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**Research Article**

# Children's Literature to Promote Students' Global Development and Wellbeing

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**Abstract:**

Young people benefited from the transmission of stories from one generation to the next because of the values, beliefs, imagination, and creativity they were exposed to. Children's literature is a prime example of "edutainment," or educational content that also serves to amuse. In this research, we conducted a literature analysis to analyze the pedagogical, didactic, and psychological/therapeutic aspects of children's literature to better understand its potential benefits for students' overall growth and development. From a teaching standpoint, stories teach youngsters important lessons. Choosing the right storybooks may be a great educational tool for helping kids develop their language skills and fostering an inclusive and supportive classroom community. It is not only parents who may benefit from the therapeutic use of children's literature (bibliotherapy) in the treatment of mental health issues including anxiety and depression. Finally, health topics in storybooks and online/digital tales may be a powerful tool in the fight to get kids to live healthier lives. Including children's literature and storytelling in the classroom has the potential to improve kids' health and development on a worldwide scale.

**Key words:** Children, Literature, Storytelling, Fairytales, Health, Wellbeing, School

## Introduction

There is a lengthy history of children's literature in Britain, dating all the way back to the founding of the country. People in Britain claim that the tradition of writing poetry for children, which began with the collection of nursery rhymes known as "Mother Goose" (first published in England by John Newbury in 1791), extends back to before the Norman invasion. However, there was no such thing as children's literature before 1800. There are a few British books for kids that teach them certain skills or provide background information, and there are also Puritanical tracts that might aid in moral development. Only ABC books and children's primers from this time period have survived to the present day. These books vary in style and illustration quality from the darkly Puritanistic New England Primer (1687-1690) to the brightly drawn modern versions of "The Childe's New Plaything" (1742).

Many children of the 18th and 19th centuries read translated fables, fairy-tales, popular ballads, and philosophical and satirical allegories like John Bunyan's "The

Pilgrim's Progress" (1678), Daniel Defoe's "The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" (1719), and Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" (1726). However, these works were not written for them, and children only mistook them

The two most influential literary traditions that gave rise to British children's literature were instructional and moralistic literature and folk stories and ballads. But the movement didn't get going until the beginning of the XVIII century, when a new premise was formulated: education should be fun as well as informative. John Newberry's "A Little Pretty Pocket Book" (1744) was the most widely read British children's book at the time. Children's literature expanded beyond strictly moralistic works to include specially adapted versions of "grown-up" classics such as "Tales from Shakespeare" (1807) by Charles and Mary Lamb, "Robinson Crusoe," and "Gulliver Travels" by Jonathan Swift, as well as folk tales and ballads in translations by Charles Perrot, the Grimm brothers (1823), and, beginning in the second half of the XIX century, Hans Christian Andersen.

Storytelling, whether by reading aloud or listening to others tell stories, is a powerful cultural activity that may inspire and equip the next generation.3 Since culture plays such an important role in education, tales become an invaluable resource for teachers from the pedagogical, psychological/therapeutic, and cultural points of view.

When opposed to more theoretical or abstract concepts, storybooks (or digital stories) are more accessible to all children. Because of this, they have the potential to become useful tools for mapping reality and disseminating health information, particularly to the most marginalized populations.

**Literature Review**

Freeman, N.K., Feeney, S. & Moravcik, E. (2011), Reading children's books aloud to their adult pupils is a common practice among early childhood teacher educators. Some teachers, especially those who don't specialize in early education, may see read-alouds as a frivolous use of valuable class time. College students can benefit from reading quality children's literature because it can improve their classroom experiences, help them learn the material, foster personal development and self-understanding, deepen their appreciation for children's literature, and make it easier for them to incorporate stories into their own lessons. A child's perspective is often reflected in children's literature. They may provide light on children and families in the past or in other cultures. Furthermore, they may open up discussions on delicate or emotive topics and lead to the discovery of universal truths. Books are listed together with their proposed applications.

Catherine Wilkinson and Nicky Hirst (2021), A more critical praxis with young children, families, communities, and college students is inspiring an emphasis on early childhood education for sustainability in children's literature. This article presents the findings of a qualitative pedagogical study conducted as part of an introductory course in the Early Childhood Studies major at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), UK. In this study, students used Book Creator to develop digital books for children that addressed one or more of the SDGs. The project's main goal was to investigate how students' participation in cultural creation is bolstered by the process of writing children's books with the intention of promoting sustainable early childhood education. In this research, we examine the students' electronic books and the thinking behind their writing choices. The results of the research showed that the student-authors'

various conceptions of children, awareness of the educational objective, and methods of learning were all shown in their respective storybook creations. These results add to the ongoing discussions about the role of students as writers and the sustainability of children's books.

Kerry Mallan (2017), The genre of children's literature remains alive and well, providing readers with a wide variety of opportunities for entertainment, introspection, and emotional investment. This article contends that its link with education dates back centuries, but that it persists today in ways that are both similar to and distinct from its earliest manifestations. Children's literature is ironic in that it serves children yet is supported by adults. However, education relies on this give-and-take between teacher and student. This discussion, drawing on the work of academics and children's books from a variety of countries (including Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States), outlines some of the many ways in which children's literature and the research it inspires can be a fruitful and valuable asset to education. This is because children's literature uses imaginative storytelling as a means of bringing the world into the classroom and taking the classroom out into the world.

Yoon, B. (2022), In today's interconnected world, children's books are increasingly important tools for delivering global education. But there is less academic inquiry into the ways in which children's books portray international viewpoints. This research closes that knowledge gap by analyzing American picture books for kids that were produced between 2010 and 2016. The results reveal that the picture books include many crucial aspects of international education. However, the distribution of subject matter and literary style is uneven. Transnational narrative lines on how individuals as world citizens link with the other people throughout the globe were weak, despite the fact that global awareness via environmental concerns was stressed through informative texts. Based on these results, educators may better prepare their students for success in today's interdependent world by covering a wider range of subject matter.

This is according to research by Curtain and Dahlberg (2019). Preschoolers are at a crucial stage in their linguistic development. They pick up new tongues quickly and are great mimics. They have trouble cooperating with others and learn best when the material being covered has some relevance to their own lives and experiences. They may have a limited attention span, but they may be patient through several rounds of the same game or activity. Small- and large-motor activities that include language development are particularly effective with preschoolers.

**Children's Literature As Narrative Tool In Education: Pedagogic Dimension**

Anxiety and Panic are Being Generated by The Impression of A Precarious Life In The Midst Of A Rising Individualism And Insensitivity to the plights of others; this crisis is not limited to the economic and financial spheres. In addition, our modern culture places a premium on scientific and technical expertise while devaluing the humanities, which have historically served as the foundation for civic instruction.

Despite the fact that educational systems throughout the globe are facing a number of issues, the classroom remains the best place to model strategies for fostering kids' all-around growth. Beyond its immediate goal, this work is crucial because it prepares the next generation to be responsible adults who can care for themselves, their communities, and the planet.

**Table 1: Main selected studies concerning pedagogic, didactic and therapeutic dimensions of children literature**

| Pedagogic Dimension | Didactic Dimension | Therapeutic Dimension |
|---|---|---|
| Lesnik-Oberstein, 1998 | Steadman & Palmer, 1997 | Bettelheim, 1991 |
| Ohler, 2006 | Moyer, 2000 | Cairney, 1984 |
| Hunt, 2000 | Banister & Ryan, 2001 | Storr, 1986 |
| Zeece PD, 2004 | Riecken & Miller, 1990 | Purves & Monson, 1984 |
| Zipes, 1996 | Batini & Giusti, 2008 | eud & Strachey, 1964 |
| Boyd et al, 2011 | Williams, 2000 | Bernays, 1979 |
| Hunt, 2006 | Daniel, 2013 | Heath et al, 2005 |
| Winnicott, 1964 | Brice, 2004 | Wyatt, 2008 |
| Nikolajeva, 1995 | Brown, 2000 | Piotrow & De Fossard, 2003 |
| Zipes, 2013 | Isbell et al, 2004 | Albert, 2010 |
| Kilpatrick et al,1994 | Mokhtar et al, 2011 | Reynolds et al, 2000 |

The cultural heritage of folktales, easily accessible both for parental and teacher use, could represent a useful tool for promoting personal growth, social cohesion, and sustainable development in the era of globalization, characterized by deep socioeconomic changes and collapse of the traditional social tissue (i.e. new forms of poverty, increase of inequalities, family mobility, etc.).

As a means of entertainment and education, stories have been recounted throughout history and continue to do so now in every culture and in a wide variety of circumstances.25 From a "culturalistic" vantage point, children's tales occupy a unique part of society and have the potential to prepare young people for adulthood by helping them come to terms with who they are as individuals and what they can offer to the world.

The field of children's literature, which has been growing rapidly in recent years with the goals of entertaining, educating, and providing new knowledge (in line with the new concept of "edutainment"), and being able to integrate the fun and adventure demanded by children (simulating the activity of free play) with the adults' objective of offering them a set of moral examples, remains a significant opportunity of presenting moral principles in an enjoyable and engaging way.

Fairytales are a significant element of children's literature because they aim to teach kids important life lessons and make them more self-aware.29 For this reason, parents have used fairytales as a form of "vaccination" against potential dangers to their children's health since long before the invention of the printing press.

## Literature and Children

There is an underlying belief shared by all the authors in this collection: that books for kids have something to teach and inspire adults. Many 'liberal humanist' professors and authors are driven by the following, as summed up by Aidan Chambers:

I consider myself a member of the demotic tradition, which holds that literature is the

property of all people at all times, should be freely and inexpensively accessible to everyone, and should be entertaining to read in addition to being stimulating, subversive, refreshing, reassuring, etc. Last but not least, I believe that literature is the finest medium through which the human imagination can be expressed and the most helpful tool for helping us understand who we are.

Whether children's books are viewed as valuable in and of themselves, or as stepping-stones to higher things (to 'adult' or 'great' literature), this faith in literature underpins much of the day-to-day teaching and thinking about children and books.

However, Chambers's statement is obviously not neutral; it incorporates some very evident (and some not-so-obvious) ideology (aspects of ideology are explored in Chapter 3), and it forces us to confront the issue of what constitutes "literature." There is no such thing as 'literary' quality or worth inherent in any arrangement of words on a page, and while oceans of ink have been spilled on the subject, it is crucial to recognize this. To paraphrase Jonathan Culler, "literature... is a speech act or textual event that elicits certain kinds of attention" (1997: 27) — or, more accurately, which is granted a certain value by those members of the culture who are in a position to confer values.

This is essential in children's reading, because practitioners want to know - as simply as possible - what is good? Many individuals have a hard time seeing that 'good' doesn't really belong to someone else, to the vast "they," because of the weight of what they 'ought' to cherish hanging over their heads. The phrase "well, it's all a matter of taste" is a tired fallback in disputes over what is "good" outside of academics. People aren't always thrilled with the idea that someone else has a greater grasp on what constitutes "good" than they do, though.

Because of this discord, novels often get unwarrantedly harsh criticism. Many of us have a strong suspicion that children's experiences with texts are much richer and more complex than our own, and this is in part because children's books are written for a different audience, with different skills, different needs, and different ways of reading. Judging children's books (even subconsciously) using the same value systems that we do for adult novels, in which children's books are always positioned to seem inferior, is a certain way to invite unneeded difficulties. Saying that Judy Blume is not as brilliant a writer as Jane Austen assumes the latter's inherent superiority and fails to provide a fair comparison between the two. 'Literature' is, thus, only helpful if we are trying to indoctrinate students into a certain culture; otherwise, it may be confusing or even harmful when 'using' the writings in other contexts.

The term "children" proves to be just as elusive as the word "literature," which already causes enough trouble on its own. Chris Jenks's Childhood (1996), Colin Heywood's A History of Childhood (2001), and Carol Garhart Mooney's Theories of Childhood (2000) are just a few examples of the recent proliferation of works on the history, definition, and study of the concept of childhood (also see Cunningham 1995 and, in a lighter but no less revealing vein, Hardyment 1995). Relationships between storyteller and listener, particularly between adults and children, may be much different in non-Western cultures than in the West (for example, see Pellowski 2004). Therefore, it is fraught with difficulties for adults who deal with children and books to pass judgment on behalf of current or former children. This fact alone calls attention to the oversimplification of peer readers in a

great many critical texts; the difficulty of referring to "the reader" or "a specific reader" should be much more apparent when discussing the "child" reader in children's literature.

It has been suggested that English-language children's books did not appear until the eighteenth century, when British publishers like Mary Cooper and John Newbery began releasing titles for young readers. John Cotton's Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes was the first book 'especially prepared for North American youth' and was published in London in 1646 (Griswold 2004: II, 1270). In India, children's books were first published in Calcutta in 1817 when the School Book Society was founded by missionaries (Jafa 2004: II, 1078), and the earliest children's book in Malayalam (spoken in Kerala) was Cherupaithangalkku Up As a result, half of the children's books produced in France in 1988 were translations from English (Bouvaist 1990: 30). (In contrast, French literature had a far larger impact on German kidlit.) The flow of information between English and other languages is mostly unidirectional at the present time.

Modern children's literature is essentially a development of the nineteenth century; the first books for children were based on traditional sources or were explicitly didactic, as in Ray's definition. In the Netherlands, children's literature flourished towards the end of the eighteenth century, but in Spain,'real' children's novels did not appear until the end of the nineteenth century, despite the country's translations of Grimm, Andersen, and Perrault.

**Reading Children's Literature**

One of the recurring topics in this collection is the connection between the reader and the text, since it would be foolish to imagine that reading and comprehending children's books is a straightforward process. Is there a limit to the author's ability to influence a reader's interpretation of his or her work by assuming a given reader's identity or background? Is there a way to find out what has been grasped? How does one create understanding, exactly?

Studies of children's literature sit somewhere in the middle of the divide between 'literary' and 'cultural' disciplines. The former is more likely to inspire "close reading," or a reading strategy "alert to the details of narrative structure and attends to the complexities of meaning," as Jonathan Culler has observed. Cultural studies, on the other hand, tend 'towards "symptomatic interpretation" - that is, recognizing broad, transferable themes' (as they often deal with "non-literary" works like television and children's books). "(Culler 1997: 52)" We may feel compelled to question the underlying assumptions of both of these stances in light of the fact that children's books have a tendency to be written with the intention of swaying young minds. Likewise, we need to give close attention to the philosophical issue at the heart of reading comprehension; to choose the most practical and maybe conservative stance:

It's common knowledge that a reader's comprehension of a piece of writing is heavily influenced by his or her prior knowledge and the ease with which that information may be accessed at the time of reading. Given that readers' interpretations of texts will vary to some degree due to differences in processing and conclusion based on their reasons and motives for reading, this is to be expected. One may argue that this is especially true of literary works, for which it is commonly remarked that there are as many possible interpretations as there are readers. However, the idea that a work may have any meaning for any reader is very unsatisfying. To some degree, the reader's interpretation

will be determined by the text itself. (Alderson and Short 1989: 72)

Even in the instance of the picture book, where it is often considered that visuals are in some way "easier" to read than words, the subtleties of how the text "conditions... understanding" remain hidden from plain sight. It is "nothing short of incredible," as Scott McCloud writes in his groundbreaking book Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art (1993:31; see also pages 30-45), that the human mind can comprehend symbols so quickly and easily. Even the'simplest' of picture books demands complicated interpretive abilities because of their inherent polyphony. What has been lacking, but is now being given thanks to the efforts of scholars like Nodelman (1988), Doonan (1993), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), Anstey and Bull (2000), and others, is an interpretive vocabulary of comparable complexity to that of words.

To dismiss the effectiveness of the picture book (or comic book) is to dismiss the 'kid' as reader, which is a fundamental mistake, as I hope to have shown. For instance, Jane Doonan cares more about the aesthetics of image interpretation than the intricate mechanics of understanding them:

The idea that images' expressive qualities allow the book to operate as an art object is less popular but, in my opinion, does the greatest justice to the picture book. The importance resides... in the aesthetic growth that might occur as a result of reading a picture book. When partaking in the arts, we are "playing" at the highest level of pleasure and difficulty... And in that play, we have to use our rationality, our intuition, and our creativity to cope with nebulous ideas. (Doonan 1993: 7)

**Efficacy of Narrative-Based Strategies To Promote Health And Wellbeing In School Setting**

"A state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing" is how the World Health Organization defines health.78 The World Health Organization has shown that many premature deaths may be averted if all members of society do their part to promote healthy lifestyles.79 Both health promotion and prevention work to proactively keep people healthy, therefore they are two sides of the same coin.80 Primary prevention has to begin as soon as possible, and schools may help set kids on the road to a healthy lifestyle from a young age. In reality, there is a close relationship between health and education, and it is undeniable that students' sense of well-being has a significant bearing on their academic performance. Risk and protective factor education is best delivered in the classroom, where engaging methods (such as "teaching narratively") may pique students' attention while also creating a collaborative and non-competitive atmosphere. Students' attention and motivation may be piqued by story, and they can cultivate the "narrative thinking" that underpins all human experience (and, by extension, all learning and introspection) in the process. Using psychological processes based on identification with the characters of the stories, specially crafted storybooks can foster children's self-responsibility towards health and stimulate critical thinking about the consequences of adopting risky behaviors (i.e. unhealthy eating habits).

Many studies and reviews have shown the compelling benefits of narrative engagement in teaching children about health topics via literature and storytelling. With an emphasis on the story qualities as possible explanatory elements in the efficacy to deliver a health message, De Graaf et al. conducted a comprehensive analysis of 153 experimental investigations on health-related narrative persuasion. tales with strong emotional content and the use of first- or second-person viewpoint were generally more

successful, and the findings revealed that tales presenting a healthy behavior were more commonly related with impacts on the desire to adopt it. There were no significant variations in the narrative intervention's effectiveness in different forms of media (books, videos, etc.), and the narrative's setting and presentation of the health message were found to be potential persuasive factors.88 In their meta-analysis of 25 trials, Shen and Han found that narratives were more effective than non-narratives in preventing and identifying dangerous behaviors, but not at changing people's minds about doing things like giving up smoking. Fifteen research were selected by Zebregs et al. that found that story was effective in persuasion. A total of 74 studies comparing narrative-based therapies to a control group that received no message were pooled and evaluated by Braddock and Dillard. Their findings indicated that storytelling improved story-consistent attitudes, beliefs, and actions compared to a no-effect baseline. Tukachinsky et al., who looked at 45 research, found that involvement with the story and its characters was associated with the behavior and beliefs suggested by the story. Some writers have stressed the persuasive power of the reader's "transportation" into a story's universe, arguing that reading enables youngsters to "enter" stories and "play out" with the characters. Dahlstrom et al. demonstrated the significance of thinking about how the persuasive message fits into the story's causal framework. In the context of social concerns, stories having two antagonistic main characters seem to have an influence on narrative persuasion, and stories depicting a change of the characters from bad to healthy behavior may be especially helpful. Characters might be more or less similar to the readers, resulting in a varied persuasive impact, and the narrative substance and form (such as characters, events, and the environment) are also highly essential. The story's presentational context also matters for "narrative persuasion" in the health care domain, whether it's an entertainment format in which the reader is blissfully oblivious of the narrative's persuasive aim, or a narrative frame in which the persuasive intent is more clear. Engagement and efficacy of narrative-based interventions may be affected not only by narrative features, but also by variables related to target recipients, such as the predisposition to become engaged in narratives and the prior knowledge of the readers, and the environment/situation in which the story is narrated. Storytelling, the target audience, and environmental (such as classroom) elements (such background noise) all have a role in the success or failure of an argument. It's important to write tales where the main character's thoughts and emotions are as near to those of the youngster as possible. In conclusion, it seems that a multicomponent strategy, comprising written stories or tales delivered by a health educator in a face-to-face situation (i.e. live storytelling), may have an impact on the beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and even the behaviors of the receivers.

## Conclusion

The psychological importance of children's literature lies in its ability to help young people work through their own internal problems and overcome external challenges in their lives. Evidence from around the world suggests that books written specifically for children can be an effective preventative tool for promoting young people's global wellbeing by promoting the adoption of healthy lifestyle choices, preparing them to deal with emotional and social challenges, and conveying health-related information. When it comes to fostering children's overall development at home and in the classroom, children's

literature can serve as a useful tool to "educate," "teach," and "heal," with narration being one of the many educational strategies that can be used for pedagogic, didactic, and therapeutic purposes.

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