

<p><b>Institution: University of Bolton</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: UoA 29</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Research on Enid Blyton</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Since his initial publications on the work of Enid Blyton in 1995, David Rudd has been instrumental in changing the public's perception of one of the most popular children's writers of all time. He has appeared on TV and Radio, both in this country and abroad, been quoted extensively in the media and in newspaper articles, besides giving talks and publishing articles, both locally and internationally. He has also been sought out by publishers, newspapers and programme makers for consultancy work.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This research dates back to 1993, when Rudd's PhD research began, though it was preceded by earlier work (a monograph, <i>A Communication Studies Approach to Children's Literature</i>, 1992, which had received critical acclaim ('if Rudd represents the future of British children's literature studies, we are in luck' - Adams, <i>Children's Literature Association Quarterly</i> 1998, p. 219). The PhD involved reassessing the work of children's writer, Enid Blyton, long the butt of criticism by academics and the popular media. It adopted a Cultural Studies perspective, drawing extensively on the work of Bakhtin and psychoanalysis. The research involved two strands: a textual analysis of Blyton's three most popular series, which also straddled the age range of her work: 'Noddy', the 'Famous Five' and 'Malory Towers'. This corpus, of some fifty texts, was derived from reviews, sales, and questionnaires from readers about their favourite titles. The rest of her work (she wrote some 700 titles, with over a thousand short stories) formed background material. The second stage involved an empirical study, engaging with readers of Blyton past and present (i.e. contemporary children), both in this country and abroad. In furthering this research, Rudd visited a number of schools and talked to children and their teachers about her books. The research was undertaken 1993-1997, with outputs appearing from 1995 on, when Rudd began to be invited by librarians, teachers and others to discuss her work. Research from most of his early outputs was absorbed into a monograph (Rudd, 2000), where he argued that her work had generally been misread and situated in the wrong context. He suggested that her style of writing, like a number of other popular writers, was better located in the oral tradition, noting parallels between her storytelling techniques and those of Homer and others. In these terms, what were seen as negative qualities (in literary terms) became more positive, vibrant features. Rudd also drew on psychoanalysis to explain her particular, personal appeal in fantasy terms. Alongside other areas of research, Rudd has been continually asked to develop his work on Blyton (e.g. the editors of a forthcoming book, <i>Internationalism in Children's Series</i>, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, had approached him for a chapter ['Blyton and Blighty'], in response to comments by readers of the original proposal). At the time of the initial research, Rudd was a senior lecturer at Bolton Institute of Higher Education, prior to it becoming the University of Bolton.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b> (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p><b>Key Publications</b></p> <p>Rudd, David. <i>Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature</i>. Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. ISBN: 0333 74718 6</p> <p>Rudd, David. 'Digging up the family plot: secrets, mystery and the Blytonesque'. Chapter in Adrienne E. Gavin and Christopher Routledge (eds) <i>Mystery in Children's Literature: From the Rational to the Supernatural</i> Palgrave, 2001, pp. 82-99. ISBN: 0 333 91881 9</p> <p>Rudd, David. 'Toffee Shocks: lands of the Magic Faraway Tree and Blyton's schematic fantasy'. Chapter in Clare Horrocks and Nickianne Moody (eds) <i>Children's Fantasy Fiction: debates for the 21<sup>st</sup> century</i> Liverpool: Association for Research in Popular Fictions/LJMU Press, 2005, pp. 191-206. ISBN: 0 9549829 0 8</p> <p>Rudd, David. 'Islands and I-lands in Blyton'. Chapter in Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (eds) <i>Treasure Islands in Children's Literature</i>. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005, pp. 72-8. ISBN: 1 85182 941 5</p> <p>Rudd, David. 'From Froebel to Disney: the phenomenal success of Enid Blyton' chapter in Julia Briggs,</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Dennis Butts and M.O. Grenby (eds) *Popular Children's Literature*. London: Ashgate 2008, pp. 251-69. ISBN: 1840142421

Rudd, David. 'In Defence of Enid Blyton' Open University Course, U300 'Children's Literature', Block 4, 'Twentieth Century Trends'. In Janet Maybin and Nicola J. Watson (eds) *Children's Literature: Approaches and Trends*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 168-82. ISBN: 978 0 230 22713 2

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Rudd's 1995 article sparked media interest, leading to interviews regionally, nationally (Radio 4's PM, Radio 2, BBC1 North-West Tonight 22/1/96) then internationally (BBC's World Service, stations in South Africa and Australia 1996). Since then, he has fairly regularly been asked to discuss Blyton on radio and TV (e.g. BBC North-West Tonight, 3 July 2000).

He was asked to write pieces on Blyton for the *TES* (3/1/97) and for *The Scotsman* (21/6/00). He was featured in a British Council film (4/97), distributed internationally, and was interviewed/consulted for three other programmes (Channel 4: *Banned* (Golliwogs, 4/05), *Writers and their Homes* ('Blyton at Old Thatch', 4/05; *Secret Lives: Enid Blyton* (16/12/96)). He was also featured on an award-winning programme for Radio Netherlands (*Mother Goose*, 10/02) and a *Woman's Hour* special 'defending' Blyton (27/11/08). Many non-academic groups have asked him to speak over the years, from librarians (e.g. Nottinghamshire County Libraries, 11/96) to, most recently, Lancashire Women's Institutes, with 142 attendees [17/4/13]). He has also spoken at the Enid Blyton Literary Society (1996, 2000), and the Children's Book History Society (2008). In 2011, Seven Stories invited him to speak alongside novelist and former Children's Laureate, Anne Fine (12/05/11, available: <http://soundcloud.com/7stories/enid-blyton-event/s-oZGeP>).

His research was ground-breaking in challenging negative perceptions of Blyton. His impact has resulted in her work being taken more seriously, with Rudd himself often being asked to contribute to this re-evaluation. The widespread nature of this impact makes it hard to pin down to specifics. But it has infiltrated society at all levels, as shown, for instance in ephemeral references like being quoted in *Private Eye*'s 'Pseud's Corner', on the BBC's *Quote Unquote*, and in a *New Statesman* competition (9/2/96) on Homeric rewrites of Blyton.

Rudd's engagement with the public concerning Blyton's work has been continuous, repeatedly asked to comment on issues around sexism, racism, nationalism, etc. Much of this is ephemeral (personal testimonies, letters and emails), but there are more overt markers, such as the decision to mount the Blyton exhibition at *Seven Stories* (May 2013 -), as a result of public demand, following on the success of the evening with Anne Fine. This exhibition (in which his work featured; he was also a consultant) has currently received 41,078 visitors (7/11/13). His monograph also led the head of Trocadero (which acquired Blyton rights) to meet Rudd to discuss the marketing of their Blyton oeuvre (as have other organisations/publishers). Most recently, the Canadian novelist Randy Boyagoda consulted him for a *Paris Review* article on Blyton:

<http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2012/06/25/five-in-the-colonies-enid-blyton%E2%80%99s-sri-lankan-adventures/> . The decision of the Open University to include Blyton on their Literature syllabus (which first ran in 2010 with 1700+ takers) was also a result of Rudd's impact, hence he was commissioned to write a chapter for their coursebook. Likewise, a number of schools and libraries have felt emboldened to feature Blyton's work again, and have written letters of appreciation; e.g.

I read some of your work on Enid Blyton and it did go some way to my decision to increase and to some extent replenish the stock of Enid Blyton books at my branch library. ... The general feedback ... was extremely positive. ... I would say that your writings on EB gave me confidence in considering her value as a writer despite her ideological and literary shortcomings. (Phyllis Ramage, Librarian, Harrow; email November 2013)

Leaving aside academia, his work has been reviewed in populist publications, attesting to his work's impact in helping to articulate and/or change views: 'It is a fresh and very exciting approach to Blyton that is likely to re-ignite (let alone kindle) interest in her work' - Sophie Smallwood, *The Enid Blyton Society Journal*. (See <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Enid-Blyton-Mystery-Childrens-Literature/dp/0333747186> for more).

'A thorough, sensible and balanced defence of Blyton. This is a work of judicious advocacy.'

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Some of its best sections demonstrate the blatant misreadings, contradictions and emotional animus which have characterised so many attacks on Blyton...Overall this is a timely and competent corrective study.' - *Books For Keeps*

'The survey alone was a mammoth undertaking, but it is matched in scale by Rudd's mastery of critical theory in general and of Blyton criticism in particular and ...his knowledge of Blyton's vast oeuvre.' - *Children's Books History Society Newsletter*

'Rudd's enthusiasm for his subject makes a riveting read... Rudd clearly has a brilliant mind, which together with an infectious enthusiasm, and a dislike of poor scholarship, has helped to produce a book that is one of the most important contributions to the study of children's literature ever published.' - Brian Stewart, *Antiques & Collectables*

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Aside from the evidence above, Seven Stories, The Enid Blyton Society, Imogen Smallwood (Enid Blyton's younger daughter), miscellaneous correspondence.