Keynote speech abstract

*The Shifting Geographies of Childhood: Place, Space and Emotion in Children’s Literature*

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Writers and illustrators of children’s literature often represent childhood in ways that promote emotional engagement with characters and the places they inhabit. This geographic perspective offers readers insights into the real and imaginary spaces children inhabit as part of their everyday lives. Thus, emotional connection can occur through a spatial orientation for both readers and characters. By exploring the conjunction between geography and emotion in a selection of picture books, I bring together two seemingly different viewpoints: the geographic viewpoint which is often associated with an objective point of view and the emotional perspective which involves an inherently subjective point of view. Recent studies of emotion explore this intersection of the cognitive and the affective. Other research on childhood and place highlight the interplay of material and symbolic geographies on spatial practices, imaginations, and emotions. These theoretical insights will inform this paper’s discussion of how children’s literature uses place, space and emotion to convey the shifting geographies of childhood.