**Guidelines for ‘Thinking in Stories’ Submissions.**

**Heading:** Name of book, author’s name, place of publication, publisher, year of publication.

**Length limits:** 500 to 1000 words.

**The general scope of Thinking in Stories.** The original column was established to help readers, parents, and teachers find stories that provoke and support independent and exploratory thinking, with particular emphasis on the thinking of children and young adults. So, many good books and all bad books should be discussed elsewhere. The appropriate target audience for books discussed here is somewhat slippery: normally, we want to feature books found in the children’s or young adult’s section of the library. There might be exceptions: a book for adults with a child or young adult character might be a good candidate for a review, especially if it could be plausibly discussed in a school or home setting. (*The Housekeeper and the Professor* by Yoko Ogawacontains a fine, provocative introduction to number theory and to mathematics in general. One hopes that children will encounter it, though it may not be placed in their section of the library. More controversial would be Muriel Barbery’s *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*; this contains some fine passages about what it means to be a thoughtful person, and some great meditations, within a general account of a suicide-decision that may be too disturbing for some audiences.)

**What to include.** There are obvious things to say: a sketch of the story (with care to avoid spoilers unless that is necessary to the discussion) and some ideas about lines of thought begun in the story that might be continued by readers or by groups in a discussion. It is especially helpful to report on discussions one has had, starting from this book: what did the book prompt people to think about. It *might* be useful to say something about the place of the book in the work of the author and/or in relation to other books that are like it, though this is not necessary, and one should not feel that one needs deep expertise in order to review a book for this website. One should however do “due diligence.” Look up the author, look up some reviews, check what else this person has written. Whether any of that research makes it into the review depends on whether it helps a reader decide about reading this book. One doesn’t need to fight with other reviewers, or argue about how good a book is. That sort of discussion detracts from the main purpose of the website: to present books as something to think along with, helping adults to engage thoughtfully with children and young adults.

**Some particularly helpful information.** Teachers and parents should know if there is some widespread public objection to a book – or features that might work as triggers for traumatic memories. In *The Higher Power of Lucky*, Susan Patron’s use of the word “scrotum” was criticized as inappropriate for the target audience. Someone reading the book aloud would at least want to know that that word was there. More generally, some classic books have been criticized for racial or gender stereotypes; one should mention such controversies, however one feels about their critical power. Also, if possible, say where to find the book, and, in particular, point to any sources of free access to the full text. For example, many of Margaret Wise Brown’s picture books are easily available for immediate reading in the Open Library of the Internet Archive. The Internet Archive is a repository of scanned books; it collects out-of-copyright materials, and it offers some books which are still under copyright for digital borrowing. Such access information is particularly valuable for parents, students, and teachers with limited library resources and small budgets for book purchases.

**Style.** Gareth B. Matthews, who initiated “Thinking in Stories” as a regular column for *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* in 1979, set a standard for clear, uncluttered, accessible prose, and the current editors want to maintain that standard on the website. Pieces should be proofread, and any secondary sources should be identified well enough that anyone interested can find them. In general, brief quotes from reviewed books help readers decide about books; quotes from secondary sources generally clutter a short piece. All the norms about use of other people’s work apply also to this enterprise.

**Other genres.** Clearly, movies and television series provoke thought, and one might want to explore those possibilities. The initial idea of the column was to explore resources that might be presented and talked about in a classroom or a bedtime story hour. It is hard, but not impossible, to make visual media work in this way, as a center for discussion, especially if one excerpts a particular scene or episode. The community committed to provoking good thinking in schools and families will have to develop some ways of talking about thought-provoking media. Reviewers are welcome to work in this area; it is likely best to query before submitting, just to work out a mutually acceptable plan.

**Longer pieces.** Articles devoted to an author or theme – for example, a piece about Margaret Wise Brown’s work or about single children’s books by authors famous for other accomplishments – could make a substantial contribution to the website. Such pieces should stay around 3000 words. We would like to make pieces of this sort peer-reviewed publications with a very fast turnaround time. For that reason, please query in advance, giving a sketch of the piece and a projected submission date, so that we can have reviewers ready to respond quickly to submissions.

**Questions** should be addressed to the editor, Peter Shea, at [shea0017@umn.edu](mailto:shea0017@umn.edu) . These guidelines are subject to revision as we all learn more about this venture, and as new issues arise.