



Symbolism in child literature: State of Art Article

Nazanin Ilchi

Department of Language and Literature, Islamic Azad University of Damavand, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

There is no single or widely used definition of children's literature. The international companion encyclopedia of children's literature notes that "the boundaries of genre are not fixed but blurred".

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Introduction

There is no single or widely used definition of children's literature. The international companion encyclopedia of children's literature notes that "the boundaries of genre are not fixed but blurred". Sometimes no agreement can be reached about whether a given work is best categorized as literature for adults or children.

It was only in 18th century, with the development of the concept of childhood that a separate genre of children's literature began to emerge, with its own divisions, expectations and canon.

French historian Philippe Aries argues in his book *centuries of childhood* that children in the past were not considered as greatly different from adults and were not given different treatment, as evidence for this position he notes that apart from instructional texts written by Clerics, there was a lack of any genuine literature aimed specifically at children before 18th century. Pre-modern children's literature tended to be of a didactic and moralistic nature, with the purpose of conveying conducted, educational and religious lessons.

Here we can consider all books written for children to be literature, the judgment and evaluation of quality of written texts for the children is an individual perception.

Some professors think that children's literature doesn't have a history and actually it began in 1865 when Charles Dodgson (under the penname of Lewis Carroll) wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It was the first novel written especially for children that was purely entertaining not instructional purpose. The book has a dream like quality. Alice follows a white rabbit down a rabbit hole and finds herself in fantasy land where animals speak, objects come alive and people change sizes.

Before the publication of Alice children listened to and enjoyed folklore. After the development of the printing press in the late 1400s, children were able to read folk literature. The earliest books written for children were entirely religious, instructional or for the improvement of their morals and manners, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, however an English publisher named John Newbery

published books for children to enjoy. One such book, (*The history of little goody two shoes* (Newberry, 1765) is considered the first novel written especially for children. Newbery's books were also highly moralistic but at least some one had recognized that children needed to be entertained as well as indoctrinated. Young children enjoyed these books, because there was little else for them to read. What made "Alice Adventures" unique for its time was that it was really made purely for enjoyment. Even today, a common criticism of children's literature is that too many books are moralistic, with implicit lessons built in.

At the end of this chapter you can find the partial list of books considered children's classics – not because they were all written for children, but because the children of nineteenth century read and treasured them.

The development of illustrated books for children is also an interesting story. Children's books were usually illustrated with crude woodcuts, if at all, until sir John Tenniel illustrated Alice in pen and ink in 1865. Before Renaissance, society viewed children as miniature, functioning adults. No separate forms of entertainment for children existed. After the Renaissance, it became feasible from economic and mechanical point of views to increase the production of educational materials.

In result, educational materials specifically targeting children could be produced and the majority of children's literature was produced during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

a -1- Antiquity and the middle ages

Every culture has its own mythology, unique fables and other traditional stories that are told for instruction and entertainment, early folk – type tales included the *Panchatantra* from India which was composed about 200 AD and maybe "The world's oldest collection of stories for children".

Oral stories that would have been enjoyed by children include the tale of *Asurik Tree*, which dates back at least 3000 years in Persia.

In imperial China children attended public events with their parents and listened to the complicated tales of

professional story tellers. In plays at festivals with elaborated costumes, acrobatics and martial arts attracted children's interest. Story telling reached its peak during the song dynasty in China from 960 – 1279. It was the traditional literature used for instruction until 20th century.

Greek and Roman children would have enjoyed listening to stories such as *Odyssey*, written by Homer, and *Aesop's Fables* by Aesop.

a-2-Early modern Europe

During the 17th century, the concept of childhood began to emerge in Europe. Adults saw children as separate beings innocent and in need of protection and training by adults around them.

In 1690 John Locke developed his theory of the *tabula rasa*. Its doctrine was that child was born by a blank mind and it was the duty of parents to imbue the child with correct notions.

Locke emphasized the importance of providing children with "*easy pleasant books*" to develop their minds.

Another influence of creation of new attitudes came from puritanism insisting the importance of individual salvation. The importance of spiritual welfare of their children resulted in "*good godly books*".

Horn books also appeared in England during this time, teaching children basic information such as the alphabet and the Lord's Prayer.

These were brought from England to American colonies.

In 1634, the *Pentamerone books* from Italy became the first major published collection of European folk tales.

Charles Perrault published his first collection of fairy tales in France in 1692, the first Danish children's book was *The Child's Mirror* by Neil Bredal in 1568. Sweden published fables and a children's magazine by 1766.

In Italy Giovanni Francesco Straparola released *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* in 1550s, containing 75 separate stories.

Russia's earliest children's books, appeared in the late 16th century. An early example is *ABC - book*, published by Ivan Fyodorov in 1571. The first picture book in Russia appeared in 1694.

a-3 - Origins of modern genre

Many thousands of good children's books are available from libraries, stories and book clubs, so people often do not know how to begin learning about literature. Literature is best studied if it is organized into categories called genres. Genres are grouping of books into similar style, form or content, the following is an outline of a common organization:

• a-3-1- literary genre of children's literature

Early childhood books: books written for children birth through age 6.

Concept: picture books that present numerous examples of a particular concept, such as the common colors.

Alphabet: a concept book that presents letters of the alphabet.

Counting: a concept book that present the counting numbers.

General: concept books that present other common concepts such as colors and opposites.

Pattern books: predictable books that contain repetitive words, phrases, questions, or structure.

Wordless books: books in which the story is revealed through a sequence of illustrations with no or very few words.

Traditional literature: stories, songs, and rhymes with unknown authorship that were passed down orally through generations.

Myths: traditional religious stories that provide explanations for natural phenomena, usually containing deities as characters.

Fables: very brief traditional stories that teach a lesson about behavior, usually with animal characters.

Ballads: traditional stories that were sung as narrative poems.

Legends: traditional stories that combine history and myth, based in part on real people or historical events (e.g., Joan of Arc).

Tall tales: exaggerated stories with gigantic, extravagant, and flamboyant characters (e.g., Paul Bunyan).

Fairy tales: traditional stories written for entertainment usually with magic and fantastical characters.

Traditional rhymes: traditional verses intended for very young children.

Fiction: literary works designed to entertain, the content being produced by the imagination of an identifiable authors.

Fantasy: fiction story with highly fanciful or supernatural elements that would be impossible in real life.

Animal fantasy: fantasy in which the main characters are anthropomorphic animals that display human characteristics.

Contemporary realistic fiction: fictional story set in modern times with events that could possibly occur.

Historical fiction: realistic story in a real world setting in the historical past with events that are partly historical but largely imaginative.

Biography and autobiography: nonfiction works describing the life (or part of the life) of a real individual.

Informational books: trade books with the primary purpose of informing the reader by providing an in- depth explanation of factual material.

Poetry and verse: verse in which word images are selected and expressed to create strong, often beautiful, impression.

The modern children's books emerged in mind 18th century England. *A little pretty Pocket – book* published by John Newbery is widely considered the first modern children's book in 1744, containing a mixture of rhymes, picture stories and games for pleasure. The book was child – sized and brightly colored. Newbery's genius was in developing fairy new product category, children's books, Jean Jacques Rousseau was another philosopher that influenced the development of children's literature. He argued that children should be allowed to develop naturally and joyously. Rousseau's ideas in Germany caused a movement reforming child education and literature.

In the early 19th century, Danish author Hans Christian Andersen traveled through Europe and gathered many well-known fairy tales

a-4 - Golden age

The shift to a modern genre of children's literature happened in mid 19th century. More humorous and child – oriented books, targeting the child's imagination were published. Lewis carol's fantasy, *Alice's adventures in wonder land*, in England change the writing style for children to an imaginative one, and it opened a golden age for child literature in England and Europe. In 1883, Carol

Colloid wrote the first Italian fantasy novel, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, which was translated many times.

In 1880s *The Treasure Island* by Stevenson was very popular. In the same years in Switzerland Johanna Spyri published *Heidi* in U.S. Louise May Alcott published *Little Women*. Mark Twain released *Tom Sawyer* in 1876.

Enlightenment and Romantic philosophy both had an important impression on further developments of children's literature as a unique burgeoning genre, and throughout 19th century, children's literature became increasingly less didactic in nature and more going towards child imagination. The advances in printing also made it possible to mass produce beautifully detailed picture illustrating books.

With the influx of immigration to the United States, several talented authors and illustrators from Europe contributed to the growth of children's literature on the other side of all antics they settled in new lands, so the markets and demand for children's books increased.

Jousen and Vloebergs note about the link between the ideology and children's literature. The child literature of that time was enforcing social norms and social views.

For example the literature of that time portrayed brave, heroic men and the boys who loved mostly quiet, virtuous girls, then the British children's literature featured adventures in distant, dangerous lands, whereas American children's literature told "Rags To Rich" stories where the hero is able to defeat economic obstacles and finally find success.

Actually American and British literature of that time reinforce socio-political reality and ideals.

Related to the motifs taken from ideology and immigration, the so-called "American dream" the twentieth century saw the development of fantasy as a popular genre for children.

Childhood became an increasingly protected sphere of life, and some subjects like "fear" lost its educating force.

Some social commentators have proved some links between the birth of fantasy for children and responses to the cold war and to the growing of drug culture in the United States. Similarly, the civil rights movements in the 1960s forced children literature authors to replace the notions of race, gender, and social narratives in their works.

Authors began to incorporate socio-political reality into their works and identify with a new generation of diverse readers.

In "Charlotte Hock's Children's Literature" twentieth children's literature is summarized as follows:

"just as adult literature mirrored the disillusionment of depression, wars and materialism by becoming more sensationalist, and psychological children's literature became more frank and honest, portaging situations like war, drugs, divorce, abortion, sex, and homosexuality no long were children protected by stories of happy families rather, it was felt that children would develop behaviors coping with problems that they read about others".

At the end of this chapter you can find the list of the written works dated products in its journey, from the past up to modernism.

a-5- Recent national traditions

5 – a -China

The development of children's literature in its early stages in China was similar to that of other countries. It began with the oral literature handed down from one generation to another, since China has a long history, its

literature heritage is very rich, Huang Qing Yun surveyed about China's Fables and says that Fables in China were recorded in "The spring and autumn period" of 770 – 470 B.C. Many fables were told by students and teachers and politicians during that period and they are widely known in China.

But until the 1920s the children's literature did not exist as a separate form. There was a long feudal period and the children were regarded as possessions of adults and they had to learn the teachings of doctrines of Confucius.

The Chinese revolution of 1911 and the May 4th movement in 1914, brought political and social and cultural change. Consequently children's literature was born in that period. There was a wave of democracy, science, technology conducted by enlightened thinkers.

Previous to this time, all books for children had been written in classical Chinese, which was different from spoken language and difficult to understand. Chinese first modern publishing firm established several children's magazines including youth magazine, educational pictures for children. The Chinese children's literature was guarded by two great writers, Lu Xun and Mao Dun. "Save The Children" was the famous book of Lu Xun. He wrote articles commenting on children's books, Mao Dun did writing, translating and editing children's books.

The fairy tale collection of Yeh Shengtao the Scarecrow was published in 1923. Lu Xun called this book the foundation of Chinese children's literature. The Scarecrow symbolized the position of intellectuals of that period.

"The stone statue of the ancient hero" in 1931 is a satire by a rich imagination and keenness of observation. Another big change was made by Bin Xin, the famous woman writer, "letters to young readers" with an emotional style inspire the love between mother and child, friendship at home and abroad.

In 1990, general "Anthology of Modern Children's Literature of China", a fifteen-volume anthology of children's literature since 1920s, was released.

5 – b -India

Kemal Sheoran talks about contemporary children's literature in India. He says that India is a country of many contradictions. In a country where thousands of children are still illiterate, to speak about children's literature as a specialized field is far-fetched.

But we can say that India has the greatest living oral narrative tradition in the world. The young and growing children fulfill their need of stories by hearing them orally.

One level of children's literature in India is the traditional, oral narratives. On the other hand there is modern printed children's literature with a less creative style.

On another level there is language. The children's literature in English which is the medium instruction in almost every major city in India displays western characteristics in style, subject, and treatment. Indian folklore is rich and imaginative and remains the most interesting source for children's literature.

Panchatatra were written in Sanskrit in 200B.C. Animal fables are predominate sources. The tales of animal's wisdom, foolishness are peculiar to India. They find quail clever, crow intelligent, jackal smart, tiger stupid, owl an ill omen. The snake not dangerous, Indian fable folklore is a mixture of tradition and pure fantasy.

5 – c -Russia

Dr. Ben Hellman has written a book, including a survey of literature in Russia for children and young people in Soviet Union from 1918 up to the end of the 1980s.

Only a few months after the October revolution. The first demands were made that Children's literature should be put in service of communist ideology.

New publishing houses and journals had to be founded to replace the old bourgeois ones. Maksim Gorky played an important role in creating a new children's literature. He brought a realistic literature and also he was the main editor of first soviet children's journal.

Raduga (rainbow) published its first books in 1923 and it was the beginning of a decade called golden age of soviet Russian children's literature.

A large group of young Leningrad writers gathered around Raduga, in the "studio for children's literature". The communist party strengthened its hold on children's and youth culture. The greatest names in poetry were Korn Chukovsky and Samuel Marshok. Fantasy and humor and a respect for special characteristics of children were dominant topic in these writers.

In prose, works were about the difficult life of Russian children before revolution. A social problem that was strongly reflected in the literature of twenties and thirties was the crowd of wild, homeless, poor children all over Russia. Boris Ztkov, Vitalu Biank, M. Ilyin were the writers of these stories, Alexander Grin, Yury Olesha wrote fairy tales and science fiction. In thirties there was a violent debate started about whether the fantasy literature could be accepted in a socialist society.

Again Maksim Gorky organized a writers association in which children's literature had its own basic section. At the first congress of Soviet Union writers, Marshak spoke for children's literature and socialist realism which was made obligatory method of creative work.

The children were given their own hero in the form of Pavel Morozov. A boy who sacrifice his life in the first fight against enemies of collectivization. The novels of Aleksey Tolstoy Alexander Volkov had something in common, it was the adaptation of foreign literature and a fact talking about the isolation of children's literature in Soviet Union.

In second world war writers participated in the war. The decade after the war was the darkest in the history of soviet Russian literature. The death of Stalin in 1953 and the criticism of Stalinism had a positive influence on children's literature." The thaw" created a new generation of writers. Boris Zakhoder, Roman Sel, Gernik Sapgir and others gathered around short-lived children's publishing house. Folklores and children's rhymes in twenties were released.

Dubo wrote about conflicts of teenagers in family, school, work, orphan hood, crime. Anatoly Aleksin, Yory Yakovlev wrote about psychological prose. Novels for girls was Lyubov Voronkova works, fantasy and fairy tales of Nikolay Nosov, science fiction of Arkady Strugatsky were the works of a movement. Towards the end of the sixties again a change accrued in the cultural life of Soviet Union.

A new period began in the middle of eighties, when Mikhail Gorbachov became leader of the party. The first sign of a new approach is a more liberal attitude towards religion. Biblical tales for children started to appear in 1989.

The biggest name in Russian children's literature is Korney Chukovsky, his influence as a critic and translator is even felt today.

Denial Khorms respected the imagination of children and stressed on humorous and experimental.

Boris Zhitkov has a unique position in children's pose. He wrote about people at work and discussed the themes of competence, courage and a sense of responsibility.

Arkady Goydor wrote adventure stories for young people.

Lev Kassil wrote about contemporary soviet life, about teenagers, schools, sports and cultural life, traits of character are modesty unselfishness and courage.

The long list of children's books by Yury Koval includes poetry and stories about animals (1938).

5 - d -United States

One of the most famous books of American children's literature is L. Frank Baum's fantasy novel "*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*". published in 1900. Connie Epstein in international companion encyclopedia of children's literature says that "Baum by combining the English fondness for word play with the American appetite for outdoor adventure, developed on original style and form that stands alone". Baum wrote more Oz novels and other writers continued the Oz series into 21st century.

Between World War I and World War II the growth of libraries in Canada and us continued, children's reading rooms in libraries helped the creation of classic juvenile books.

In publishers weekly and in the bookman reviews of children's regularly appeared and in 1919 the first children's book week was held.

Louise Seaman Bechtel and May Masee and Alice Dalgliesh from 1919 to 1934 established children's book departments in the country.

The American library association started increasing interest in awarding Newbery medal, the first children's book award in 1922. "Little house in the big woods" by Ingalls Wilder appeared in 1932.

In 1950s there was a large growth in children's books. Charlotte Web in 1952 was written by F.B. White. In 1957 people and government started to show an increased interest in science and math, so the non-fiction books were bought by almost all families with children.

2- B - Pre – printing literature**2 – B – a -Lullaby**

I'd like to indicate lullaby as form of literature provided that we define children's literature as a tool to pass down cultural knowledge to enhance the existing knowledge to develop communication, to transfer a moral, scientific, social, political or national knowledge. The first use of a lullaby is transferring music and language as the pillars of culture. Cradle – song's purpose has always been a soothing way of teaching something to the babies, conveying love or affection. All over the world lullabies share structural similarities. Lullabies have been passed from one generation to the other orally, and they have strengthened the cultural roles and practices. Lullabies have served as cultural roles and practices. Lullabies have served as cultural symbols of a nation even before they were printed.

Dr. Jeffery Perlman chief of Newborn Medicine at New York Komansky center for children's health found that gentle music helps the infants feed and sleep better and lullabies sung in person can influence on the mind development of babies and neurological system. Federico Garcia Lorca studied lullabies and wrote about the poetic character of them, like the other elements of written

literature, lullabies are expressions of attachment, sadness/ tears and happiness/ laughter, in mind mostly, lullabies are sung in folk languages.

2 – B – b - Mythological and Archetypal approaches

Joseph Campbell defines mythology a curious phenomenon of animal behavior, his approach to mythology and its connection to art is whatever the artist likes to discover in the mysterious elements of dramatic and universal reactions of human.

The classics is the image of reality constructed by writer through archetypes of Greek and Roman Gods Goddesses.

Actually myths are primitive fictions, illusions or opinions based on false opinion. Alan W.Watts in "Myths and Ritual in Christianity" says "Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories – some no doubt fact and some fantasy which for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life".

Every people has its own mythology which is reflected in legend, folklore and ideology and myths take their shape from the cultural environments and serve cultural functions, the motifs and images that come from the cultures are called archetypes or the universal symbols that carry similar meanings for a large group of people.

The symbolic meanings are actually used in children's literature under a mask, or through the connection of some conventional meanings intended to convey to the children.

For example:

Water: creation, the son the mother of life, rebirth, purity.

Sun: creative energy, natural law wisdom, thinking.

Colors: Red: blood, sacrifice

- **Green:** growth, hope, fertility.
- **Blue:** highly positive, security.
- **Black:** death, evil, melancholy.
- **White:** light, innocence.

Serpent (snake, worm): evil, destruction.

Princess: beautiful lady, fulfillment.

The wise old man: knowledge, moral qualities, help.

Garden: unspoiled beauty, innocence.

Hero: savior, impossible tasks, battle with monsters, overcome obstacles, solve unanswerable riddles.

All these examples used in different types in children's literature are challenging the origins of magic, ritual and myth.

Most myths talk about heroic journey that heroes leave home and travel to the world of supernatural, start a battle with light and dark and fight monsters, these themes are actually the basic foods of children's fantasy world.

The famous "Star Wars" by Henry Gilroy. When creating "star wars" George Lucas was influenced by Joseph Campbell an expert in mythology.

We have to stick to the fact that fantasy stories can be traced back to the myths and legends of different cultures, they were the oral story telling in the contents miracles existed.

Carol Harts, "children literature Newsletter" has good articles about Greek and Roman mythology" featuring the picture book of Jane Yobn's "Wings", She surveys and speculates not only on the book but also the paintings and fine arts with mythological subjects.

I'd like here to mention some of mythological archetypes, commonly found in literature.

- The Anthromorphic animal: commonly seen in children's tales, the human like animal is used to explain the human

weaknesses and strengths, specific animals are chosen for their human like qualities, therefore owls are wise, foxes are wily, chickens are fearful, and wolves are vanerous. Keep in mind that animal symbolisms change from culture to culture.

- The Child this common figure is a naïf who will be either victim to his naiveté of will. It is commonly used in fairy tales as a symbol of innocence and vulnerability.

- The Comedic hero: usually a male character is often young, naïve, handsome and likable who struggles against on enemy to achieve on unrealistic, pleasing victory.

- The Damsel in distress: usually females, young attractive in a situation of danger from which she must be rescued and the rescue is almost from a nameless character often a prince.

- The Devil: a live manifestation of evil a character with common desires of riches fame of special knowledge (Satan, Lucifer, old scratch)

- The Hero: the most used archetype is a character, usually male, who is of low status from birth or low status because a higher birth rate was taken from him. He is in tragic loss of parents (orphan) rejected by parents, suspicious or magical parents.

- The Talisman: an object with magical power that can be given to the carrier of the object.

2- c- intellectual, affective, social dimensions of children's development

C – a- Understanding children

Children through the continuous process of learning, in order to function successfully in society must learn to know themselves and achieve self-identity, their understanding abilities and motor-skills grow continually. At different ages children experience different needs, different value systems and different reading interests.

An understanding of children's needs, their psychological crisis, their moral and social development will help the adults, responsible for planning educational experiences, to make child literature a meaningful part of children's lives.

Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Albert Bandura have theorized the development of children.

Maslow's great concern was for humanistic education and self – actualization. Erikson presented theories of individual identity. Piaget has written a lot about child's cognitive development .Kohlberg theorized the increasing maturity of moral development and Bandura surveyed the social models influence on children. Maslow identified five levels of human needs:

a-1- Children's need for physical well – being

A child's physical security begins in mother's or father's arm, eating and sleeping gives a sense o comfort and well – being. The material (food-clothing) satisfaction becomes a symbol of security.

The old fairy tales were told by people who did not have enough food to eat or clothing to keep them warm, so the tales are full of rich clothes, huge palaces with burning bright fires and festivals of foods. All are symbols of comfort and security. Burnett's Sara Crew can be an example of seeking security.

a-2 - Children's need to love and to be loved

This is a profound need. A child who feels out of favor or rejected, may show an excessive love to an abnormal or unwanted thing. The children's sense of being loved develop from family patterns. A child may found an embodiment of

his own father in Joseph's Onion's John, or Alcott she may recognize her own mother in little women by Lewis.

"A heart to the hawks" by Don Noser is an example of a boy's love for a wild creature. The romances for young people will satisfy their love desires.

Stories about wild animals deferring their mate, are very interesting.

A flood of novels of romance on a glass hill are more than just abstract symbols and stereotyped and predictable. They show happiness as well as disappointments and the ways to master the problems through family affection, warm friendships and love to opposite sex.

a-3- Children's need to belong

The need to belong means being accepted member of a group. It is a sign of growing up. The children can identify with school, friends with city and county.

Eve Bunting's "Jumping the Nail" reflects this expanding feeling of the group. The stories like Carolyn Haywood, Charlotte Zolotto represent happy group experiences. But there are stories about children that are trying hard to be liked by the people around. Jessica in Marilyn's "A secret friend" is a good example. In Mildred Taylor's "Roll of thunder" black people face prejudice.

We can recognize children's need to achieve competence and children's need to know in the children's stories revealed like Eleanore Estes's "the hundred dresses" and Toro yashima's "crow boy".

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