



The Centre for Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature
at the University of Wrocław has the honor to invite you to the 27th lecture
in the series "International Voices in Children's Literature Studies"

Prof. Sara Pankenier Weld

Tolstoy as Teacher, Children's Writer, and Childhood Studies Pioneer



DATE: 30 January 2025

TIME: 18.00 (CET)

VENUE:

MS Teams

If you are interested in taking
part in the lecture, please
register [here](#)



In 1862, the famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy entitled a polemical article on pedagogy "Who should learn to write from whom, the peasant children from us or we from the peasant children?" Three years earlier, being already an established writer, he had abandoned literature to open a school for peasant children on his estate at Yasnaya Polyana. This experience also led Tolstoy to write educational and literary materials for children and cast children's writing as a literary model for literature in general, even as he aimed to reconfigure society for the benefit of children. Moreover, I would argue that Tolstoy was a significant figure for childhood studies, not only as an educator and children's writer, but also in his remarkably early promotion of children's writing, literary co-creation with children, and children's writing as a model, as he demonstrates throughout his life. In this talk I examine Tolstoy's activities with and for children to critically scrutinize these structured interventions into childhood, showing both how they were innovative and where they founder. I aim to lift forward and contextualize Tolstoy's attempts to account for children's voices, agency, and literary capacity at a remarkably early date and show how Tolstoy's example proves remarkable in a national, international, and historical context, as do his structured interventions in education, children's literature, and childhood studies.

Sara Pankenier Weld is a Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature at the University of California, and researches children's literature and childhood across national and disciplinary boundaries. She is the author of *Voiceless Vanguard: The Infantilist Aesthetic of the Russian Avant-Garde* (Northwestern UP, 2014), *An Ecology of the Russian Avant-Garde Picturebook* (John Benjamins, 2018), and *Bezrechie avangarda: estetika infantilizma v ruskom avangarde* (Bibliorossika, 2023), the Russian translation of her first book, as well as numerous journal articles, book chapters, and recent public opinion pieces. She is currently finishing a book on Nabokov and childhood entitled *Miniature Revelations: Childhood in Nabokov's Writings*. Since 2022 she is a convenor of the *Global Childhood Media* research group of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center at UC Santa Barbara. Since 2023 she is President of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL), having served on its Executive Board since 2019 and as a convenor of the 2023 Congress. Previously she served as an Executive Officer of Childhood in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Russia (ChEEER), in 2013–2019.