



**Where is the Critical in Literacy?  
Tracing performances of literature reading, readers and  
non-readers in educational practice**

av

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**Akademisk avhandling**

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i pedagogik,  
som kommer att försvaras offentligt  
fredagen den 18 januari 2019 kl. 13.15,  
Hörsal F, Örebro universitet

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## Abstract

Elin Sundström Sjödin (2019): *Where is the critical in literacy? Tracing performances of literature reading, readers and non-readers in educational practice.*

Örebro Studies in Education 59 and Örebro Studies in Educational Sciences with an Emphasis on Didactics 18.

In many instances in society, educational and other, literature reading is emphasised as something that develops persons in positive ways. The present thesis explores this claim in relation to literature reading in educational practices. By tracing how values and critical aspects of reading are enacted, the purpose is both to problematize taken-for-granted truth claims about literature reading and to develop an understanding of the elements involved when reading, readers and critical aspects of reading are created. The studies focus on different educational practices; a teacher's narrative about grading, information brochures about reading to children and the policy and practice of a reading project at special residential homes for detained youth in Sweden. In these practices, the thesis explores where and when the critical takes place, in what constellations and with what consequences. The thesis draws on critical literacy, where reading is regarded as taking action and having self-empowering potential. However, with help of a pragmatic and material semiotic approach, the investigations steps away from what is taken for granted about reading and about what *critical* means, and instead reading, readers and the critical are analysed as transactional effects.

The studies show how students can be placed at risk by rationales for reading literature that construct and establish them as lacking of culture or as literacy inadequate. The thesis further shows that the critical in literacy can be ambivalent as well as multiple, and it can be enacted by both human, discursive and material actors.

*Keywords:* Literary Didactics, Literature, Critical literacy, Critical space, Actor-network theory, Special residential homes.

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