

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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ments/language-literature

LITTLE KANAWHA READING SERIES WELCOMES DOC MCLEMORE

WHEN & WHERE: Thursday, October 8, at 4:00 p.m. in the Robert F. Kidd Library

The Reading Series is pleased to host nonfiction writer Doc McLemore, author of the recent University of Kentucky Press publication *Someday We Won't Remember This: A Forensic Memoir of My Father's Secrets*. The premise of the book is striking: McLemore's earliest memory is of their father, Don, having a seizure when they were three, yet Don wasn't even home then; he was confined in an Oregon mental hospital. Despite both parents denying it, the memory persisted, along with nightmares of Don trying to kill a young Doc. To investigate, McLemore gathered medical records, court documents, interviews, journal entries, personal memories, and photographs, assembling a collage of the different versions of the story they thought they knew.

Jonathan Bernstein, senior research editor and writer at *Rolling Stone*, called McLemore's book "a haunting portrait of mental illness, violence, addiction, complex love, forgiveness, and the half-truths and half-lies families sculpt into myth." Sarah Einstein, author of *The Tripart Heart*, describes the memoir as "a fine addition to the diversity of voices that truly represent Appalachia." And M. Randal O'Wain, author of *Meander Belt: Family, Loss, and Coming of Age in the Working-Class South*, described McLemore's book as a profound look at how generational trauma shapes adult life.

For another great read, take a look at McLemore's personal essay "Hurtling Toward the Water," which was published in *Salvation South* in June 2023. The essay relates to the deadly 2016 West Virginia floods, with the narrative taking place June 25 and 26, 2016. McLemore, then living in Rochester, New York, in an unhappy early marriage, watches news of the West Virginia floods late at night and decides to drive south with an SUV

full of bleach, gloves, water, and donated books. Interestingly, as the essay progresses, we learn that for McLemore the trip may also be an escape from their husband and from their own grief. You can read this terrific essay for free at *Salvation South*:

<https://www.salvationsouth.com/hurtling-toward-the-water-delaney-mclemore/>



THE DARK SIDE OF PETER PAN IN THE CLASSIC *PETER AND WENDY*

Contributed by Aizelyn Stroehman, Elementary Education/Education 5-9; member of the GSU Honors Program

Peter and Wendy, published in 1911 by J.M. Barrie, is a novel criticizing the Romantic Era's fascination with children who are perpetually stuck in childhood. Modern reviews recognize the novel's fantasy, which popularized it at the time of its publication, but also acknowledge the underlying warning found in Peter's character: children who never grow up are stuck with the primitive and immature qualities of childhood.

A review posted in 2024 by Rosty on their blog, *Just Some Thoughts*, interprets Peter's character as demonstrating both qualities of The Golden Age's portrayal of childhood. They write: "he may be innocent in a sense, but he flies against the notion that children are a representation of purity." This take recognizes Peter as both ideal and primitive, as he acts both carefree and selfishly. It can be implied that the novel gained popularity during the early 20th century because adults were captivated by the representation of a child who never matures, but modern reviews recognize the downfall of this illusion. As charming as Peter is, he harms other characters through his self-centered behavior.

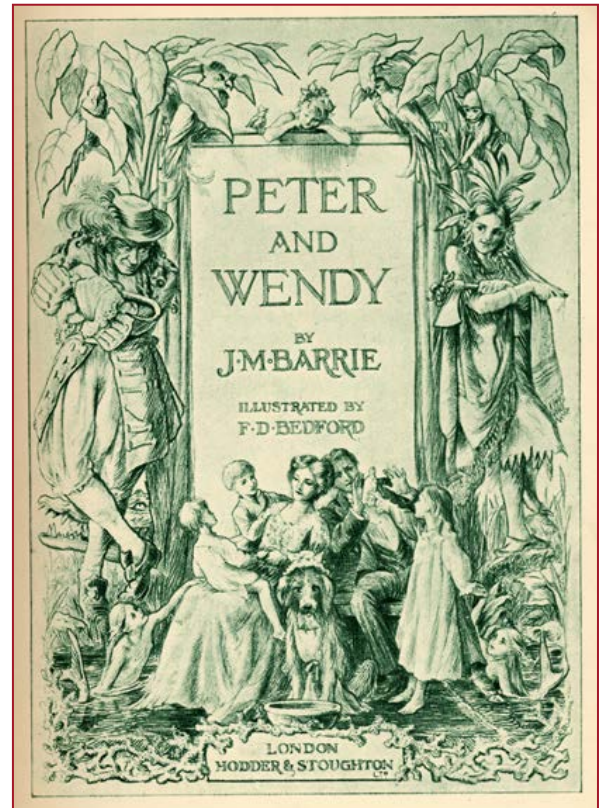
Reviews also interpret Peter as a metaphor for a dead child, citing the death of author Barrie's mother as well as Peter's fascination with finding a mother to bring back to Neverland. A review posted on Goodreads in 2010 by user K.M. Anonymous writes: "A child longing for his mother's love. This is symbolized by Peter asking for Wendy to be his mother and probably Tink and probably even Mrs. Darling. This is the moral of the story: we all need mothers." This take is more literal than what is found in most other reviews, but supports the idea that Peter's character is selfish, representing the "primitive" characteristics of childhood. Peter would rather Wendy be separated from her own parents than go without a parent himself. This interpretation also aligns with Romantic ideals of childhood as a dead child was a child that parents did not have to watch grow into adulthood and lose their innocence.

While *Peter and Wendy* is intended for children, reviewers recognize the dark themes found in the novel. The perpetual child is flawed and selfish, and parents who romanticize a perpetual child fail to consider the child as a person, instead glorifying them through the lens of the Romantic Era or Golden Age.

Works Cited

<https://ristledow.substack.com/p/peter-and-wendy-1911-made-me-want>

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/29144659-peter-and-wendy-novel-1911-by-j-m-barrie>



Oh, Deer!

How many deer can you spot in this picture by Kaylee Hershman, Dual Enrollment student?

Did you know . . .

The U.S. is home to about 30 million deer.

Deer can hear about as well as dogs—that's three times better than humans.

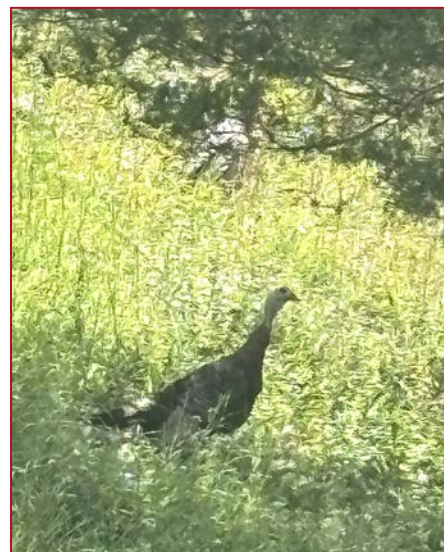
Deer can run about 35 miles an hour.

The white-tailed deer is the state animal of nine U.S. states.

MY PEACEFUL VIEW FROM THE LOFT

Contributed by Haylee Malone, Dual Enrollment

I'm sitting in the loft of the barn, taking in the peaceful surroundings. From the loft, I can observe the trees swaying gently and admire the beautiful, delicate leaves as they fill the landscape with color. The smell of fresh-cut, warm wood from the barn and earthy soil waft on the breeze. In the distance, I hear birds chirping softly from the trees. Their cheerful songs blend with the gentle rustling of the leaves. I wonder what they are saying. Some small insects buzz around. Where are the insects going? What are they building? Perhaps a honey bee collecting nectar or a great big dragonfly. I can hear turkeys calling in the distance, and I can see some of them nearby. They are beautiful as they move through the grass. There are at least eight turkeys together, and one is really, really big! What are they saying when they gobble and claw at the ground? Where are the turkeys going? What are they eating from the ground? worms? They are amazing to just observe from a distance. They have beautiful feathers that shimmer and show off different shades as they move in the sunlight. Their feathers make them even more admirable. I took a picture of the big turkey making his way through the tall grass. He is standing beneath the shade of a tall pine tree. His long neck is raised, making him look alert and curious. Some of the trees were planted by the previous owner of this land. Most of them are pine; however, there is a mixture of oak trees. There is a beautiful mixture of ivy climbing the trees.



From the loft, I have a beautiful view across the valley. The mountains make the view peaceful and almost endless. From up here, it almost looks like a beautiful painting. Everything just seems so still and calm. The sky is a very pretty deep blue. The clouds stretch across it endlessly, almost like cotton candy. The soft breeze pushes them past ever so slowly. They look like great big fluffy pillows.

I found a small, fuzzy, yellow-green caterpillar crawling on the door of a stall. The caterpillar is covered in long, fine hairs that stick out in different directions. This caterpillar may look friendly and soft; however, this particular one has a stinger, or rather, stingers mixed in the fine hairs. The bright colors on this caterpillar are both beautiful and a warning to predators.

From my loft, I hear birds chirping, see turkeys moving through the grass, smell the fresh cut grass, and look across the valley toward the mountains. I feel calm and amazed by the wide valley and the mountains around me.

TAKE A MINUTE TO LOOK AT THE GROUND BENEATH YOUR FEET

Contributed by Casey Smola, Title IX Coordinator

Every year my mother and father go out and carefully select the perfect Norway spruce to decorate for Christmas. Tradition is very important in our family, so to remember that joyous holiday, the ornaments are carefully packed away and the very special tree is planted in their yard. It was decided one year that one would be planted beside the patio so that it could be adorned with holiday joy every year. It has grown quite large and the south sun bears on it. The dirt beneath it is dry and seems lifeless, almost as though that tree has claimed its right to the ground, therefore not allowing anything to cohabitate with it. I suppose the tree has been there for so long it believes that it's the most important thing on that little patch of earth. Upon further inspection it would seem as though the ground is only entertaining the tree's audacity to be so proud.

You see, even though the dirt is dry, loamy, and seemingly lifeless, I noticed a few tiny ants crawling around. I chuckled. That tree that thinks it's the only thing to live in that dirt is actually supported by an entire underground ant colony and no doubt other small creatures that can't be seen. Pioneering naturalist Arthur Paul Jacot once observed, "All natural, shallow soil is a maze of tunnels and passageways averaging a millimeter in diameter, and harboring a varied and extensive population which keep these channels open" (Jacot 359). I wondered just how big that little village was under that lifeless ground. It wasn't lifeless at all. It was quite alive—just not to the naked eye. Those few small ants were just like the speaker in a Lois Kennedy poem: "You gather what you can carry, a pilgrim collecting relics from the deep" (11). I guess it's no wonder the tree seems so happy and proud. It does, after all, protect an entire civilization, and it's certainly not short of company either.

Works Cited

Jacot, Arthur Paul. "Soil Structure and Soil Biology." *Ecology*, vol. 17, no. 3, July 1936, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1931840>.
Kennedy, Lois. "Beachcombing After a Storm." *Between Earth and Sky*, edited by Melissa Gish, Sabre Lake Publishing, 2026, pp. 10-11.



To a Waterfowl

Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last
steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou
pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight, to do thee
wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chaféd ocean side?

There is a Power, whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless
coast,—
The desert and illimitable air
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold thin
atmosphere;
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome
land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end,
Soon shalt thou find a summer home,
and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds
shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form, yet, on my
heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast
given,
And shall not soon depart.

He, who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy
certain flight,
In the long way that I must trace alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

— William Cullen Bryant
written 1815, published 1818

SAILING TOWARD SUCCESS

For many decades following the American Revolution, people with power and influence tended to label sailors as not “real” citizens. The novelist James Fenimore Cooper presented a different image of sailors in his books about the sea. He described them as the kind of people a young country should be proud of.

His late novels, *Afloat and Ashore* and its sequel *Miles Wallingford*, are particularly good examples of his belief, as he used these books to argue that sailors would play a central role in establishing the United States as a global power. A close examination of the novels' sailor characters reveals that they were the kind of Americans who fueled investigative sea voy-

ages, such as the government-sponsored US Exploring Expedition, that laid the groundwork for American influence around the world. Attending to this aspect of these novels, readers can uncover a different perspective on the way American came to prominence—a perspective that stresses the maritime, rather than the oft-cited continental, origins of its power.

This in-depth analysis is the subject of **Dr. Schuyler Chapman's** article, “The Citizen-Sailor: James Fenimore Cooper and the Imperial History of US Maritime Citizenship,” which appears in the September 2026 issue of the journal *American Literature*, and it's the kind of analytical close reading that fuels OUR program in the Department of Language and Literature.

Studying literature is a way of studying history, politics, economics, and personal and national identity through the stories people tell. When you read literature, you learn not only what happened in the world, but also how people were persuaded to accept it and how they sometimes pushed back against it.

Why is literary analysis important? Because in a world flooded with information, misinformation, and AI hallucinations, the skill to read closely and think deeply is rare and valuable. And this is the reason a BA in English is valuable. In every literary analysis you complete in our classes, you will learn how to dig deeply for new ideas, take a position, back it with evidence, and respond to counterarguments. These skills are the core of careers in law, politics, economics, journalism, marketing, business, research, and so many more. Employers rank clear writing and critical thinking among the top skills they want most. Our Bachelor of Arts in English program can put you on a path to real-world success in virtually any career you choose.

Kudos to Dr. Chapman for his fine work. Read about his article in *American Literature*, vol. 98, no. 3, Sep. 2026, pp. 359–385, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-12613061>.



American Literature

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TAKE A BREAK IN A WEST VIRGINIA WILDERNESS AREA

Photos contributed by Dr. Catherine Kong, Assistant Professor of English

With the 3-day weekend coming up (October 9 is Fall Recess), consider a trip east to some spectacular wilderness areas.

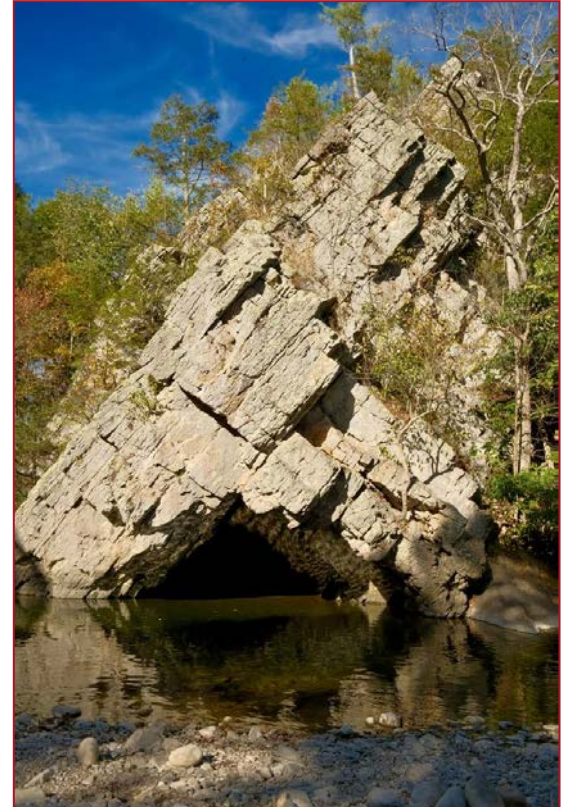
Seneca Rocks (about 115 miles, 2½ hours, from Glenville)

A dramatic fin of Tuscarora quartzite rising 900 feet above the North Fork River. Hike to the overlook, or watch climbers tackle a south peak reachable only by technical rock climbing.



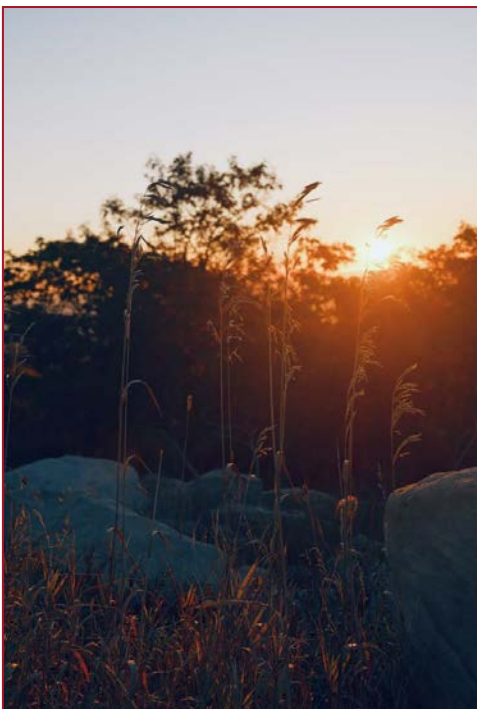
Spruce Knob (about 130 miles, 3 hours from Glenville)

At 4,863 feet, it's the highest point in West Virginia. A short half-mile walk from the parking area brings you to an observation tower with 360-degree views.



Dolly Sods Wilderness (about 135 miles, 3 hours from Glenville)

Windswept plains, blueberry heaths, and wind-sculpted spruce. Grab your camera and go!





Dept. of Language
& Literature



HALLOWEEN Writing and Art Contest

Show off your spooky side with creative writing or art. Share your paranormal experiences or imagine something scary.

- Write a short story or mini-essay (up to 1,000 words)
- Write a poem (up to 2 typed pages)
- Take a creepy photo or create some uncanny artwork

AI writing / AI artwork will NOT be accepted!

Your work will be displayed in and around the Department of Language & Literature's office on the third floor of the Harry B. Heflin Admin Building.

DEADLINE 4:00 PM ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

Drop off your work with anyone in the department suite
(include your name & email address) OR email it to

melody.wise@glenville.edu

OR melissa.gish@glenville.edu

Prizes will be Awarded!