, impositions, narrow views.*
- x Representing children as braver, more intelligent, curious and alive than adults*



***The Case of Harry Potter's wizardry:  
a contemporary version of the Romantic  
child's "inward eye"?***

- **Children conceive the world as full of “Muggles” that don't understand them and don't want to have anything to do with what is unpredictable and invisible.**
  - **Harry's story, like Alice's one during the Victorian Age, embodies one of the most common childhood fantasies: terrible adults and siblings that are not their real family, and the ability to do magic in order to change things.**
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## Unit 6 – Section 2

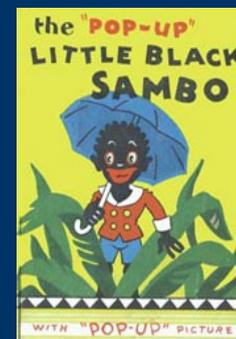


# Political Correctness in Children's Literature

The Case of Helen Bannerman's

*Little Black Sambo* (1899)

Political correctness of some  
expressions/verbal representations  
of the “other”



- ★ *Negro* vs Black/Afro-American
  - ★ *Oriental* vs Asian-American (see E. Said, *Orientalism*)
  - ★ *Mexican* vs Chicana
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# *The Cultural Studies movement*



is an academic field of critical theory and literary criticism initially introduced by British academics in 1964 and subsequently adopted by allied academics throughout the world.

Characteristically interdisciplinary, the field of cultural studies is an academic discipline aiding cultural researchers who theorize about the forces from which the whole of humankind construct their daily lives. Cultural Studies is not a unified theory, but a diverse field of study encompassing many different approaches, methods and academic perspectives.

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Distinct from the objective methodology of cultural anthropology and ethnic studies, cultural studies is focused upon the political dynamics of contemporary culture and its historical foundations, conflicts and defining traits. Researchers concentrate on how a particular medium or message relates to **ideology, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and/or gender** rather than providing an encyclopedic identification, categorization or definition of a particular culture or area of the world (it includes, among others, gender studies, ethnical studies – such as Black Studies - communication studies, literary theory, translation studies, media theory, re-writings)

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## ***The Black Movement in the USA (1955-68)***



The **African-American Civil Rights Movement** were social movements in the United States aimed at outlawing racial discrimination against black Americans and restoring voting rights to them.

The wave of inner city riots from 1964 through 1970 undercut support from the white community. The emergence of the Black Power Movement, which lasted from about 1966 to 1975, challenged the established black leadership for its cooperative attitude and its nonviolence, and instead demanded political and economic self-sufficiency.

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## At the origins of the Black Movement THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

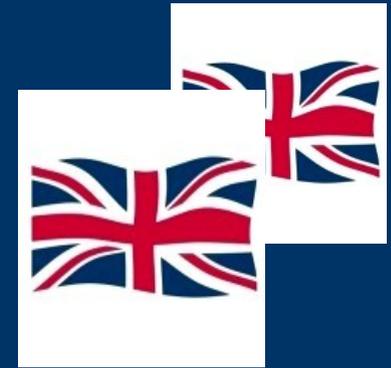


The **Harlem Renaissance** was a cultural movement that spanned the 1920s. At the time, it was known as the "New Negro Movement", named after the 1925 anthology by Alan Locke. Though it was centered in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, many French-speaking black writers from African and Caribbean colonies, who lived in Paris, were also influenced by the Harlem Renaissance.

bell hooks (1952, -), Professor at Yale University, Critic and Social Activist: *Ain't a Woman* (1981), *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Centre* (1984).



U.N.I.A. parade in Harlem, 1924.



The Harlem Renaissance is unofficially recognized to have spanned from about 1919 until the early or mid-1930s. Many of its ideas lived on much longer. The zenith of this "flowering of Negro literature", as preferred to call the Harlem Renaissance, was placed between 1924 (the year that *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* hosted a party for black writers where many white publishers were in attendance) and 1929 (the year of the crash and the beginning of the Great Depression).

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