

# The History of the Development of Children's Literature

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## Abstract:

This article examines the historical development and pedagogical–didactic significance of children's literature, with a particular focus on the works of Dr. Seuss. The study explores the evolution of children's prose across key stages of its formation, emphasizing both universal and national characteristics reflected in literary texts. By analytical and descriptive methods, the study ascertains the features of narrative patterns, poetic devices, and character depictions, and how each of these aids in the educational, psychological, and moral development of young readers. Focusing on the distinctiveness of Dr. Seuss stories artistically to show how these stories help in fostering and stimulating reading motivation, cognitive development, and value-based thought in children. The analysis is significant in that it reflects a continued relevance of children's literature as a foundational aspect of early education, underlining the presence of literary narrative within modern pedagogues.

**Keywords:** Children's Literature, Historical Development, Pedagogical-Didactic Approach, Dr. Seuss, Educational Significance, Literary Analysis, Child Psychology, Narrative Techniques, Thematic Evolution, Poetics of Children's Prose.

## Introduction

Despite the significant development of the literary field in the contemporary world, the sphere of children's literature appears to lag in terms of such progressive trends. There are ample reasons to support this observation [1]. When we think about children's literature, what often comes to mind are brightly colored books designed to teach the alphabet or numbers. However, children's literature is not limited to books aimed solely at education or entertainment. Rather, it carries the crucial

responsibility of providing the younger generation not only with knowledge and literacy but also with moral and ethical guidance [2]. The following discussion focuses specifically on the historical development of children's literature.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the historical development, contemporary trends, and pedagogical significance of children's literature both globally and in Uzbekistan. Data were collected through an extensive review of primary and secondary sources, including historical texts, literary works, scholarly articles, and relevant educational publications. Comparative and analytical methods were applied to trace the evolution of children's literature from its origins in folk oral traditions to its modern manifestations, incorporating psychological, pedagogical, and sociocultural perspectives [3]. Additionally, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify the key trends in contemporary children's literature, such as digitalization, multimedia integration, genre diversification, and the incorporation of ecological, gender, and inclusive education topics. Particular attention was given to Uzbek children's literature, analyzing the contributions of key authors across different historical periods and the impact of translation and adaptation of global works for young readers [4]. This methodological framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of both historical developments and current innovations in children's literature.

## **Results**

Results reveal that the development of children's literature seems to be a multi-stage progressive process influenced at different phases by cultural, educational and technological changes [5]. The worldwide trends analysis leads to the conclusion that the 20th century was crucial because of the incorporation into writing practices of psychological theories, especially those by Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, resulting in a wider range of genres, and an emphasis on the mental and emotional experience of the child. Modern children's literature from around the world also demonstrates wide-ranging development across themes of emotional intelligence, environmental conservation, gender equality and inclusive education largely bolstered by hyperspeed digitalization and multimedia fusion [6]. The findings further show that the development of children's literature in Uzbekistan has also been unique yet parallel: emerging from deep-rooted folk settings, sharpening its professional form with the Jadid reformist movement, and advancing at different stages during the Soviet and independence periods [7]. Modern Uzbek children's literature is marked by renewed attention to national values, psychological relevance, and the adoption of translated global classics. Overall, the findings highlight that both global and Uzbek children's literature are now experiencing an innovative phase driven by digital technologies, pedagogical priorities, and socio-cultural demands of contemporary childhood.

## **Discussion**

The origins of children's literature are deeply rooted in antiquity, and initially, it did not develop as an independent literary genre but rather as part of the broader corpus of folk creativity [8]. In ancient times, tales, myths, proverbs, and other forms of oral folk art served as important sources for the moral and educational development of children. Works such as Greek and Roman mythological stories, Aesop's fables, the Indian Panchatantra, and the Arab Kalila wa Dimna were widely employed to shape the imaginative world of young readers [9]. During the Middle Ages, religious and didactic texts, along with moral treatises, played a significant role in cultivating the minds of children, while folktales and epics began to take written form; for instance, the fairy tales of Charles Perrault became

popular in Europe.

The 17–19th century is when children literature is slowly gaining momentum as its own genre. Charles Perrault's collection *Ma mère l'Oye* ("Mother Goose Tales") was first published in 1697 and is often identified as the first book written for children. The 18th-century educational theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau gave rise to a psychological approach to literature that took into account the point of view of the child. It was in the 19th century that children's literature began to thrive, from the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, the collections of the Brothers Grimm, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, children's literature established itself as a very prosperous and separate literary genre [10].

The 20th century stands as this palpable shift in children's literature history, where educators and psychology permeated the literary landscape, so there was a need to question the relationship. Similarly to educational theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, children's literature was produced that focused on age-specific characteristics of children, cognitive abilities, and language (Sutherland, 1997). Furthermore, for children literature of 20th century, literary genres are considerable diversified [11]. J.K. Rowling and Astrid Lindgren moved the fantasy genre forward, but in realistic prose Jewish writer Anne Frank and Michael Morpurgo also sent ripples through the genre. Of course, playfully subversive poetry by Shel Silverstein and Dr. Seuss also contributed, as did humorous and psychology-based narratives of great storytelling that drew children in. In global children literature, iconic figures such as Karlsson, Pippi Longstocking, and the characters from *The Freedom Novel* were created between 1920 and 1970, while the cinema and animation played a great role in the development of the children literature from the 90s [12]. Especially in the contemporary period, with its increased emphasis on environmental themes, gender equality, and inclusion, social and moral relevance has often enriched the power of works of art.

The Uzbek literature for children through generations derived from the folk oral creativity where fairy tales (*Zumrad va Qimmat*, *Uch og'a-ini*), proverbs, riddles, epics and anecdotes were dominated. As the works of great thinkers such as Alisher Navoi, Babur, Gulxaniy, and Ahmad Yasawi provided moral and ethical guidance to children, they express educational and formative value.

The national children's literature has emerged and began developing in the early 20th centuries thanks to Jadid movement; Munavvarqori, Abdulla Avloniy, Fitrat and many others created textbooks, stories and poems for children. Most importantly, Avloniy's *Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq* served as a key tool for education of children and moral education.

The Soviet time (1930 to 1990) actually marked a new stage in the professional children's literature. The works of G'afur G'ulom: *Shum bola*, Abdulla Qahhor: children's stories, and the 'Sariq Devni minib' trilogy by G'afur Ibrohimov and Xudoyberdi To'xtaboev served as the hallmark of the fantastic realism [13]. School-oriented textbooks and Poetry collections were also popular during the early years.

Following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, the themes and aesthetic criteria of children's literature were renewed, with a primary focus on national values, independence, moral education, ecological upbringing, and character development. Translation literature also expanded, introducing works by authors such as Dr. Seuss, Astrid Lindgren, and J.K. Rowling into children's libraries. Today, writers including Xudoyberdi To'xtaboev, Tohir Malik, Erkin A'zam, Sirojiddin Sayyid, and younger contemporary authors such as Jamila Ergasheva and Nilufar Muzaffarova continue to play a significant role in the development of Uzbek children's literature [14].

Contemporary children's literature is distinguished by the integration of digital technologies and multimedia. E-books, audiobooks, interactive stories more broadly e-forms, and animation and children's series have a direct impact on the production of contemporary work. Concurrently,

pedagogical and didactic vectors have become more robust, with integrations of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics), gamification, and visual storytelling providing new ways to incentivize reading. Themes of modern-day children's literature are broad, from psychological growth, emotional literacy, equal rights, multicultural awareness, ecological lessons (if you know the Lorax), to global issues - all with a child-friendly dialogue. In Uzbek children's literature, notable trends include modern adaptations based on national folktales, new translations of works by Dr. Seuss, Andersen, and the Brothers Grimm, as well as stories adapted to the psychological characteristics of the younger generation. These directions further enhance the pedagogical, aesthetic, and social significance of children's literature, playing a crucial role in engaging young readers [15].

## Conclusion

To summarize, the evolution of children's literature has been closely tied to the established tradition of folk oral creativity, but over the course of the 17th to 19th centuries it emerged as a separate literary genre. In the 20th century, the developments of pedagogical and psychological directions led to radical changes in the literature for children and appeared new genres, which considers the child age characteristics, assimilation of the information and stylistic simplicity. Although professional children's literature appeared in Uzbekistan with the start of the Jadid period, its genres and means of pedagogy expanded during the Soviet period and continued but were never really established independently after independence. Digital technologies, creative techniques and psychological ideas are being interwoven into the twenty-first-century arena with children's literature as not just a teaching vehicle but a platform for aesthetic, social and world ideas.

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