

Mona Gleason and Tamara Myers, eds.

*Bringing Children & Youth into Canadian History: The Difference Kids Make*

Oxford University Press: Don Mills, 2017. 465 pp.

Mona Gleason and Tamara Myers are the ideal editors for this important new teaching anthology. The two are leading scholars—leading scholars in the history of children and youth with stellar international reputations. In addition, they co-founded the History and Children and Youth Group of the Canadian Historical Association. Their collection reviewed here is already becoming the standard text for undergraduate courses in Canada, and it will work very well in similar courses with a transnational focus. The sophistication of the included pieces, combined with the editors' careful framing, means that this book will also find a place in graduate courses where students probe more deeply the theory, the method, and the ethical choices underlying the research articles.

The collection begins with a timeline that will be very useful for students and research scholars less familiar with core narratives in Canadian history or in the history of childhood. The timeline includes elements that are discussed in the articles or that provide crucial background about, for example, emerging child welfare systems and the regulatory state more broadly. But there are also tantalizing hints of other developments that students or scholars may wish to pick up in their own research and reading. (I, for example, want to know more about an Ottawa convent school that expelled eight students for attending an Elvis Presley concert in 1957.)

The challenge for the editors of any anthology, but especially for a wide-ranging teaching anthology, is to find a through-line that unites the book. Gleason and Myers use their well thought-out introduction to orient students to the field of the history of childhood and youth, and also to identify their core message. The essays in *The Difference Kids Make*, they argue, “help to define how the youngest, [who are] often assumed to be the most vulnerable and dependent, of our society have in turn contributed to the making of Canadian history” (9). In thematic chapters that cover the period from the late nineteenth century through the 1970s, we learn from the editors and from the contributing authors that the history of childhood is inseparable from labour history, political history, the development of the welfare state and the police/regulatory state, war and peace, medicine, immigration, popular culture, Canada's action and reputation on the world stage, and finally from Canada's difficult, tragic history of colonialism and the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. To quote the editors, “Young people lie at the heart of the nation-state's development” (2). To underscore this point about the significance of the history of children and youth, the editors also point to the centrality of children and young people in our most contentious contemporary debates. The history of children is also the history of the present.

Gleason and Myers have selected twenty-two research articles that they have organized into eleven chapters. Their selections range from classics, such as John Bullen's 1986 essay on the many contributions of children to working class family economies, to important recently published research, such as Sarah Glassford's 2014 article on

the Junior Red Cross in wartime. These are paired with essays created for this collection, such as Jessica Haynes' work on Thalidomide Babies and "normal" families. Each chapter includes an introduction by the editors, a primary source document connected to each article, a set of study questions, and a short bibliography. Gleason and Myers use the introductions and questions in each chapter to explain and then probe key concepts and tools in the history of children and youth. The core lies in exploring "age as a significant and revealing category of analysis" (7). And this means, of course, also probing definitions of childhood, of adolescence, and of youth. Just who are the subjects of the history of children and youth? The editors also guide readers to explore the closely related questions of evidence in the history of childhood, asking how and when the voices of children are heard amongst the declarations and dictates of adults. The editors challenge us, as well, to consider children's agency, asking how and when children are able to assert agency in a world largely controlled by adults.

Some of my favourite essays in this anthology are those which highlight the methods historians of childhood and youth use to explore these crucial analytic concepts, including contributions from Kristine Alexander on children's voices in archival sources, as well as from Barbara Lorezkowski and Gleason oral histories of childhood collected from adults. Also intriguing are the essays which make the reader explore the ethics of historical research and writing about children whose tragedies and moments of crisis become historical evidence, as in contributions from Magda Fahrni on the 1927 Laurier Place Fire and Jane Nicholas on child freak performers. Ian Mosby's searing work on nutritional experiments conducted by Canadian government officials on Indigenous adults in remote communities and on Indigenous children in residential schools explores the question of research ethics—or more accurately lack of ethics—when young people are research subjects.

These concepts and methods also have a wider valence; students who are learning about the practise of the history of childhood are also learning about the practise of history more widely. Myers and Gleason make these wider connections as part of their message that the history of childhood is history writ large, and as part of their responsibility to train student historians who encounter this text as part of their larger historical education. Thus, Myers and Gleason explore the affinities between social history, women's and gender history, and the history of children and youth. They also explain the importance of an intersectional approach to historical research that considers mutually constitutive effects of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, sexuality, and race in historical experience. The attention to ability and ableism is particularly notable, showing up in contributions from Gleason, Haynes, Myers, Nicholas and Nic Clarke. There are also exceptional and highly intersectional discussions of race in this anthology, especially in articles that discuss the experience of Indigenous children as compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. This work appears, most notably, in essays from Alexander, Nicholas, Gleason, Mosby, Tarah Brookfield, and Sarah De Leeuw. If I were to make one plea for revisions in a future edition of this text—and without question there should be future editions—it would be for more attention from the editors to the places where racial identities are assumed (assumed white?) and/or left undiscussed in the research articles. Pulling out the presence of racial

identity when it is unmarked would contribute greatly to teaching students about history and history-making. Overall, this anthology is a remarkable accomplishment sure to establish itself and remain at the centre of teaching in this field.

**Karen Balcom**  
McMaster University

Keith Crawford

*Arthur Mee: A Biography*

---

Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2016. 199 pp.

Keith Crawford, an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, has long had an interest in resources used in schools, particularly textbooks and their social constructions of national identity. His books *What Shall We Tell the Children: International Perspectives on School History Textbooks* (2006) and *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks* (2007), both co-edited with Stuart J. Foster, are widely cited. In 2013, his research interests moved beyond textbooks to early-twentieth-century children's magazines. This would explain his interest in Arthur Mee, who was a household name in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century, and who was described at his 1943 funeral as someone whose "name will stand for ever [sic] as the greatest writer for children of our day and generation" (155).

Crawford's biography is intended to reach both academic and non-academic audiences. He uses three sets of primary sources: 700 letters written by Mee and members of his editorial staff to his lifelong friend, mentor, and collaborator John Derry (1905–36); letters between Mee and his employer Alfred Harmsworth (1904–10); and Mee's publications across forty years. Crawford also refers to two previous biographies, although he calls one "more hagiography than anything else" (xiii). This thoroughly documented work is supported by extensive endnotes, a bibliography, and an index.

Mee is best known as the creator of *The Children's Encyclopaedia* (1909–10), its later iterations (1910–33), and *The Children's Newspaper* (1919–64) (a publication to which Princess Elizabeth subscribed, although Crawford does not mention this). His work was hugely successful on a financial level. *The Children's Encyclopaedia* (the fortnightly issues having been compiled and revised) sold 1.5 million sets, with its American edition, *The Book of Knowledge*, selling another 5.5 million. Sales of *The Children's Newspaper* reached 500,000 copies weekly across the British Empire during the 1920s and 1930s. *My Magazine*, one of the later iterations of *The Children's Encyclopaedia*, was described in *The Daily Mirror* as "the most loved monthly in the British Empire" (46). (Crawford does not point out that *The Daily Mirror* was owned by Alfred Harmsworth, Mee's publisher.)

Mee was born into a "respectable working class" (1) family in the Nottinghamshire