

“Coming of age” in children’s fiction often means achieving maturity through the experience of trauma. In classics ranging from *Old Yeller* to *The Outsiders*, a narrative of psychological pain defies expectations of childhood as a time of innocence and play. In this provocative new book, Eric L. Tribunella explores why trauma, especially the loss of a loved object, occurs in some of the most popular and critically acclaimed twentieth-century American fiction for children. Tribunella draws on queer theory and feminist revisions of Freud’s notion of melancholia, which is described as a fundamental response to loss, arguing that the low-grade symptoms of melancholia are in fact what characterize the mature, sober, and responsible American adult. *Melancholia and Maturation* looks at how this effect is achieved in a society that purports to protect youngsters from every possible source of danger, thus requiring melancholia to be induced artificially. Each of the book’s five chapters focuses on a different kind of lost object sacrificed so as to propel the child toward a distinctively gendered, sexual, ethical, and national adulthood—from same-sex friends to the companionship of boy-and-his-dog stories, from the lost ideals of historical fiction about the American Revolution to the children killed or traumatized in Holocaust novels. The author examines a wide spectrum of works—including Jack London’s dog tales, the contemporary “realistic” novels of S. E. Hinton, and Newbery Medal winners like *Johnny Tremain* and *Bridge to Terabithia*. Tribunella raises fundamental questions about the value of children’s literature as a whole and provides context for understanding why certain books become required reading for youth. Eric L. Tribunella is assistant professor of English at the University of Southern Mississippi. His articles have been published in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, *Children’s Literature in Education*, *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children’s Literature*, and *Children’s Literature*.

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*Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Undergraduates* in my introductory children's literature courses often express surprise.

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*Melancholia and Maturation* reads narratives of American children's literature and young adult texts in the context of Freud's theories of melancholia and cultural.

Tribunella raises fundamental questions about the value of children's literature as a whole and provides context for understanding why certain books become. Get this from a library! *Melancholia and maturation: the use of trauma in American children's literature*. [Eric L. Tribunella] -- Tribunella (English, U. of Southern. Get this from a library! *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Literature*. [Eric L. Tribunella].

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Melancholia and maturation: the use of trauma in American children's literature / Eric L. Tribunella. Publication Library Call Number: PS His essay on sexuality in children's and young adult literature was published in the Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's. and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Literature. that the children's literature Tribunella cites as guides to melancholic maturation are.

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