

For Critical Insights volume under contract: Literary Sidekicks

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: June 23, 2025

We seek submissions for a Critical Insights volume, under contract with Salem Press, exploring the evolving role of sidekicks across literary and popular culture. From Sancho Panza and Don Quixote to Robin and Batman; Queequeg and Ishmael to Patrick and SpongeBob; John Watson and Sherlock Holmes to Ethel and Lucy; Jim and Huck to Goose and Maverick—sidekicks have often served as more than mere comic relief or supporting characters. They shape plot, provide emotional resonance, sharpen protagonists' identities, and offer subversive alternatives to mainstream narratives. Some of the sidekicks far outshine their counterparts.

This volume invites essays that explore the cultural, ideological, and literary value of the sidekick across time periods, genres, and media. What does it mean to be a "sidekick," and how have secondary characters become central to understanding cultural values, heroism, and identity? Contributors are encouraged to consider how sidekicks have historically functioned in relationship to race, gender, class, ability, and/or national identity, as well as how these characters have adapted across contemporary media landscapes.

Submissions should be representative of current critical discourse while remaining accessible to high school and undergraduate audiences. Particularly welcome are essays that foreground close readings, pedagogical relevance, and creative approaches to thinking with and about sidekicks. Bring those characters to life so readers of this volume will fall in love with those characters the way readers have done in the past.

Submissions should be tailored to one of the following categories:

- **CRITICAL READING** essays focused on how readers today might interpret or respond to sidekick figures in literature, film, or television;
- **CRITICAL LENS** essays that apply a specific theoretical approach to the role of sidekicks in a specific text;
- **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS** essays that juxtapose sidekick roles across two to three texts;
- **COMPREHENSIVE** essays exploring cultural, critical, and contexts of sidekicks in general;
- **HISTORICAL CONTEXT** essays that explore how the sidekick archetype evolved through particular literary traditions, cultural moments, or media transformations;
- **CRITICAL RECEPTION** essays that trace the evolving reception of famous sidekick figures or iconic duos.

By June 23, 2025, please submit a 250–350-word abstract, a 75-word biographical statement (including your academic affiliation, if any), and full contact information (BOTH summer and fall) to the acquiring editor, Dr. Laura Nicosia: lauranicosia@gmail.com.

Completed essays of approximately 5000 words (inclusive of Works Cited) will be due by August 1, 2025.

Honoraria will be awarded by the publisher to contributors after publication.