

Low-Residency MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults faculty information:

## Gary Schmidt

### **Biography:**

He just turned past the half-century mark, so he's suffering all sorts of crises of which he isn't even aware. He began writing seriously about twenty years or so ago, and has tried to have two streams of work: one, novels and some slight non-fiction for young readers, and two, academic books about children's literature and the historical literature of early New England. He teaches at Calvin College as well as Hamline University, and at the former he holds forth on children's literature, medieval literature, and creative writing. He lives on an 1830's farm in Alto, Michigan—a town you won't find on many maps—and writes in an outbuilding there.

### **I Am Happy to Work with Students in the Following Genres/Areas:**

Fiction of Contemporary Realism

Historical Fiction

Non-fiction

### **Other Things to Know About Me as an Advisor:**

I tend to over-edit, and I think this puts some folks into shock. But most of these are "things to think about," and not demands.

I'm not fast, but I am thorough.

I tend to focus on the smaller pieces that make up the whole, since that is where I think the story really can blossom. Thus I am very concerned with voice, and with narratorial choices, and with the use of seemingly slight detail that can make the difference between a flat character and a fascinating character, and with setting that contributes rather than setting as a mere stage.

On critical work, I want to see engagement. Criticism by itself isn't very interesting, but taken as part of a larger critical and analytical discussion, it can be fantastically important. So I want to push folks into seeing their critical work as an entry into a conversation that is already going on.

I tend to want to take things electronically—which is generally against all of my principles, but there it is. I'll print it off on my end, and send you back a letter and the edited MS.

### **Books of Mine I Recommend That You Read:**

I suppose *Trouble* or *The Wednesday Wars* or *First Boy* or something along those lines. The diehards might want to try *A Passionate Usefulness: the Life and Literary Labors of Hannah Adams*--but you really have to be a diehard.