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Children's Literature  
Circle



**SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~childlit>

Spring 2005 \* Volume 13

## Join Us at San Diego State University for Pippi Longstocking Week February 2-6, 2005

Who is one of the best known children's book characters in the world? Who is the redheaded girl so strong she can lift a horse? Who is the nine-year-old who lives by herself in her home in a Swedish town--never bothering with school and having adventures all over the globe? Why, Pippi Longstocking, of course.

Astrid Lindgren, the creator of Pippi, is one of the best known children's authors on the planet. Besides Pippi,

she also created other beloved characters: Tommy and Anika, Ronia, the Brothers Lionheart, Emil, and the children of Noisy Village. SDSU's National Center for the Study of Children's Literature will honor Lindgren in a special Pippi Longstocking Festival, February 2-6.

The centerpiece of the festival will be a special display in SDSU's Love Library (Room 108, the Main Floor) of "The International Traveling Astrid Lindgren Exhibit." Through the efforts of Dr. Alida Allison, SDSU was chosen by the Swedish government as one of only three locales in the U.S. where this extraordinary exhibit will be on display.

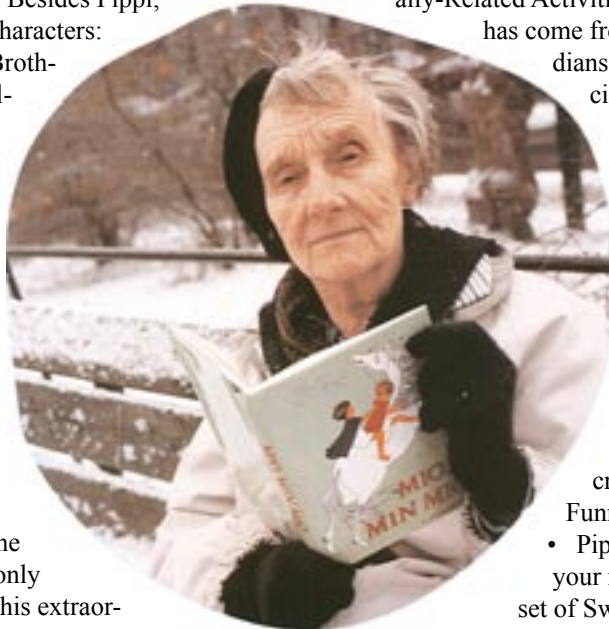
The official opening of the exhibit will take place at 3:30 on Wednesday, February 2, in Room 108 in SDSU's library. It is free and open to the public. At the opening, Michael Cart, the hilarious author and critic, will talk about "Humor in Pippi Longstocking."

Throughout the festival, there will be book sales, Pippi films, and Swedish cookies. There will also be a Pippi Longstocking Look-Alike Contest. For detailed information (including maps and parking information), please look soon for a link on SDSU's Children's Literature website: [www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~childlit](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~childlit)

The Pippi Longstocking Festival coincides with the Theater of the World Festival which will take place February 4 and 5 on the SDSU campus. This annual presentation of children's theatrical events is sponsored by SDSU's School of Theatre, Television, and Film. This year the featured performers are TITTUT, the

famed Swedish theatrical troupe.

Please join us for Pippi Longstocking Week—a celebration of Astrid Lindgren, Swedish children's literature, and Swedish theater. These events are sponsored by SDSU's National Center for the Study of Children's Literature, Love Library, the College of Arts and Letters, Aztec Shops, and the student-run Instructionally-Related Activities Board. Important off-campus assistance has come from the the Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians, Ikea, Swedish Women's Educational Association, Digital Vikings, the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, and the Swedish Embassy.



### **Pippi Longstocking Week Schedule of Events:**

**Feb. 2: Celebrate the opening of the International Astrid Lindgren Exhibit in Library Room 108 3:30-5:30**

- Ribbon-cutting by Ulf Brynjestad, San Diego's Swedish Consul
  - Keynote talk by Michael Cart, author and critic, on "What Makes Pippi So Universally Funny?"
  - Pippi Longstocking Look-Alike Contest—wear your red braids and freckles and you could win a set of Swedish children's books!
  - Excerpts from and discussion of Pippi Longstocking movies
  - Swedish children's books and other titles available for purchase
  - Puppetry workshop by Sweden's puppet troupe TITTUT ("peek-a-boo"), 7-8 p.m., Scripps Cottage
- Feb. 3: Attend a Puppetry Workshop:** details at The School of Theatre, Television, and Film's web site: <http://theatre.sdsu.edu/theatre.htm>
- Feb. 4: Celebrate the opening of the Theatre of the World Festival for Young Audiences,** short plays for you and your family, 7-9 p.m.
- Astrid Lindgren Exhibit, Love Library Room 108
  - Invitation-only pre-opening reception in Scripps Cottage, 5:00-6:30

Pippi from page 1


**Feb. 4 Continued:**

- Simultaneous performances in the Theatre Building of children's plays from around the world, 7-9 p.m.
- Post-performance reception in the Don Powell Theatre-open to all

**Feb. 5: Come back to campus for Saturday's Theatre of the World Festival, 10:00-3:00, Theatre Building and Patio**

- Drama, musicals, Fringe Festival, face-painting, music, Native American drummers, jugglers, international food, and more....
- Swedish children's book sales
- Astrid Lindgren Exhibit Library Room 108

**Feb. 6: Speak Swedish?**

- Performances in Swedish by TITTUT, 10-noon
- Lindgren Exhibit closes 8 p.m. Library Room 108 

**NCSCL named as nominator for Astrid Lindgren Award**

The National Center for the Study of Children's Literature is honored to be one of a handful of American nominating bodies for Sweden's prestigious Astrid Lindgren Award. With a prize worth more than \$500,000, this new Award is generally referred to as the "Nobel Prize in Children's Literature" and honors an author's lifetime achievement. The 2002 winner was Maurice Sendak, and the 2003 winner was Brazilian writer Lygia Bojunga.

**Graduate Study in Children's and Adolescent Literature**

While there are places in this country where someone can do advanced and specialized study in such fields as Women's Literature and American Poetry, there are only a handful of places in the U.S. where one can do graduate study in Children's and Adolescent Literature. In fact, SDSU is the only university west of the Rocky Mountains where this is possible. With more than a dozen faculty teaching in these areas, and with undergraduate enrollments in these classes now exceeding 1000 students a year, we believe that SDSU is the best place in the country to do advanced study in Children's and Adolescent Literature.

As a result, we get inquiries from throughout the U.S. and from abroad about our Graduate Specialization in Children's and Adolescent Literature. Here are some responses to Frequently Asked Questions and a description of that program.

The "Graduate Specialization in Children's and Adolescent Literature" exists within the Master's Program of the Department of English and Comparative Literature. Students do regular course work towards an M.A. in English, taking 9 literature classes. Within that degree program, students take 3 of those classes

within their chosen specialty—for example, British, American, Comparative Literature, or Children's Literature. Near the end of their studies, students then take an exam or write a thesis.


It is important to understand that the Specialization in Children's Literature involves advanced courses in literary studies

and literary criticism. Ours is not a program in writing for children; if your interest is in Creative Writing, you might consider the Department's Master's of Fine Arts program. It is also not a course of study in pedagogy or "methods"; this is not a program to prepare educators for work with children in schools, a subject taught in SDSU's graduate programs in the College of Education. Instead, the Specialization in Children's Literature involves advanced work in that genre and in a manner no different from specialized literary study in, for example, Women's Literature or British Literature.

There are typically two kinds of students enrolled in this specialization. There are those from around the country who have taken an undergraduate degree in English and who wish to do more advanced and graduate study in Children's and Adolescent Literature. Others enrolled in the program are local school teachers who have a special and adult interest in these subjects and who wish to advance their own professional development.

Typically, courses in the Specialization are offered once a week in the evening in order to accommodate working students. In Fall 2005, Professor Alida Allison will be offering a class on "The History of Children's Literature." In Spring 2006, Professor Carole Scott will be offering a class on "The Picturebook," the subject of her recent book *How Picturebooks Work*.

The Department and the university have a modest number of scholarships to support graduate students; in addition, some graduate students work as graduate teaching assistants (teaching their own lower-division classes or assisting faculty with their classes). In the coming months, we will be seeking funds and donors to offer fellowships to those especially pursuing graduate study in this specialization and to offer financial support to school teachers who wish to continue their professional development.

There may be some who wish to do additional work in Children's and Adolescent Literature after their undergraduate degree but who do not wish to take an M.A. in English. The "Graduate-Level Certificate in Children's Literature" is designed for them. Those enrolled in this program take 4 classes in this subject area and—by way of acknowledging their course of study—receive the Certificate. This Certificate program does not yet exist but is expected to be approved shortly by the university. Please watch our website for details: [www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~childlit](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~childlit). 


“We believe that SDSU is the best place in the country to do advanced study in Children's and Adolescent Literature.”

## From SDSU to Iceland

Dr. Carole Scott, a faculty member in SDSU's Children's Literature Program, helped plan and lead a doctoral workshop in Iceland this October with the theme "Children's Literature: Art or Pedagogy." It was sponsored by the Nordic Children's Literature Network in which she is a Senior Scholar.

At the request of the National Librarian of Iceland, Dr. Scott arrived early to set up a special exhibit at the University-National Library titled "Images of American Children in Contemporary American Children's Books." With the able assistance of Linda Salem, SDSU's special librarian for Children's Literature, she selected one hundred prize-winning books. She also collaborated on the exhibit brochure and gave a lecture at the official opening.


In her lecture, Dr. Scott stressed that, while many Icelandic people can trace their ancestry back to the Eighth Century, the much briefer history of the United States requires our children to create a sense of personal identity within our immigrant nation. Many recent children's books explore the balance between their immigrant roots and their identity as Americans. In a country that once saw itself as a "melting pot," these new books emphasize diverse images of American children and suggest a changing, more pluralistic vision of the nation.

While she was in the country, Reykjavik's Nordic House also asked Dr. Scott to speak at their international conference on magic in Children's Literature, and she discussed fantasy and surrealism in contemporary American picturebooks. She found even more surrealism in the lobby's fascinating exhibits on Icelandic sorcery—including a witch's "necropants" (a pair of trousers made from human skin) and a "tilburi" (a creature made from a rib taken from a grave and used to steal milk from other people's cows). 

## The Secret to Aging With Grace

In his bestselling book *Aging With Grace*, Dr. David Snowdon recounts the results of his years of investigating the causes of Alzheimer's Disease. Sometimes called the "Nun Study," Snowdon's research confirmed what others often identify as causes of the disease (heredity, strokes, head injuries, etc.). But the great surprise in Snowdon's research is the discovery of a dramatic correlation between the onset of Alzheimer's and the absence of early childhood linguistic skills.

Examining biographical essays written by 656 young women when they first became nuns and cross-referencing these with recent mental and psychological exams now that they are aged, Snowdon noticed that those whose youthful essays indicated a high level of imagination and accomplished writing skills were the very nuns least likely to contract Alzheimer's. Those young women who wrote simple essays and possessed low linguistic skills were those most likely to contract the disease.

Now recognized as a leading expert in the disease, Snowdon often lectures around the country and is often asked: "What can we do to avoid Alzheimer's?" He explains he has only one answer: "Read to your children." 

## Sydney Taylor, a Work in Progress


--by Dr. June Cummins

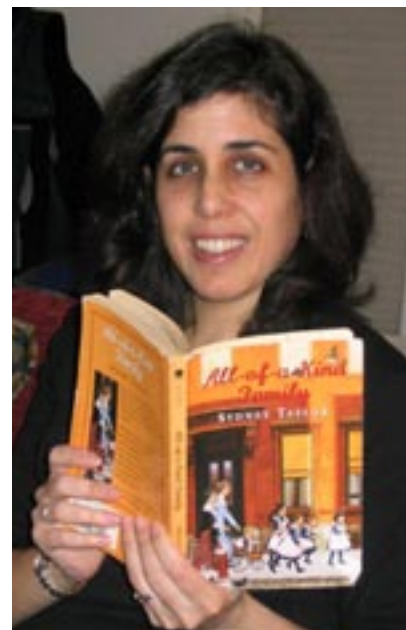
I first taught Sydney Taylor's book *All-of-a-Kind Family* in 1997 in a seminar at SDSU on American Regionalism and Children's Literature. Interested in finding a work to represent the urban northeast and a significant slice of an American ethnic identity, I chose this book about a Jewish family living in the Lower East Side of New York in the early Twentieth Century. Who could know that this would lead me to write a critical biography about Taylor?

For many readers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, the five books in the *All-of-a-Kind Family* series presented the first depictions of Jewish children they ever saw in fiction. Taylor was a pioneer of the genre of Jewish children's literature, and she was the first Jewish children's author to be published by a major publishing house and reach a wide audience. Small wonder that today the Association of Jewish Libraries gives out two awards for Jewish children's literature in Sydney Taylor's name, an award won by such luminaries as Isaac Bashevis Singer, Lois Lowry, and Jane Yolen.

Taylor's parents were Jewish immigrants who came to this country a hundred years ago, needed to assimilate, and only later felt a growing ethnic pride. Their daughter went on to become an actress performing on New York stages and later a member of Martha Graham's modern dance troupe.

I am interested in how these common and unusual experiences shaped Taylor and how, through her books, she in turn shaped a particular ethnic identity of the twentieth-century American Jew. Illuminating the private life behind the books, my biography will also show how children's reading shapes the American culture we live in today.

I will be giving a presentation about Taylor's life in the 1920's at the West Coast Jewish Literature for Children conference in Los Angeles on Sunday, February 20th. For more information about Sydney Taylor's birthday and the LA conference, please go to <http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/home.htm>. 



## In the Community.....

Over the years, the Children's Literature Program at SDSU has provided thousands of new children's books to local schools. This fall, several hundred new hardbacks were donated to the Chula Vista Community Learning Center, a K-6 public charter school with a largely Hispanic student body.



Photo Credit: Lynda Koolish

## Donations Acknowledged

Until her retirement a few years ago, Professor Lois Kuznets was a founding member and popular teacher in SDSU's Children's Literature Program. The author of *Kenneth Grahame*, the prize-winning *When Toys Come Alive*, and numerous essays, Dr. Kuznets is often credited with introducing feminist criticism to the study of Children's Literature. In 2002, the Children's Literature Association honored her with a lifetime award for her contributions to the field.

Along with her spouse Jim Dowling, Dr. Kuznets has now made a handsome gift of \$20,000 to SDSU's National Center for the Study of Children's Literature. In acknowledgement of her generosity, a room in the Center will now be named after her late sister Joan Moos. Part of Dr. Kuznets' donation is already at work subsidizing the printing of this newsletter.

The National Center for the Study of Children's Literature has ambitious plans for the coming months, including: workshops for school teachers, Saturday book discussions with parents, a public film series

featuring recent movies for the young, and summer training sessions for university faculty from across the country. In addition, the NCSCL hopes to mount a lecture series and annual festival, fund scholarships for students and school teachers who wish to do graduate study in Children's and Adolescent Literature, and create an endowed chair and visiting positions for distinguished researchers.

If you would like to consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Center, please contact the Director, Dr. Jerry Griswold (619-594-2655; [jgriswol@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:jgriswol@mail.sdsu.edu)). Dr. Griswold would be happy to discuss opportunities to be associated with the various endeavors of the Center. 📖

**NCSCL**

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