

Sarah Blackwood, PhD
English, Dyson College of Arts and Sciences

Women's Work: Writing for Children at Mid-Century, 1960-1980

Women's Work tells the story of the intersecting professional and personal lives of renowned children's book editors Ursula Nordstrom and Susan Hirschman, and a selection of the vanguard authors they worked alongside—Louise Fitzhugh (*Harriet the Spy*), Peggy Parish (the Amelia Bedelia books), Virginia Hamilton (*M.C. Higgins the Great*), and June Jordan (*His Own Where* / *Voice of the Children*). Employed within one of the era's "mothering professions," these writers and editors promoted new values about women and children while living the gendered and raced realities of the era's vexed feminist revolution. The literary milieu of children's books comprises a central, yet underrecognized, story about women's (creative) work in the mid-twentieth-century U.S. Yet there is no biography or cultural history that examines the women's movement and mid-century children's book publishing together. Drawing on extensive interviews and archival research, this book parses these women's relationships and creative achievements/failures, while reckoning with the promises and flaws of mid-20th-century feminism.