

## SCHOLARLY ARTICLE

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# **Rethinking Children’s Literature: Towards Encompassing Its Holistic Development and Well-being**

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### **Abstract**

Literature serves a broader purpose than simply appealing to a specific type of reader. It is a rich and diverse collection of words that can impact individuals in various ways. While children's literature is often associated with young audiences, it is not limited to children. In fact, it can resonate with anyone seeking to reconnect with the innocence and wonder of childhood. For adults, in particular, children's literature offers a way to reignite a sense of joy, creativity, and imagination that may have faded over time. The value of children's literature extends beyond mere entertainment; it plays a vital role in nurturing emotional and cognitive development. This article aims to explore the many reasons why children's literature is essential, with a focus on its contribution to the holistic development and well-being of students, making it an invaluable educational tool, covering stories, poems and books.

**Keywords:** children’s literature, books, stories, childhood, poems, literature

## **Rethinking Children's Literature: Towards Encompassing Its Holistic Development and Well-being**

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It is difficult to imagine growing up without books to read, as they have become such an integral part of childhood and education. While children's stories and native folklores have existed for centuries, dating back to when humans first learned to communicate, they were not initially shared through physical books. In the past, these tales were passed down through oral tradition, with stories being narrated and shared from one generation to the next. This oral storytelling not only preserved the culture and values of various communities but also fostered a deep connection between individuals and their cultural heritage. Only with the advent of writing did these stories begin to be captured in written form, ensuring their survival for future generations.

In earlier times, children's reading materials were mostly limited to basic textbooks, such as alphabet primers, hornbooks, and prayer books. These early texts were primarily designed to teach fundamental religious principles and moral lessons. Children of these past generations were closely supervised by adults, who often guided them toward reading literature that focused heavily on themes like death, damnation, and moral behavior. In fact, during the middle Ages, very few books were specifically written for children, and the ones that existed were almost entirely centered on religious teachings or moral instruction. These books were meant to impart spiritual wisdom and ethical conduct, leaving little room for imaginative or recreational content. The emphasis was overwhelmingly on shaping the children's character and understanding of the world, rather than offering them a chance to explore creativity or fantasy.

Children's books are among the most significant forms of writing, yet they are often overlooked and underappreciated. Percy Bysshe Shelley famously described poets as "the unacknowledged legislators of the world," a term that can also apply to authors of children's literature. These writers play a crucial role in shaping the present and future of young readers by offering them a window into how the world could be or how it should be. Through their stories, children are introduced to the literary world for the very first time. Children's books tackle deep and often complex themes, confronting young readers with their greatest fears and challenges. In doing so, they help children recognize and strengthen their inner abilities, empowering them to cope with difficulties, understand their true potential, and shape their own identities as they grow.

Children's books are undeniably important in shaping young minds, and their value cannot be overstated. These books should not only be simple and easy to understand, but also imaginative and engaging enough to spark creativity and leave lasting impressions on children's minds. By doing so, they encourage children to use their imaginations and develop their cognitive skills.

However, the role of parents is equally vital. Parents should actively participate in their children's reading journey by helping them understand the deeper meanings and philosophies embedded within the stories. When children grasp the core values or lessons of a book, it fosters their ability to reflect on their own thoughts, emotions, and the world around them. This connection between the story and their personal experiences allows children to better understand themselves and the people they interact with.

Furthermore, the events and adventures within the pages of children's books open up opportunities for exploration. These stories often introduce new concepts, cultures, and perspectives, encouraging children to think beyond their immediate surroundings. As they relate the book's themes to their own lives, they begin to see how the world works and how

they fit into it. In this way, children's books serve not just as entertainment, but as powerful tools for personal growth, self-awareness, and connection to the world.

It's important to clarify that children's literature is not exclusive to children. While these books are primarily written with young readers in mind, they still hold a special place for adults who maintain a sense of childlike wonder within themselves. After all, every adult still carries a piece of their childhood, making these stories universally relatable. Whether through nostalgia or the timeless lessons they impart, children's books have an enduring appeal that transcends age.

Children's literature didn't emerge in the early 1900s, as some might think—it actually dates back much further. In fact, it has existed since the dawn of storytelling. In its earliest form, these stories were passed down orally by adults to entertain and educate children. Over time, these tales became more structured and elaborate, evolving into the rich and diverse genre of children's literature that we recognize today. What began as simple, spoken narratives eventually became the beloved books that generations of children (and adults) continue to cherish.

To underscore the significance of children's literature, it's worth noting that there are even prestigious awards given to authors of children's books. These accolades celebrate the creativity and impact that these works have on young minds. Children's literature not only entertains, but also shapes how we view the world, making it an essential part of cultural heritage for people of all ages.

### Children's books broaden your creativity

Stories and literature intended for older audiences often focus on a more realistic outlook on life, exploring the complexities of the world as it is. These works reflect the challenges, struggles, and intricate realities of human existence, grounded in the real world.

However, when it comes to literature for children, there is a noticeable shift. Children's stories tend to distance themselves from the constraints of reality, embracing the fantastical, the magical, and the whimsical. They transport readers to realms where anything is possible—a world where trees can talk, leaves can dance, and adventure awaits at every corner.

This shift toward the imaginative is one of the key aspects that makes children's literature so special. It invites young readers into a universe that is not bound by the limitations of the real world. Through these stories, children are exposed to endless possibilities and scenarios that could never happen in real life. Whether it's a magical creature, a secret world hidden in plain sight, or an impossible journey, children's books expand the horizons of what is possible and spark the imagination in ways that are not limited by the physical world.

At its core, children's literature helps children believe—not just in magic, but in the power of their own imagination and dreams. It encourages them to envision a world beyond what they know, nurturing creativity and inspiring a sense of wonder. In a way, these stories offer children the freedom to believe in things beyond logic and reason, fostering an open-mindedness that helps shape their view of the world as a place full of endless possibilities.

### Children's books offer a new point of view

When we read a children's book, we often find ourselves approaching it with the mindset of a child. To truly connect with the story, we have to align ourselves with the perspective of the narrator, which often embodies the innocence and wonder of childhood. In doing so, we momentarily shed our adult experiences and expectations, allowing ourselves to experience the world through the fresh and untainted eyes of a young reader.

This process of reading through the lens of a child invites us to see the world as they do curious, open, and full of possibilities. The beauty of children's literature lies in its ability to present life in a way that is unburdened by the complexities and hardships that adults often

face. By adopting this innocent, uncorrupted view, we allow ourselves to rediscover the purity of simple joys and the excitement of new discoveries.

It's a unique experience that enables us to remember what it was like to view the world without preconceived notions or doubts. As we read a children's book, we are reminded of the importance of seeing things with a sense of wonder, just as a child would—where every moment a new adventure is, and every possibility feels within reach.

### Children's books allow you to revisit the simplicity of your childhood

Reading can be a powerful way to reconnect with the past and reminisce about simpler times. When you immerse yourself in a children's book, you don't just engage with the story—you also have the opportunity to mirror the childlike qualities of the characters. By doing this, you are able to relive what it was like to be a child once again. You experience the world with that same sense of wonder, curiosity, and innocence that children possess, where even the smallest pleasures can hold immense meaning.

In a way, children's books allow you to travel back in time and reconnect with the version of yourself who found joy in the simplest things—a colorful sunset, a playful adventure, or a quiet moment of imagination. The characters in these books, with their unfiltered excitement and boundless curiosity, remind you of the joy that comes from discovering the world anew.

As you read, you step into the shoes of a young version of yourself, exploring and experiencing the world through a lens free of the worries or complexities that often accompany adulthood. The act of reading, therefore, becomes more than just a way to pass the time—it becomes a journey back to a time when everything felt fresh, and every experience was a new discovery. It's a beautiful way to remember the childlike joy that can still reside within us, waiting to be rediscovered through the pages of a book.

## Children's books help build your character

It's no secret that many of us wish to become like our favorite characters from the books we love. These characters often hold a special place in our hearts, inspiring us in ways we may not fully understand. However, what we often don't realize is that we start to mimic their traits and behaviors without even noticing. Over time, as we continue to connect with these characters, their unique qualities begin to subtly influence us.

We become more adventurous, like Jack, who fearlessly climbs the towering beanstalk to face the unknown. We adopt the carefree, youthful spirit of Peter Pan, living in the moment and embracing our imagination. We begin to reflect the generosity of the Giving Tree, finding joy in selflessness and kindness toward others.

As these traits gradually intertwine with our own personalities, we discover that we're not just reading these stories anymore – we're living them, embodying the qualities of these beloved characters. These fictional figures become more than just characters on a page; they shape who we are, influencing our actions, decisions, and the way we view the world around us. In many ways, the stories we immerse ourselves in become a mirror, helping us uncover and develop the best parts of ourselves.

## Children's books inspire you to improve

Some stories have a way of sticking with you for the rest of your life. They leave a lasting impression that resonates deep within you, shaping your dreams, desires, and even your actions. These stories often provide the inspiration you need to pursue something greater for yourself, something beyond the ordinary.

They have the power to push you out of your comfort zone, urging you to take risks and embrace challenges that you might have otherwise avoided. Just like the heroes in those

tales, you feel compelled to embark on your own adventure, to carve out a path that's uniquely yours.

These stories spark a fire within you, motivating you to go to great lengths to create a life that mirrors the excitement, growth, and fulfillment you've witnessed on the pages of a book. You begin to chase after your own version of greatness, determined to live a life filled with the same courage, wonder, and triumphs as the characters you've come to love. The more you immerse yourself in those stories, the more you realize that they aren't just stories – they are blueprints for your own journey, showing you what's possible if you dare to dream and act.

Children's books continued to gain popularity throughout the 18th century, and by the end of the century, children's literature had emerged as a distinct category within Britain's publishing industry. The growth of this genre was so significant that, by this time, approximately fifty children's books were being printed and distributed each year across various parts of Britain. This was a remarkable achievement, reflecting the increasing recognition of the importance of literature for young readers.

However, when we compare these books to modern publishing standards, they might seem somewhat preachy or dry in their content and tone. The writing style was often more focused on imparting moral lessons or didactic messages rather than purely entertaining young minds. Despite this, these early children's books were still created with the intention of providing enjoyment and amusement. They often featured appealing characters, captivating illustrations, and a light-hearted tone that aimed to engage and entertain young readers.

Even though the narratives may not have been as dynamic or engaging as those in today's children's literature, they still played a vital role in shaping the development of the genre. They provided young readers with a sense of wonder and adventure, while also subtly teaching valuable lessons about behavior, society, and morality. The balance between

education and entertainment in these early books laid the foundation for the rich diversity of children's literature that we enjoy today.

## Conclusions

Children's literature offers young readers the opportunity to develop a value system (through its educational role), engage in stimulating learning activities, and address personal challenges and life struggles. Research from around the world indicates that children's literature, particularly storybooks designed for this purpose, can promote the adoption of healthy habits and serve as an effective preventive tool to support young people's overall well-being. It helps children navigate emotional and social difficulties while modeling appropriate behaviors and providing health-related information. As a valuable resource, children's literature can "educate," "teach," and "heal," making storytelling a crucial educational strategy for fostering children's development in both home and school environments.

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## **About the Author**

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