1-1-2016

Chapter 02: What is Children's Literature?

Jenifer Jasinski Schneider
University of South Florida, jschneid@usf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/childrens_lit_textbook

Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schneider, Jenifer Jasinski, (2016). *What is Children's Literature?* In The Inside, Outside, and Upside Downs of Children's Literature: From Poets and Pop-ups to Princesses and Porridge (p. 9-27). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/9780977674411.ch2>

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Teaching and Learning at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Inside, Outside, and Upside Downs of Children's Literature: From Poets and Pop-ups to Princesses and Porridge by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

THE INSIDE, OUTSIDE, AND UPSIDE DOWNS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

From Poets and Pop-ups to
Princesses and Porridge

Jenifer Jasinski Schneider, Ph.D.

The Inside, Outside, and Upside Downs of Children's Literature: From Poets and Pop-ups to Princesses and Porridge

Jenifer Jasinski Schneider, Ph.D.

Copyright

Published by The University of South Florida Library, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, Tampa, FL 33620.
Copyright ©2016 by Jenifer Jasinski Schneider. All rights reserved.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Author and Editor in Chief: Jenifer Jasinski Schneider

Editorial Director: Monica Metz-Wiseman

Media Project Manager and Producer: Christine Brown

Video Producers and Editors: Jared Brown, Jason Su, Ian Crenshaw, Jessica Brennen,
Diana Trueman, Jeremy Willis

Art Director: Stephanie Rivera

Illustrators and Multimedia Designers: William Tillis and Elise Michal

Copyright Coordinator: LeEtta M. Schmidt

Open-Access Editor: Jason Boczar

Editorial Manager: Carol Ann Borchert

Editorial Project Manager: Chelsea Johnston

Cover image book credits:

Upside Down Babies by Jeanne Willis and Adrian Reynolds ©2013 Andersen Press; *If All the Animals Came Inside* by Eric Pinder and Marc Tolon Brown ©2012 Little, Brown and Company; *Guess What Is Growing Inside This Egg* by Mia Posada ©2007 Millbrook Press; *Outside and Inside Killer Bees* by Sandra Markle ©2004 Walker & Co.; *Inside the Slidy Diner* by Laurel Snyder and Jaime Zollars ©2008 Tricycle Press; *Outside Over There* by Maurice Sendak ©1989 HarperCollins; *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, original cover art by Robert Hunt ©1967 Viking Press. Mass Market edition ©1997 Speak; *Inside Outside Upside Down* by Stan and Jan Berenstain ©1968 Random House; *Upside Down Magic* by Sarah Mlynowski, Lauren Myracle, and Emily Jenkins ©2015 Scholastic Press; *Inside Outside* by Lizi Boyd ©2013 Chronicle Books; *Inside Hurricanes* by Mary Kay Carson ©2010 Sterling; *The Outside* by Lauren Bickle ©2013 Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; *Upside Down in the Middle of Nowhere* by Julie T. Lamana ©2014 Chronicle Books.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schneider, Jenifer Jasinski, 1968-

The Inside, Outside, and Upside Downs of Children's Literature: From Poets and Pop-ups to Princesses and Porridge / Jenifer Jasinski Schneider.

ISBN- 978-0-9776744-1-1 eBook

ISBN- 978-0-9776744-2-8 print

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication.

TEXTUAL TENDENCIES AND OPEN AND CLOSE READINGS

SECTION 1

CHAPTER 02

WHAT IS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE?

DEFINITIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Children's Books on Trial

Children's Literature, the term conjures images of baby books, predictable plots, and basic illustrations (Figure 2.1). Or, perhaps, you might equate children's literature with the artless, pointless stories in classroom basal readers, the ones with contrived vocabulary built around particular reading levels (Figure 2.2), or the purified stories, stripped of real life in order to pass the scrutiny of state textbook selection committees and school boards (Figure 2.3). Yes, it's true. Some examples of children's literature can be inane. But the same can be said about books for adults; the quality varies.

Basal readers are anthologies of stories and other texts grouped together for students at certain reading or grade levels. Basal readers contain contrived stories and stilted vocabulary. Many people do not consider basal stories to be "literature" because the texts are often altered for readability purposes.

Figure 2.1

Dorothy Kunhardt's *Pat the Bunny* is a classic example of a predictable baby book in which the content, layout, illustration, and language are designed to match young children's developmental levels. *Pat the Bunny* by Dorothy Kunhardt, 1940/2001, New York, NY: Golden Books. Copyright 1940 by Dorothy Kunhardt.

Figure 2.2

The McGuffey Readers were a popular series beginning in the early 1800's and used until the 1950's. *McGuffey's Second Eclectic Reader (revised edition)* by William H. McGuffey, 1879, Van Antwerp, Bragg & Co. (<https://archive.org/stream/mcguff2ndeclector02mcguf/page/n3/mode/2up>).

Figure 2.3

Current basal readers include "real" children's literature in their collections. The publishers rewrite the stories, controlling for content and embedding vocabulary words. *Treasures* by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011, New York, NY: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill. Copyright 2011 by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill.

At its best, children's literature includes books of the highest caliber, representing complex plots or concepts in both word and art. Children's literature is often defined as a **collection of books written for children, read by children, and/or written about children**. But this definition may be too simplistic for a not-so-simple genre. Below, I offer a series of exhibits to test your knowledge and this definition.

Is children's literature a collection of books?

Is children's literature read by children?

Is children's literature written about children?

Exhibit A:

***A Game of Thrones* by George R. R. Martin**
(Figure 2.4)

A Game of Thrones, which is the first book in the series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is an epic fantasy set in medieval times. The book, written by George R.R. Martin, is wildly popular and was developed into a television series for HBO. Based on three interwoven storylines, *A Game of Thrones* is told from individual character's perspectives and recounts a complex, dark, and epic story of family dynasties.

Is *A Game of Thrones* children's literature?

Figure 2.4

A Game of Thrones by George R. R. Martin, 1996, New York, NY: Random House. Cover art copyright 2011 by Bantam Books.

A Game of Thrones is a book. But its plot was used as the basis for a television show and other adaptations.

A Game of Thrones was not written for children. George R.R. Martin is a writer of adult fiction, known for his fantasy, horror, and science fiction. *A Game of Thrones* was not intended for youthful readers; however, it is a popular book among teenagers.

School Library Journal lists *The World of Ice and Fire: The Untold History of Westeros and the Game of Thrones* (Martin, Garcia & Antonsson, 2014) as one of its choices for best fantasy (nonfiction companion). In fact, so many books crossover from adult to “child” readers that *School Library Journal* hosts a blog by Angela Cartensen and Mark Flowers entitled, *Adult Books 4 Teens* (<http://blogs.slj.com/adult4teen/>).

Children read adult books. Of course you may not refer to teenagers as children, but the United Nations (1989) recognizes anyone under the age of 18 as a minor child (<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>). The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (2015) defines children as unmarried persons under 21 years of age (<http://www.uscis.gov/policymanual/HTML/PolicyManual-Volume12-PartH-Chapter2.html>). And the United States criminal code (18 U.S. Code § 2256) defines a “minor” as any person under the age of 18 years (2015, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2256>).

In the book industry, teenagers form their own demographic and they are a separate, targeted group. Young Adult is the common term for literature written for youth aged 12 to 18. The young adult label took hold in 1957 when the American Library Association (ALA) (www.ala.org) divided the Association of Young People's Librarians (established in 1941) into the Children's Library Association and the Young Adult Services Division for the purposes of providing differentiated services to groups of youth who have different social, emotional, and literacy needs (Starr, 2015).

When does “childhood” begin and end? The differences are fluid and debatable, yet often randomly demarcated by certain organizations such as movie theaters, restaurants, libraries, credit card companies, and the US criminal justice system. If jail sentences vary state-by-state and judge-to-judge, why are book audiences held to rigid age limitations? Some people make a career obsessing over age limits and reading habits, judging what is or is not children's literature. For example, Ruth Graham (2014a) levied harsh criticism against adults who read YA novels (http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2014/06/against_ya_adults_should_be_embarrassed_to_read_children_s_books.html). But as Mark Medley (2014) explained, her position is nonsensical (<http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/06/11/stick-with-your-kind-getting-adults-off-ya-books-doesnt-go-nearly-far-enough/>).

To me, it's all academic (code for irrelevant—unless you are concerned about library classification systems or marketing, profits, and awards—but more on that later) and easily decided through an operational definition: Kids under the age of 18 read *A Game of Thrones*, some as young as 10 or 11; therefore, some adult books crossover into the YA category because they are read by teenagers. *A Game of Thrones* is read by adults, teenagers, and children. Therefore, what is it?

- ⊗ *A Game of Thrones* is not written about children, although children exist in this fantasyland. There are many examples of children's books that feature adults, but they are written for children. Think about biography books featuring US Presidents or famous scientists (more on that later as well).

Exhibit B:

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

(Figure 2.5)

The Kite Runner is a story of two youths, Amir and Hassan, and their friendship built around kite flying. The story is set in Kabul and includes scenes of violence, rape, and racial discrimination along with themes of loyalty, betrayal, family, and war. Told over a period of many years, the story comes full circle through a series of acts of redemption.

Is *The Kite Runner* children's literature?

Figure 2.5

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini, 2003, New York, NY: The Berkeley Publishing Group. Cover art copyright 2003 by Honi Werner.

The Kite Runner is a book.

The Kite Runner was not written for children. The book is marketed to adults. It was on the *New York Times* Bestseller List and reviewed by adult fiction critics. The author writes for adults.

As with *A Game of Thrones*, young adults read *The Kite Runner*. It is assigned as summer reading and used in high school English classrooms. Due to the subject matter, *The Kite Runner* is often “banned” and placed on the American Library Association’s list of frequently challenged books (<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>).

People commonly refer to “banned” books. Legally, we don’t ban books in the United States. Books are “challenged” and they can be removed from shelves or restricted for purchase. More on that later...

Unlike *A Game of Thrones*, the book begins with two children as the main protagonists, yet young adults read the book. The content of *The Kite Runner* is clearly intended for mature audiences. It seems as if the age of the protagonists may not be the best criterion for classification.

Exhibit C:

Fanfiction (e.g., *Wrenfield Hall* by Wannabe Charlotte, 2015, Retrieved from <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/6369019/1/Wrenfield-Hall>)

Fanfiction is fiction written by fans of the characters, plots, and settings borrowed from other works of fiction including movies, books, comics, anime, cartoons, and games. Fanfiction.net boasts the largest collection of fanfiction (<https://www.fanfiction.net/>) holding millions of stories. But sites such as Archive of Our Own (AO3) (<http://archiveofourown.org/>) boasts refereed content and better search capabilities, winning a place on a *Time* magazine list of best websites (2015, Retrieved from <http://techland.time.com/2013/05/06/50-best-websites-2013/>).

Two popular fandomes are based on the *Harry Potter* Series by J.K. Rowling and the *Twilight* Series by Stephanie Meyer. For demonstration purposes, let's examine *Wrenfield Hall*, which is fanfiction based on the characters, Bella and Edward, from *Twilight*.

Is *Wrenfield Hall* children's literature?

Wrenfield Hall is not a book. In other words, it is not printed on paper and sold in bookstores. It is, however, a fully-developed story, freely available to anyone with an Internet connection. Stories are the basis of many books, but not all stories are published as books.

Some fanfiction is published in book form. For example, *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E.L. James began as fanfiction, but then James distributed her stories in other forms. Following her success, some fanfiction writers resented her cross publication using different outlets (Miller, 2015; <http://nypost.com/2015/02/07/fan-fiction-writers-speak-out-against-50-shades-of-grey/>).

Does publication format determine what is or is not children's literature? Books are one physical method of sharing text and images, but other methods exist. Some books, like the one you are reading, are shared digitally. "Open-source" or "ebooks" are the more specific labels; yet, they are still defined as books. Before the digital age, authors and illustrators relied on publishing companies to select, produce, and distribute children's literature because the process was too expensive for an individual to pursue mass distribution. Now, self-publishing platforms make it possible for almost anyone to publish in any form.

Do the materials (paper, skin, wood, ivory, computer screen) or the methods of production (binding, gluing, sewing, coding) determine the definition of a book? Of course not. Artistic explorations with format, binding, layout, and design have always been a part of book production.

Perhaps "books" are privileged in definitions of children's literature because there is an assumption of quality and selectivity? Books are reviewed and published by editors and critics. However, book status does not necessarily indicate quality (See [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#)). Also, famous authors, including S.E. Hinton, Neil Gaiman, and Meg Cabot, write fanfiction (Romano, 2014; <http://www.dailydot.com/culture/10-famous-authors-fanfiction/>). Therefore, literary texts of high quality can be found outside the printed pages of books.

Video 2.1 What makes a book? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4BK_2VULCU

What makes a book a book? That's a great question. For one answer, read *It's a Book* by Lane Smith, 2010, New York, NY: Roaring Book Press. Copyright 2010 by Lane Smith.

- ✗ *Wrenfield Hall* is not written for children. However, the story is rated as “T” which is the Fanfiction.net rating that indicates “Suitable for teens, 13 years and older, with some violence, minor coarse language, and minor suggestive adult themes” (<https://www.fanfiction.net/guidelines/>). Again, when does childhood end? Given the age restrictions, pre-teens should not read teen fanfic. But they do. What is suitable for children and who decides?

The author of *Wrenfield Hall* did not intend to write the story for children, but children read the posts. Once an author writes and places the story into the public sphere his or her control over readership is lost. Is authorial intent the best way to define a book?

- ✓ *Wrenfield Hall* features young protagonists. Children are part of the plot. Again, the age of the protagonists may be a strong indicator of the best audience for a particular piece of literature; however, there are many examples (such as *Wrenfield Hall*) in which character age is not the best criterion for classification.

Exhibit D: *Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad* by Henry Cole (Figure 2.6)

Set during the time of slavery in the U.S., in *Unspoken*, Henry Cole presents the story of a young girl who discovers a runaway slave hiding in her family's barn. Frightened at first, she eventually decides to help the person by providing food, water, and safety, receiving a special gift in return.

Figure 2.6

Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad by Henry Cole, 2012, New York, NY: Scholastic. Copyright 2012 by Henry Cole.

Is *Unspoken* children's literature?

- ✓ *Unspoken* is a book, printed, bound, and distributed by Scholastic Press.

Unspoken is not written for children; it is *illustrated* for children. Tricky! Beyond the title, *Unspoken* does not include any words to advance the plot. Beautiful, brown, charcoal images capture the story with scenes spanning two full pages (Figure 2.7) or broken into panels (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.7

A full-page spread from *Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad* by Henry Cole, 2012, New York, NY: Scholastic. Copyright 2012 by Henry Cole.

Figure 2.8

Panel illustrations from *Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad* by Henry Cole, 2012, New York, NY: Scholastic. Copyright 2012 by Henry Cole.

How many words are required in order for a story to become “literature?” Must books include text or print? How many pictures are too many? If pictures are juvenile, why do adult texts include images and cover art? For example, graphic novels include images and text. If a viewer can interpret the story from the images, are words necessary?

The author, or in the case of *Unspoken*, the illustrator, intended to *create* a story for children. *Unspoken* is marketed to children and listed as a children's book. However, the history of slavery in the US is filled with stories of horrific cruelty. Wouldn't these issues come up when children wonder why the person had to hide in the straw and was so afraid of being discovered? The power of a wordless book lies in the interpretation by the reader, and readers can take the story in many directions beyond what is "appropriate" for children. Therefore, author or illustrator intention is not a foolproof test for defining children's literature. In addition, the interpretation rests with the reader.

Henry Cole tells the story from the perspective of a child. In this case, the protagonist is a strong indicator of the intended audience. *Unspoken* features children and it was created for children.

Exhibit E:

The Littlest Bitch by David Quinn and Michael Davis, illustrated by Devon Devereaux (Figure 2.9)

The Littlest Bitch is a story about Isabel, a bossy little girl who aspires to have a corporate career as a venture capitalist and business tycoon. Unfortunately, her thoughtless behavior fuels her physical demise as she literally shrinks into obscurity.

Is *The Littlest Bitch* children's literature?

The Littlest Bitch is a book.

The Littlest Bitch is not written for children. The book cover clearly states "a not-for-children children's book." The Littlest Bitch, along with many other books with similar intent, uses the format of a picturebook along with a child protagonist to create an illusion of children's literature, but the content is not appropriate for children. Or is it?

Figure 2.9

The Littlest Bitch by David Quinn and Michael Davis, illustrated by Devon Devereaux, 2010, Portland, ME: Sellers Publishing. Cover art copyright 2010 by Devon Devereaux.

What is appropriate for children? How do we decide? In the Grimm Brothers' version of Cinderella, the step-sisters chop off portions of their feet to fit into the shoe. Is this behavior appropriate for children? What levels of violence are acceptable in children's books? What portrayals do we want to reinforce or call into question? The content of children's literature is broad and reaches into adult topics whether we like it or not.

The Littlest Bitch refers to a child, and she is pictured on the cover and throughout the fully-illustrated book. In this case, *The Littlest Bitch* looks like a children's book, reads like a children's book, and features a child. Yet, it is not for children. What gives?

I would like to submit these exhibits into evidence. They represent the outliers and renegades that stand as counterclaims against a simple definition that children's literature consists of books written for children, read by children, and/or written about children. As a result, I revise the previously provided definition of children's literature:

Children's literature is an assortment of books (and not books) written for children (and adults), read by children (and adults), and written about children (but not necessarily).

That was a better definition. But it is not completely inclusive. As further evidence, I submit the following:

Children's literature is a collection of books as old as the printing press (Figure 2.10)

Figure 2.10

Gutenberg invented movable type printing around 1439 and children's books evolved alongside changes in the printing process. Although not the very first children's book, *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* was an influential publication. *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* by John Newbery, 1744, Worcester, MA: Isaiah Thomas. Copyright expired.

and as new as the latest app
(Figure 2.11).

Children's literature portrays
all aspects of humanity
(Figure 2.12),

inhumanity (Figure 2.13)

and non-humanity (Figure 2.14),

all periods of human history
(Figure 2.15)

and all places of this world
(Figure 2.16)

as well as worlds beyond
(Figure 2.17).

Figure 2.11

Popular book characters can lead to popular apps. *Don't Let the Pigeon Run This App* by Mo Willems and you, 2011, Glendale, CA: Disney Enterprises Inc. Cover art copyright 2011 by Disney Enterprises Inc.

Figure 2.12

Some children's literature deals with everyday emotions as demonstrated in *Grump, Groan, Growl* by bell hooks and illustrated by Chris Raschka, 2008, New York, NY: Disney-Hyperion. Cover art copyright 2008 by Chris Raschka.

Figure 2.13

Many forms of children's literature explore the dark side. For example, learn how Hitler exploited children in *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, 2005, New York, NY: Scholastic. Copyright 2005 by Susan Campbell Bartoletti.

Figure 2.14

Children's literature is full of memorable characters. He's not human, but he acts like one. *Marcel the Shell: The Most Surprised I've Ever Been* by Dean Fleischer-Camp and Jenny Slate, 2014, New York, NY: Razorbill. Copyright 2014 by Dean Fleischer-Camp.

Figure 2.15

Children's literature includes unique views of history. *The Death of the Hat: A Brief History of Poetry in 50 Objects* by Paul B. Janeczko and Illustrated by Chris Raschka, 2015, Somerville, MA: Candlewick. Cover art copyright 2015 by Chris Raschka.

Figure 2.16

Children's literature covers the whole world. *Maps* by Aleksandra Mizielski and Daniel Mizielski, 2013, New York, NY: Big Picture Press. Copyright 2013 by Aleksandra Mizielski and Daniel Mizielski.

Figure 2.17

Explore the secret worlds of your imagination in children's literature. *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton and illustrated by Beth Krush and Joe Krush, 1953, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace. Cover art copyright 1953 by Beth Krush and Joe Krush.

Children's literature
is poetry (Figure 2.18),

fiction (Figure 2.19),

nonfiction (Figure 2.20),

argument (Figure 2.21),

and biography (Figure 2.22).

Children's literature includes
picturebooks (Figure 2.23)

and pop-up books (Figure 2.24;
Video 2.2),

Figure 2.18

Children's literature claims world famous poets. *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein, 1974, New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers. Copyright 1974 by Shel Silverstein.

Figure 2.19

Children's literature includes world famous storytellers. *Matilda* by Roald Dahl and illustrated by Quentin Blake, 1988, New York, NY: Penguin. Cover art copyright 1988 by Quentin Blake.

Figure 2.20

Children's literature explains everything we need to know. *From Seed to Plant* by Gail Gibbons, 1993, New York, NY: Holiday House. Copyright 1993 by Gail Gibbons.

Figure 2.21

Children's literature portrays human qualities, desires, and perspectives. *No, David!* by David Shannon, 1998, New York, NY: Blue Sky Press. Copyright 1998 by David Shannon.

Figure 2.22

Children's literature demonstrates human resilience and power. *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb, 2013, New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company. Copyright 2013 by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb.

Figure 2.23

Jumanji by Chris Van Allsburg, 1981, New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Copyright 1981 by Chris Van Allsburg.

Figure 2.24

Encyclopedia Prehistorica Dinosaurs: The Definitive Pop-Up by Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart, 2005, New York, NY: Candlewick. Copyright 2005 by Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart.

paper books (Figure 2.25)

Figure 2.25

It's a Book by Lane Smith, 2010, New York, NY: Roaring Brook Press. Copyright 2010 by Lane Smith.

plays (Figure 2.26)

Figure 2.26

Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up by J.M. Barrie, 1904, London, England: Hodder & Stoughton. Copyright 1988 by Great Ormond Street Hospital.

and digital texts

(Figure 2.27).

Figure 2.27

The Fault in Our Stars by John Green, 2012, New York, NY: Penguin. Copyright 2012 by John Green.

Children's literature includes many stories (Figure 2.28)

Figure 2.28

Guys Write for Guys Read edited by Jon Scieszka, 2005, New York, NY: Viking Press. Copyright 2005 by Jon Scieszka.

and single stories

(Figure 2.29),

Figure 2.29

Delores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers by Sarah Warren and illustrated by Robert Casilla, 2012, Seattle, WA: Two Lions. Cover art copyright 2012 by Robert Casilla.

happy stories (Figure 2.30),

Figure 2.30

Mr. Happy by Roger Hargreaves, 1971, London, England: Price Stern Sloan. Copyright 1971 by Roger Hargreaves.

sad stories (Figure 2.31),

Figure 2.31

Sad Underwear and Other Complications by Judith Viorst and illustrated by Richard Hull, 2000, New York, NY: Antheneum. Cover art copyright 2000 by Richard Hull.

scary stories (Figure 2.32),

Figure 2.32

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark by Alvin Schwartz and illustrated by Stephen Gammell, 1981, New York, NY: Scholastic. Cover art copyright 1981 by Stephen Gammell.

mad stories (Figure 2.33),

Figure 2.33

Babymouse #14: Mad Scientist by Jennifer Holm and illustrated by Matthew Holm, 2011, New York, NY: Random House Books for Young Readers. Cover art copyright 2011 by Matthew Holm.

and not stories (Figure 2.34).

Figure 2.34

Locomotive by Brian Floca, 2013, New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Copyright 2013 by Brian Floca.

Children's literature is created for and read by children, adolescents, and adults. Children's literature is high art, extraordinary writing, and everything in-between.

Video 2.2 Look, Touch, Shake, and Swipe: Pop Up Books and Interactive eBooks <http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/wlrn1>

**LOOK, TOUCH, SHAKE, AND SWIPE:
POP UP BOOKS AND INTERACTIVE eBooks**

WITH JENIFER SCHNEIDER

**THE INSIDE, OUTSIDE, AND UPSIDE DOWNS
OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

**From Poets and Pop-ups to Princesses
and Porridge**

It's difficult to appreciate the 3D art of pop-up artists like Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart in a 2D, non-moving, space. To see some of the intricacies in pop up books, watch this pop up video.

A Working Definition

Children's literature is a label for collections of texts that are specifically written and/or illustrated for and/or about youth as well as texts that are not specifically written and/or illustrated for and/or about youth but which youth choose to read, view, and/or write. Adults are welcome to read children's literature too—many do.

Children's literature provides encounters with the world that shape the meaning children make of the world (Kiefer, Hepler, Hickman, Huck, 2007). Having a vicarious or “lived through” experience with literature, builds readers' aesthetic responses and perceptions (Rosenblatt, 1978). Reading literature increases one's sensitivity to the power of the written word (Sipe, 2008) and contributes to visual expression (Brenner, 2011; Sipe, 2011). For these reasons, adults study children's literature as scholars, critics, educators, librarians, entrepreneurs, and social commentators.

A Brief History of Children's and Young Adult Literature

With my almost anything goes orientation toward children's literature broadly detailed, let's take a look at how this body of literature came to be through selected examples and important artifacts.

The origins of children's literature are hard to nail down. Do cave illustrations count? In my opinion, why not? There is evidence cave paintings included children (2015, November 10, Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/earthnews/8798392/Childrens-prehistoric-cave-paintings-discovered.html>).

I accept different formats of text as representatives of children's literature (and by text I am referring to symbolic systems of meaning). I realize cave paintings are not “books,” but they were a form of communication most relevant and accessible to the people of that time.

I am not obsessed with the content of the cave drawings either. If hunting deer was the trending topic of ancient people, then children and young adults needed to know about it. Cave youth needed to access others' thoughts and ideas. They needed information.

Somewhere between prehistoric cave people and the Renaissance, the Sumerians and others invented cuneiform to represent sounds that captured human speech, the Egyptians developed hieroglyphs for record-keeping, and the Chinese used oracle bones and inscriptions to communicate with their ancestors (2015, November 10, Retrieved from http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/themes/writing/historic_writing.aspx). Gutenberg created a printing press and the speed of information exchange increased dramatically (2015, November 10, <http://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/videos/mankind-the-story-of-all-of-us-the-printing-press>). Here are a few examples.

1400's : A 1485 Italian edition of *Aesopus Moralisatus* by Bernardino di Benalli (Figure 2.35).

Figure 2.35

An Italian translation of Aesop's Fables was published as *Aesopus Moralisatus* by Bernardino di Benalli, 1485, Venezia, Italy. Copyright 1485 by Bernardino di Benalli. The book is available for viewing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s_Fables#/media/File:Aesopus_-_Aesopus_moralisatus,_circa_1485_-_2950804_Scan00010.tif.

1500's: Michael Agricola's ABC book published in 1559 (Figure 2.36)

Figure 2.36

Abckiria is the first children's book in Finnish, written by Bishop Michael Agricola (c. 1510-1557), 1559, Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Literature Society. Copyright 1559 by Michael Agricola. The complete book is available for viewing at http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPreview?bookid=agrabck_00070001&route=advanced_327_326_0_English_0_all&lang=English&msg=&lang=English.

1600's: Johannes Amos Comenius' *Orbis Pictus*, 1657, is widely considered to be the first picturebook school book (Comenius, 1896) (Figure 2.37).

Figure 2.37

Johannes Amos Comenius' *Orbis Pictus*, 1657, is widely considered to be the first picturebook school book (Comenius, 1896). *Orbis Pictus* by Johannes Amos Comenius, 1685, London, England: Charles Mearne. Copyright expired. The 1728 edition is available for viewing at http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/28299?msg=welcome_stranger.

1700's: *The Catechism of Nature for the Use of Children* by Dr. Martinet published in 1793 (Figure 2.38).

Figure 2.38

The Catechism of Nature for the Use of Children by Dr. Martinet was published in 1793. Figure 2.38 is an English version translated from Dutch. The Catechism of Nature for the Use of Children by Dr. Martinet, 1793, Boston, MA: Young and Etheridge. Copyright expired.

As these representative texts indicate, writing evolved across cultures and through various modes and media. Tablets, stones, pamphlets, and books were vehicles for conserving history or sharing information among scholars, the wealthy, and royalty.

Eventually, the creation of chapbooks, and other forms of cheaply-produced texts, increased people's access to books. Chapbooks often featured rhymes, fairy tales, or alphabet books along with crime stories, songs, and prophecies; however, children were not the only target audience of these texts (2015, November 10, Retrieved from <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/n/national-art-library-chapbooks-collection/>).

Fairy tales, collected by the Brothers Grimm as part of their study of linguistics, were oral stories that were shared among adults. Their work was not necessarily intended for children either (Ashliman, 2013, Retrieved from <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>).

Of course, children read the texts of their times, or listened to the stories around them, but they only had access to the books that were placed within their lives.

Parallel to the publication of chapbooks, publishers developed instructional materials specifically for children (Video 2.3). Spelling books, primers, and alphabet books were intended to support religious and/or academic instruction for children. Yet, the notion of reading for pleasure or the production of texts specifically for children's amusement was not a priority.

Video 2.3 The Didactic Origins of Children's Literature by Melanie Griffin. <http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/vnmbg>

For the most part, the 18th century was the time period in which “children’s literature” became a thing. According to Professor M.O. Grenby (2015), Professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies in the School of English at Newcastle University,

A cluster of London publishers began to produce new books designed to instruct and delight young readers. Thomas Boreman was one, who followed his *Description of Three Hundred Animals* (Figure 2.39) with a series of illustrated histories of London landmarks jokily (because they were actually very tiny) called the Gigantick Histories (1740-43). Another was Mary Cooper, whose two-volume *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* (1744) is the first known nursery rhyme collection, featuring early versions of well-known classics like ‘Bah, bah, a black sheep’, ‘Hickory dickory dock’, ‘London Bridge is falling down’ and ‘Sing a song of sixpence’ (Figure 2.40). But the most celebrated of these pioneers is John Newbery, whose first book for the entertainment of children was *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly* (c.1744) (Figure 2.41). - See and read more at: (Grenby, 2015, Retrieved from <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-childrens-literature#sthash.6MIH4VoM.dpuf>).

Figure 2.39

A Description of Three Hundred Animals by Thomas Boreman, 1730, London, England: Thomas Boreman. Copyright expired.

Figure 2.40

Image from *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* by Mary Cooper, 1788, Worcester, MA: Isaiah Thomas. Copyright expired.

Figure 2.41

John Newbery published *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly* in 1744. Image from *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly* by John Newbery, 1770, London, England: Newbery and Carnan. Copyright expired.

With the development of improved printing processes and the recognized value of books and literacy, the field of children’s literature shifted and expanded.

1800's: *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* written by Daniel Defoe and illustrated by Paul Adolphe Kauffman (1884) is still widely read and this version boasts "coloured illustrations" on the book cover (Figure 2. 42).

1900's: By the 1900's, children's literature was more pervasive in homes, libraries, and schools. The global importance of children's literature is represented in books published in many languages all over the world (Figures 2.43, 2.44, 2.45, 2.46)

2000's: More recently, children's literature has taken a digital turn. In addition to ebooks, attempts to reflect diverse perspectives have increased with open access publishing and grass-roots promotion through social networking. For example, the Anna Lindh Foundation promotes Arab children's literature (<http://www.arabchildrensliterature.com/about>).

Children's books are an important part of civilization. The creation of children's literature led to changes in how children read, how children learn in school, and how children understand the world. Yet none of the changes would have been possible without access to books.

Figure 2.42

The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe written by Daniel Defoe and illustrated by Paul Adolphe Kauffman, 1884, London, England: T. Fisher Unwin. Copyright expired. The book is available for viewing at http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPage?bookid=defthea_00360697&pnum1=1&twoPage=false&route=advanced_329_326_0_English_0_all&size=0&fullscreen=false&lang=English&ilang=English.

Figure 2.43

El Capitán by Liliana Santirso and illustrated by Patricio Gómez, 1998, Mexico: Celta Amaquemecan. Cover art copyright 1998 by Patricio Gómez. The book is available for viewing at http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPreview?bookid=sntcptn_00160004&route=advanced_335_326_0_English_0_all&lang=English&msg=&ilang=English.

Figure 2.44

All We Need Are Dragons by Ljubivoje Ršumović and illustrated by Dušan Petričić, 1990, Serbia: Rad. Cover art copyright 1990 by Rad. The book is available for viewing at http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPreview?bookid=rsujosn_00380094&route=advanced_335_326.

Figure 2.45

Intik'a: How the Taquileo island was not an island but a very tall mountain that was called Intik'a by Cronwell Jara Jiménez, 1995, Lima, Peru: Ironyodla. Copyright 1995 by Cronwell Jara Jiménez. The book is available for viewing at http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPreview?bookid=jarinti_00510025&route=advanced_335,389_326,359_0_English_0_all&lang=English&msg=&ilang=English.

Figure 2.46

Mbegu Ya Ajabu (The Amazing Seed) by Deus M. Richard, 1997, Kenya: Sasa Sema. Copyright 1997 by Readit Books. The book is available for viewing at http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPreview?bookid=ricmbeg_00590008&route=advanced_335,380_326,359_0_English_0_all&lang=English&msg=&ilang=English.