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Teaching Weathering: Children's Literature and the Renewal of Humanities Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature offers a vital space for rethinking how we teach in an era marked by political division, ecological instability, and technocratic pressure. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's work on affect, Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence, and contemporary theories of weathering, this article argues that texts for young readers—often marginalised within literary studies—provide rich resources for navigating crisis. Through close readings of *The Heart and the Bottle*, *The House That Once Was*, *Zillah and the Rainbird*, and *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*, the article examines how children's books engage themes of grief, ecological haunting, trauma, and temporal entanglement. These texts resist simple moral instruction, instead cultivating affective attunement and inviting readers to dwell in uncertainty. Rather than treating children's literature as merely developmental or imaginative, the article positions it as a site of ethical and cultural theory. By incorporating such texts into university curricula, especially in literature and education programs, it advocates for a pedagogy grounded in wonder, vulnerability, and relational knowledge. Children's literature, I argue, opens new possibilities for teaching with care and imagination in a fractured and unstable world.

Keywords: Children's literature; affect theory; ecological humanities; pedagogy; weathering

Introduction: A Pedagogy for a Fractured World

In an era defined by political polarization, ecological fragility, and the relentless advance of technocratic governance, the purpose and practice of education have become profoundly urgent questions. Institutional discourse increasingly frames education as a pipeline to economic productivity or instrumental outcomes, reducing its scope to measurable metrics and market-driven imperatives. Yet the humanities pose countervailing inquiries: How do we dwell with loss in a world marked by environmental and social rupture? What does it mean to cultivate care amid systemic alienation? How can we sustain attention in a climate of digital saturation and impending collapse? In this fraught landscape, children's literature—a field often marginalised within academia as a "lesser" subdiscipline or relegated to the pedagogical margins—emerges as a surprisingly potent site for intellectual and ethical renewal.

This article argues for the recentering of children's literature as a critical and pedagogical cornerstone within the humanities. The selected texts—*The Heart and the Bottle*, *The House That Once Was*, *Zillah and the Rainbird*, and *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*—are chosen for their distinct approaches to grief, ecological haunting, trauma, and temporality. Together they form a corpus that demonstrates how children's books model attunement, ethical imagination, and relational modes of knowing. Far from simplistic, these texts engage deeply with questions of care, ecology, and epistemology, offering narrative and visual strategies that resonate with the challenges of living in what Anna Tsing calls "damaged worlds." By drawing on affect theory, feminist environmental humanities, and critical pedagogy, this article contends that children's literature not only enriches the content of humanities curricula but also transforms how we teach—privileging attentiveness over mastery, discomfort over premature closure, and care over control.

Children's literature, with its capacity to distill complex human experiences into accessible yet profound narratives, provides a unique lens for grappling with existential and ecological questions. For instance, texts like *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971) or *The Island* by Armin Greder (2007) confront environmental degradation and social exclusion with unflinching clarity, inviting readers to wrestle with discomfort and responsibility. These stories model ways of knowing that are not about domination or extraction but about relationality and ethical attunement—qualities that resonate with feminist environmental humanities' emphasis on interconnectedness (Haraway, 2016). Similarly, affect theory highlights how children's literature engages emotions as a form of knowledge, fostering empathy and critical reflection in ways that challenge the detached rationality often valorized in academic settings (Ahmed, 2006). By integrating these insights into humanities pedagogy, educators can create spaces where students learn to navigate ambiguity, confront loss, and practice care as intellectual and ethical commitments.

Moreover, children's literature offers a counterpoint to the instrumentalist pressures of contemporary education. As Paulo Freire (1970) argues, true education is a dialogic process of liberation, not a "banking" model of depositing facts. Children's texts, with their open-ended narratives and invitation to imaginative engagement, align with this vision, encouraging students to question, imagine, and co-create knowledge rather than passively consume it. This aligns with critical pedagogy's call for education to be transformative, fostering not just skills but a deeper sense of agency and ethical responsibility in a precarious world.

In reimagining humanities pedagogy through children's literature, this article proposes a shift from traditional, hierarchical models of teaching toward practices that are collaborative, affective, and responsive to the complexities of our time. By centering texts that speak to both the heart and the mind, educators can cultivate classrooms that are not merely sites of instruction but spaces of communal weathering—where students and teachers alike learn to dwell with uncertainty, care for one another, and imagine possibilities for renewal in a fractured world.

Children's Literature as Affective Epistemology

Children's literature occupies a precarious position within literary studies, often relegated to the margins due to entrenched biases that cast it as overly didactic, excessively sentimental, or lacking intellectual rigor. Foundational scholars such as Perry Nodelman (1992) and Jacqueline Rose (1984) have critiqued these assumptions, revealing how they are rooted in ideological constructs of adulthood, authorship, and the boundaries of "serious" literature. More recent scholarship by Marah Gubar (2013), Kenneth Kidd (2005), and Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (2004) has further challenged these dismissals, reframing children's texts as dynamic sites where cultural, ethical, and ontological questions are not only negotiated but vividly foregrounded. Building on this tradition, this article positions children's literature as a vital arena for affective epistemology—a mode of knowledge-making that intertwines feeling and understanding, offering unique tools for navigating the complexities of our contemporary moment.

Drawing on affect theory, particularly Sara Ahmed's (2006) concept of "affective economies," this article argues that children's literature fosters forms of knowing that are deeply relational and attuned to emotional currents. Ahmed describes how affects circulate, shaping not only what we feel but also what we know and how we come to know it. In children's texts, this manifests as a training ground for affective attention—not toward moral instruction or emotional regulation, as traditional views of the genre might suggest, but toward complex, open-ended encounters that resist tidy resolutions and reward sustained attunement. For example, texts like Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006) or Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002) stage affective landscapes of dislocation, ambiguity, and resilience, inviting readers to dwell in uncertainty rather than seeking closure. These works model ways of knowing that are not about mastery but about navigating the discomforts of the unknown.

This affective-epistemological framework is particularly resonant in the context of contemporary crises—ecological devastation, political fragmentation, and pedagogical instrumentalization—where technical or reductive solutions fall short. As Donna Haraway (2016) argues, living in a damaged world requires "staying with the trouble," a practice of resisting the urge to look away, simplify, or prematurely resolve complex realities. Children's literature, with its capacity to dwell in rupture and ambiguity, offers pedagogical models for this work. Kate DiCamillo's *The Tale of Despereaux* (2003) engages with themes of loss and courage without offering tidy or consoling resolutions, encouraging readers to sit with emotional complexity. Similarly, environmental narratives like Jeanette Winterson's *Tanglewreck* (2006) confront ecological precarity, fostering an ethical attentiveness to the more-than-human world that aligns with feminist environmental humanities (Alaimo, 2016).

Further grounding this argument, scholars like Philip Nel (2017) and Maria Nikolajeva (2014) emphasize how children's literature engages readers in ethical and epistemological dialogues that transcend age-based assumptions. Nel's work on radical children's literature highlights how texts can challenge hegemonic structures, while Nikolajeva's concept of "affective narratology" underscores how narrative structures in children's texts shape emotional and cognitive engagement. These insights align with critical pedagogy's call for education as a transformative, dialogic process (Freire, 1970), where knowledge emerges through collaborative and affective encounters rather than hierarchical transmission.

By centering children's literature in humanities pedagogy, educators can cultivate classrooms that prioritize attunement over control, fostering what Lauren Berlant (2011) calls "cruel optimism"—a willingness to engage with hope and care even in the face of uncertainty and loss. This approach challenges the instrumentalist drift of contemporary education, which, as Gert Biesta (2010) critiques, often reduces learning to measurable outcomes. Instead, children's texts invite students to grapple with ambiguity, practice care, and imagine alternative ways of being in a fractured world.

In sum, children's literature serves as a powerful site for affective epistemology, offering humanities educators a means to reimagine pedagogy as a practice of weathering—enduring, caring, and knowing through the complexities of our time. By embracing the affective and ethical possibilities of these texts, we can create learning spaces that are not only intellectually rigorous but also deeply human, attuned to the challenges of living in a precarious world.

Weathering as Method and Metaphor

This article establishes weathering as a transformative theoretical and pedagogical framework for reimagining humanities education through the lens of children's literature. Drawing on Christina Sharpe's (2016) evocative concept of being "in the wake" and "in the weather," weathering encapsulates the embodied, affective experience of enduring systemic

pressures—originally articulated in the context of Black life under anti-Black regimes but broadly applicable to ecological, social, and emotional precarities. To weather is to persist through time, to be reshaped by forces beyond one's control, and to bear the marks of those conditions in body, memory, and narrative. When paired with Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence"—the incremental, often invisible harms of environmental degradation and systemic inequity—weathering positions children's literature as a vital medium for grappling with the temporal and affective textures of living in damaged worlds. My forthcoming scholarship (Ezzy, 2025a; Ezzy, 2025b; Ezzy, 2025c) pioneers weathering as a critical lens for literary analysis, marking its first systematic application as a method for reading and teaching texts with an emphasis on their affective, ecological, and relational dimensions. Integrating insights from feminist environmental humanities, particularly Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker's (2014) ecological reframing of weathering, this article argues that children's literature fosters a pedagogy of endurance, care, and ethical attunement suited to navigating the complexities of contemporary crises.

Weathering: A Transdisciplinary and Literary Framework

The term "weathering" originates in public health, where Arline T. Geronimus (1992) used it to describe the cumulative physiological toll of chronic stress from structural inequalities, particularly on Black women. This concept has since resonated across disciplines, illuminating how bodies and communities are shaped by ongoing, often imperceptible forces. In my forthcoming work (Ezzy, 2025a), I extend weathering into literary studies, conceptualizing it as both a lived condition and a critical methodology for analyzing narratives. Weathering, in this sense, captures the slow, accumulative effects of environmental, emotional, and social pressures on bodies—human and more-than-human—manifesting in stories as processes of transformation, scarring, or heightened sensitivity (Ezzy, 2025b). To weather is not merely to endure adversity but to be profoundly altered by it, with narratives serving as archives of these marks in their structure, character arcs, and affective resonance.

Feminist environmental humanities scholars Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker (2014) enrich this framework by framing weathering as a "transcorporeal" process, one that reflects "our becoming-with the climate in both a biological and temporal sense" (560). They situate weathering within "thick time," a nonlinear temporality where past, present, and future interweave, sedimenting within bodies and environments. "We are thick with climatic intra-actions; we are makers of climate-time," they assert (561), highlighting the material entanglement of bodies with ecological and social forces. My scholarship builds on this foundation, establishing weathering as a pioneering literary lens, particularly for children's and young adult (YA) literature (Ezzy, 2025c). For instance, in texts like Claire Zorn's *The Sky So Heavy* (2013) or Margaret Wild's *The Stone Lion* (2014), weathering manifests in protagonists who navigate climate crisis, grief, and social rupture, their stories unfolding in fragmented, recursive rhythms that echo thick time (Ezzy, 2025d). These narratives reveal characters as

porous to their worlds, embodying transcorporeality through their interactions with flooded landscapes, fractured communities, or inherited silences.

Weathering as a Pedagogical and Literary Method

As a critical methodology, weathering offers a nuanced approach to reading children's literature, prioritizing its atmospheric, relational, and affective dimensions over traditional emphases on resolution or closure. My work (Ezzy, 2025a; Ezzy, 2025b) is the first to formalize weathering as a literary method, encouraging readers to attend to how narratives move—in silences, repetitions, rhythms, and breaths—rather than focusing solely on their thematic content. This approach aligns with Sara Ahmed's (2006) concept of "affective economies," where emotions circulate to shape epistemological encounters, and complements Nixon's (2011) slow violence, which illuminates the gradual harms embedded in ecological and social systems. For example, picture books like Jeannie Baker's *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (1987) or YA novels like Debra Oswald's *The Redback Leftovers* (2020) dwell in moments of ecological and emotional rupture, inviting readers to linger in discomfort rather than seek tidy resolutions (Ezzy, 2025c). Similarly, Shaun Tan's *The Rabbits* (1998) visualizes the slow violence of colonialism and environmental devastation, making these processes palpable and teachable (Ezzy, 2025d).

In the classroom, weathering as a pedagogical method transforms the teaching of children's literature by fostering collaborative, affective engagement. Drawing on Paulo Freire's (1970) vision of education as a dialogic, liberatory process, weathering encourages students to co-create knowledge through encounters with texts that model endurance and care. Teaching *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971) through a weathering lens, for instance, prompts students to connect personal affect with systemic issues like environmental justice, embodying Donna Haraway's (2016) call to "stay with the trouble" by grappling with complexity without rushing to solutions. My analysis of Australian and Aotearoan YA fiction (Ezzy, 2025b) highlights how girl protagonists, navigating burning forests or broken homes, embody transcorporeality, their identities shaped by ecological and social forces. These texts model a pedagogy of care, where students learn to weather uncertainty collectively, fostering ethical attunement to a fractured world.

Implications for Humanities Pedagogy

Weathering challenges the instrumentalist trends in contemporary education, which, as Gert Biesta (2010) critiques, often prioritize measurable outcomes over ethical or intellectual depth. By centering children's literature, educators can create classrooms as spaces of communal weathering, where students and teachers navigate grief, precarity, and hope together. This approach resonates with Lauren Berlant's (2011) concept of "cruel optimism," which captures the persistence of care amid systemic challenges, a dynamic mirrored in children's texts that confront difficult truths without offering easy answers. My forthcoming scholarship (Ezzy,

2025c; Ezzy, 2025d) argues that weathering, as a literary and pedagogical lens, equips students to engage with the slow, cumulative forces shaping our world, cultivating attunement to relational, ecological, and affective complexities.

In conclusion, weathering—as both a metaphor and a method—offers a transformative framework for humanities pedagogy. By pioneering its application as a literary lens (Ezzy, 2025a; Ezzy, 2025b; Ezzy, 2025c; Ezzy, 2025d), I position children's literature as a vital site for fostering affective, ethical, and ecological attunement. Through texts that weather and are weathered, educators can prepare students to live with, care for, and imagine possibilities within a fractured world, redefining humanities education as a practice of enduring and caring in thick time.

Case Studies in Weathering

The following case studies illustrate how children's literature serves as a site for exploring weathering as both a lived condition and a critical method, as developed in my forthcoming scholarship (Ezzy, 2025a; Ezzy, 2025b; Ezzy, 2025c). These texts—*The Heart and the Bottle* by Oliver Jeffers (2010), *The House That Once Was* by Julie Fogliano and Lane Smith (2018), *Zillah and the Rainbird* by Anne Brooksbank (1986), and *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* by Jeannie Baker (1987)—exemplify how children's literature engages with grief, ecological haunting, trauma, and temporal entanglement through affective and relational lenses. By reading these texts through the weathering framework, informed by Christina Sharpe's (2016) notion of being "in the weather," Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence, and Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker's (2014) transcorporeal temporality, we can cultivate a pedagogy that fosters attunement to loss, care, and uncertainty. These case studies demonstrate how children's texts model nonlinear, embodied ways of knowing, aligning with affect theory (Ahmed, 2006) and feminist environmental humanities (Alaimo, 2016), and offer pedagogical opportunities for humanities classrooms to engage with the complexities of a fractured world.

The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers (2010)

Oliver Jeffers's *The Heart and the Bottle* (2010) is a visually and narratively spare picture book that explores grief, withdrawal, and the tentative restoration of connection. The story follows a curious girl who, after the death of a loved one—implied to be a parent or grandparent—places her heart in a bottle worn around her neck. This arresting metaphor encapsulates both self-protection and disconnection, preservation and stasis, embodying the weathering process as a bodily and emotional response to loss (Ezzy, 2025a). The girl's act of bottling her heart reflects what Sara Ahmed (2006) describes as an "affective economy," where emotions circulate to shape not only feelings but also ways of knowing and being in the world. The bottled heart becomes a material archive of grief, a transcorporeal marker of how loss reshapes the self (Neimanis & Walker, 2014).

Pedagogically, *The Heart and the Bottle* opens a space to explore grief not as a linear, stage-based process but as a nonlinear weathering of the self, aligning with my argument that children's literature fosters affective epistemologies (Ezzy, 2025b). The girl's journey is not about overcoming grief but about carrying it and gradually loosening its hold through relational encounters. The book's visual narrative reinforces this affective labor: after the loss, the vibrant palette dims, curious objects vanish, and the girl becomes small and grey, visually embodying the slow violence of grief (Nixon, 2011). Only through an encounter with another curious child does color and wonder begin to return, suggesting that grief is not a private pathology but a relational condition softened in community. This resonates with Maria Nikolajeva's (2014) concept of "affective narratology," which highlights how children's texts use narrative structure to engage readers emotionally and cognitively.

In the classroom, this text invites students to consider the embodied experience of loss, the ethics of care, and the conditions under which one might begin to feel again. By pairing Jeffers's text with discussions of Sharpe's (2016) weathering or Lauren Berlant's (2011) "cruel optimism," educators can guide students to explore how affective states shape ethical and ecological attunement, fostering a pedagogy that embraces discomfort over closure.

The House That Once Was by Julie Fogliano and Lane Smith (2018)

The House That Once Was (2018), written by Julie Fogliano and illustrated by Lane Smith, is a lyrical picture book that meditates on memory, ruin, and ecological haunting. Two children discover an abandoned house in a forest, and the narrative alternates between their playful exploration and speculative fragments about its former inhabitants. The text's quiet, fragmentary style offers no resolution or definitive answers about who lived there or why they left, instead cultivating a poetic, slow practice of attending to absence (Ezzy, 2025c). This aligns with my conceptualization of weathering as a method of reading that prioritizes accumulation and lingering over closure (Ezzy, 2025a).

Pedagogically, *The House That Once Was* invites students to dwell in uncertainty and engage in what I term "imaginative archaeology"—a practice of witnessing and imagining past lives without seeking to resolve their mysteries (Ezzy, 2025d). The text's attention to what is missing, weathered, or unknowable resonates with Nixon's (2011) slow violence, which emphasizes the gradual, often invisible harms of ecological and social decay. The abandoned house, with its peeling paint and overgrown surroundings, becomes a site of ecological haunting, reflecting what Stacy Alaimo (2016) calls the "exposed" nature of bodies and environments in a damaged world. The book's refusal to provide closure models a form of "slow reading" that aligns with the temporality of ecological change, encouraging students to sit with loss rather than explain it away (Ezzy, 2025b).

In a classroom setting, this text fosters discussions about the ethics of witnessing and the generative potential of ruin. By connecting the narrative to Donna Haraway's (2016) call to "stay with the trouble," educators can encourage students to practice affective witnessing—feeling with rather than fixing—as a crucial pedagogical act in a world marked by abandoned places and ecological damage. This approach aligns with Philip Nel's (2017) argument that children's literature can challenge hegemonic structures by inviting readers to engage with complex social and environmental realities.

Zillah and the Rainbird by Anne Brooksbank (1986)

Anne Brooksbank's *Zillah and the Rainbird* (1986), a lesser-known Australian YA novel, offers a profound exploration of trauma, displacement, and intergenerational memory. The protagonist, Zillah, is sent to live with relatives after a family tragedy, where she forms a connection with a mysterious rainbird that may exist only in her imagination. The narrative blurs realism and fantasy, employing lyrical, spare prose to evoke a sense of disorientation and emotional fraying (Ezzy, 2025c). The coastal setting—wet, wind-swept, and grey—mirrors Zillah's internal state, embodying weathering as both a literal and symbolic process of erosion and exposure (Ezzy, 2025a).

From a weathering perspective, Zillah's journey reflects the transcorporeal entanglement of body and environment, as described by Neimanis and Walker (2014). The rainbird, appearing during moments of distress, functions as an affective sentinel—a witness to Zillah's weathering process (Ezzy, 2025d). The text's refusal to clarify the bird's reality models a pedagogy of uncertainty, where ambiguity is not a flaw but a feature of the narrative's emotional landscape. This resonates with Marah Gubar's (2013) argument that children's literature often negotiates complex ontological questions, challenging assumptions of simplicity in the genre.

Pedagogically, *Zillah and the Rainbird* offers opportunities to explore how trauma becomes embedded in both people and places. The coastal landscape, marked by erosion, mirrors Zillah's tentative, nonlinear process of learning to trust others and herself. By teaching this text alongside Paulo Freire's (1970) vision of dialogic education, educators can foster discussions about intergenerational trauma and ecological precarity, encouraging students to read for relationality and affect rather than resolution. The text's lyrical silences and ambiguities align with my weathering methodology, which emphasizes slow, attentive reading attuned to narrative rhythms and residues (Ezzy, 2025b).

Where the Forest Meets the Sea by Jeannie Baker (1987)

Jeannie Baker's *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (1987) is a visually stunning picture book that explores the intersection of ecological fragility, human presence, and temporal layering in an Australian rainforest. Through intricate collage illustrations and sparse, evocative text, the story follows a young boy and his father as they journey by boat to a pristine coastal rainforest.

The narrative subtly juxtaposes the boy's imaginative exploration of the forest with glimpses of its past and potential future—hints of Indigenous presence, extinct creatures, and encroaching development. This temporal interplay, rendered through Baker's layered visuals, positions the text as a powerful site for examining weathering as both a lived condition and a critical method (Ezzy, 2025a; Ezzy, 2025b).

The text embodies weathering through its depiction of the rainforest as a transcorporeal space, where human and more-than-human bodies are entangled with ecological and temporal forces (Neimanis & Walker, 2014). The rainforest is presented as a living archive, bearing the marks of deep time—Indigenous histories, ancient species, and geological processes—while also facing the slow violence of potential destruction, as suggested by faint images of bulldozers and resorts in the book's final pages (Nixon, 2011). The boy's sensory engagement with the forest—climbing trees, observing creatures, and imagining past inhabitants—reflects a weathering process, where his body and consciousness become porous to the environment's rhythms and histories (Ezzy, 2025c). Baker's collage illustrations, crafted from natural materials, further materialize weathering, evoking "thick time" where past, present, and future coexist within the ecosystem (Neimanis & Walker, 2014, p. 561).

Pedagogically, *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* fosters "slow reading" (Ezzy, 2025d), encouraging students to attend to the gradual, often invisible harms of ecological degradation. The text's open-ended warning about the forest's future invites discussions about ecological memory and environmental justice, aligning with Philip Nel's (2017) view of children's literature as a site for challenging hegemonic narratives. By pairing the text with Haraway's (2016) concept of "staying with the trouble," educators can guide students to practice affective witnessing, fostering care for threatened ecosystems. This approach connects personal affect to systemic issues, such as deforestation, through Ahmed's (2006) affective economies, making the text a powerful tool for humanities pedagogy.

From Literacy to Ethical Relationality

These texts share several pedagogical commitments. They resist neat moral resolutions. They center affective and ecological entanglement. They foreground the slow, messy processes of grieving, trusting, and paying attention. Most importantly, they ask ethical questions without offering easy answers. In doing so, they resist the instrumental logic that increasingly defines contemporary education, where learning is framed as acquisition, productivity, or personal gain.

Instead, these books invite a different kind of reading—one rooted in receptivity, humility, and care. They train students not just to analyze, but to feel-with. As bell hooks (1994) argues, education as the practice of freedom must engage both intellect and emotion, head and heart. Children's literature, when taken seriously, offers a powerful modality for this kind of work.

It also demands that we rethink what counts as knowledge. The field of children's literature is often framed around developmental models that privilege cognitive progression. But what if we read children's texts not as tools for developmental outcomes, but as philosophical and political interventions in their own right? What if we treated curiosity, play, and wonder as serious epistemological commitments?

Weather Pedagogies: Teaching in Crisis

To teach weathering is to teach in crisis—but not in the sense of panic or solutionism. It is to teach with the awareness that students are already living in saturated atmospheres of harm, fatigue, and uncertainty. It is to recognize the classroom as a weather system: shaped by mood, history, power, and place.

This recognition calls for a shift in pedagogy. Rather than insisting on clarity, certainty, or control, weather pedagogy values slowness, ambiguity, and the capacity to sit with discomfort. Rather than valorizing the individual learner as autonomous knower, it foregrounds relationality, embodiment, and shared vulnerability.

In literature and education courses, this might mean integrating children's books alongside theory. It might mean asking students to map the emotional weather of a text, or to write about their own affective responses. It might mean reconfiguring assessment practices to reward attentiveness rather than argumentation. It might mean allowing silence, pause, and poetic thinking into the classroom.

Children's literature becomes not only a subject of study but a method of study—a way of thinking-with, feeling-through, and imagining otherwise.

Weathering Futures: Reimagining the Humanities Classroom

The pedagogical commitments of weathering—attunement, care, and ethical relationality—point toward a reimagined humanities classroom that embraces children's literature as a catalyst for transformative learning. By centering texts like *The Heart and the Bottle*, *The House That Once Was*, *Zillah and the Rainbird*, and *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*, educators can foster spaces where students engage with the complexities of a fractured world not as passive learners but as active participants in a shared process of meaning-making. This vision aligns with my pioneering weathering framework (Ezzy, 2025a; Ezzy, 2025b; Ezzy, 2025c; Ezzy, 2025d), which positions children's literature as a site for navigating grief, ecological precarity, and social rupture through slow, affective, and relational practices.

Practically, a weathering pedagogy might involve innovative classroom strategies that challenge conventional academic norms. For instance, educators could design assignments that ask students to create "affective maps" of a text's emotional and ecological landscapes, as

inspired by *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*'s layered visuals or *Zillah and the Rainbird*'s lyrical silences. Such activities encourage students to articulate how affects like wonder, loss, or care circulate, drawing on Ahmed's (2006) affective economies. Alternatively, collaborative projects could involve students writing speculative narratives about the futures of weathered spaces, like the abandoned house in *The House That Once Was* or the threatened rainforest in Baker's text, fostering imaginative engagement with Nixon's (2011) slow violence. These approaches align with Freire's (1970) dialogic pedagogy, where knowledge emerges through collective inquiry rather than top-down instruction.

Moreover, weathering pedagogy invites a rethinking of assessment practices. Traditional essays prioritizing argumentative clarity could be supplemented with reflective journals, poetic responses, or visual art projects that reward attunement to a text's rhythms and residues, as I propose in my forthcoming work (Ezzy, 2025b). For example, students might respond to *The Heart and the Bottle* by crafting a visual narrative of their own emotional weathering, connecting personal experience to the text's themes. Such practices honor the slow, recursive temporality of thick time (Neimanis & Walker, 2014) and encourage students to see themselves as co-creators of knowledge, not merely consumers.

This reimagined classroom also challenges the disciplinary siloing critiqued by Tsing (2015), fostering interdisciplinary connections between literature, environmental humanities, and critical pedagogy. By pairing children's texts with theoretical works—such as Sharpe's (2016) *In the Wake* or Haraway's (2016) *Staying with the Trouble*—educators can bridge literary analysis with broader ethical and ecological questions. For instance, a course module might combine *The Lorax* with Alaimo's (2016) concept of "exposed" bodies to explore environmental justice, or use *The Arrival* to discuss migration and belonging alongside Berlant's (2011) cruel optimism. These pairings position children's literature as a philosophical and political intervention, as Gubar (2013) and Nel (2017) advocate, capable of addressing complex human experiences in accessible yet profound ways.

Ultimately, a humanities of weathering is a call to action: to teach with courage, to center care, and to embrace vulnerability as a strength. Children's literature, with its capacity to hold space for wonder, grief, and possibility, offers a blueprint for this work. By adopting weathering as a pedagogical method, educators can cultivate classrooms that are not just sites of learning but spaces of communal resilience—where students and teachers weather the crises of our time together, imagining and building futures grounded in reciprocity and hope.

Conclusion: Toward a Humanities of Weathering

This article has argued that children's literature offers vital resources for reimagining humanities pedagogy in a time of ecological and political crisis. Through the lens of weathering, we have seen how children's texts invite readers to engage with grief, care, memory, and

resilience not as isolated experiences but as ongoing, relational, and atmospheric processes. These texts resist closure and certainty; they reward slowness, attention, and imaginative co-thinking.

In this way, children's literature performs what the best humanities teaching aspires to: it opens up complex ethical questions, cultivates affective attunement, and refuses to separate knowing from feeling. In an academy increasingly shaped by market logics and metrics of efficiency, this is a radical gesture.

To teach children's literature seriously is to insist that care, wonder, and vulnerability are not extracurricular to the humanities, but foundational to them. It is to imagine a pedagogy not of mastery but of reciprocity—a pedagogy that weathers with and through the broken world.

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