



The Centre for Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Wrocław has the honor to invite you to the 17th lecture in the series "International Voices in Children's Literature Studies"

**Gareth Osborne**

## **Immersive story worlds as participatory research arenas with children**



How can research get closer to children's first aesthetic engagement with stories without interrupting those experiences? How can we make visible to research more of the hidden mental processes children are engaged in? Recent immersive theatre practices in schools invite children to believe that a book story has come to life and is actually happening to them in real time and space. The companies behind these productions use the thrill of exercising agency within a story to motivate children's embodied participation and creative writing as they are invited to co-create the story world alongside the adult practitioners. In this talk I will propose that these immersive experiences can become participatory research arenas with children, allowing them to guide the adult critical endeavour towards what is important to them in their story engagement. Such a methodology allows children to generate research data from within their first aesthetic experience of a fiction in a way that is thrilling and motivating for them, harnessing precisely the sphere children and adults have honed together to focus and motivate their intergenerational learning – that of story. Contextualised through some of the latest productions from UK companies, I will present my own practice-based research during the staging of the immersive experience *Storyhaven* with a team of creative practitioners and a group of 30 school children.

**Gareth Osborne** is a postgraduate practitioner-researcher in children's literature, working across the School of English at Cardiff University, the Department of Theatre at the University of Bristol, and the Centre for Cultural & Creative Industries at the University of Bath Spa. He researches immersive practices for children that bring book stories to life to invite embodied participation and co-authorship. As a practitioner with 20 years' experience in children's publishing and education he works with Wonderspun, a studio exploring new forms of fiction for children. Their latest immersive story game, *Storyhaven*, won a finalist placing in the British Libraries' Emerging Formats Award, showcased at the Bologna Book Fair 2023, and is now running through UK public libraries, schools and literacy organisations. The data generated through the piloting of *Storyhaven* will be submitted as a practice-based PhD thesis at the University of Bristol in 2023.

**DATE:** 24 May 2023

**TIME:** 18.00 (CET)

**VENUE:** MS Teams

If you are interested in taking part in the lecture, please contact us by email by 22 May at the following address: [mateusz.swietlicki@uwr.edu.pl](mailto:mateusz.swietlicki@uwr.edu.pl)