

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

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## Abstrak

Buku anak-anak sudah berkembang di negara maju, seperti Amerika Serikat, sejak sebelum abad ke-16. Oleh karena itu di Amerika berbagai jenis buku-buku anak-anak terus berkembang dan keberadaannya sangat mendukung kegiatan belajar mengajar di kelas. Buku anak-anak ini memiliki fungsi baik akademis maupun personal. Pustakawan, terutama pustakawan sekolah, harus mengetahui jenis-jenis literature anak serta criteria yang harus dipenuhi untuk menyeleksi buku anak-anak, karena untuk mendukung kurikulum di kelas diperlukan buku yang berkualitas.

Keywords: Children Literature, Young Adult Literature, School Collection

## Introduction

### *Definition of children's literature*

There are some definitions of children's literature stated by experts. Children's literature comprises those books written and published for young people who are not interested yet in adult literature or who may not possess the reading skills or developmental understandings necessary for its perusal.<sup>1</sup> It is literature that implies some value added to separate good books from ordinary one.<sup>2</sup> The value relates to quality that is associated with literary standard. This means that children's literature should be good-quality trade books.<sup>3</sup> Every book that children read is not necessarily a part of children's literature. Textbook, comic book, adult science fiction borrowed

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<sup>1</sup> W. Wesley Patton, "Child Development, stages of growth," *Encyclopedia of education* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol.1. New York: MacMillan Reference USA, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Hillman. *Discovering children's literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River New Jersey: Merrill, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Carol Lynch-Brown and C.M. Tomlinson. *Essentials of children literature*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Pearson Education, 2005.

from parents is not children's literature.<sup>4</sup> However, some people still believe that anything children read and enjoy is a part of their literature. More people working on this field state that children book are books that are not only read and enjoyed by children but books that are written for children.<sup>5</sup> This means that children's book should meet certain criteria related to literary standard. Children's books are book for children from birth to adolescence covering topic that is relevance for children on their ages and the books should be interesting for children.

#### *Understanding children development aspect*

As children grow their interest on type of book may change. Therefore, it is important to understand children development on what their interest in terms of the kind of book they need. There four phases of children development are:<sup>6</sup>

1. Infancy through preschool. Children in this age are acquiring language, forming attachment with caregiver, developing locomotor skills and beginning to learn autonomy. Children learn language by listening both from conversation and through story and poetry performed by parents, teachers or caregivers.

2. Early childhood (5 – 8)

Children in this age are marked by some important things:

- Developing language
- Enjoying achievement (learning to read)
- Imitating adult roles
- Using “concrete” thought
- Projecting an optimistic view

3. Middle childhood (9 – 12)

Children in this age gain several typical developments such as:

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<sup>4</sup> Zena Sutherland. *Children and Books*. New York, Longman, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p15.

<sup>6</sup> Hillman, *Discovering children literature* p. 7.

- becoming more like adult in logical thought pattern
- growing increasingly dependent on peer group.
- perfecting skills
- employing metacognitive thought
- moving toward independence from parents
- developing competence in interpersonal and social relationships

Implication in-school learning; it is a good time increase independence, broader friendships and developing interest, like sports, art or music but the skill required for academic success become more complex.<sup>7</sup>

4. Adolescence. There are some changes like mature biologically, autonomous, start to employ abstract thought and establish sexual identity.

#### *Value of literature to children*

Basically, literature entertains through fiction works and it informs through non-fiction books. More specifically, children can benefit from literature that offers two values:

1. Personal value that consists of enjoyment, imagination and inspiration, vicarious experience, understanding and empathy, heritage, moral reasoning, literary and artistic preferences.
2. Academic value is related to improving skill on
  - Reading. Appropriate literature allows children to develop language development
  - Writing, that can be reached by reading literature and listening. Children will learn the pattern of their favorite authors and adapt it in their writing.
  - content area subject using literature across curriculum that require teachers to use works of literature as teaching materials in the content areas of social, studies and history, science, health and possibly math.

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<sup>7</sup> Patton, "Child...", p. 20.

- Art appreciation. Illustration is an important element in children's books that can help tell what the story about (cognitive value) and convey the value as art (aesthetic value).

## **Books and Young Adult**

### *Definition*

To identify books for young adult, we need to understand “young adult” and their needs. It is difficult to define term young adult, but generally young adult are thirteen to nineteen years old.<sup>8</sup> In this age when puberty comes, there are changes in young adult such as biological aspect and maturity growth. Complex of personal, family, environmental and social factor contribute to these changes.<sup>9</sup>

### *Types of literature for young adults*

To define literature for young adult is difficult. Psychological aspect influence what their interest on reading. Young adult experience crises of identity relating to some relationship:

1. With authority such as school and parents that tend to limit their personal autonomy.
2. With peers where relationships are sometimes transient but can develop into a strong and lasting bonding between confidantes.
3. with social norms
4. With sexual expectation and orientation
5. with indoctrination of faiths and morals
6. With one's self-concept.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Betsy Hearne and D. Stevenson. *Choosing books for children: a common sense guide*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Saxby. *Books in the life of a child: bridges to literature and learning*, South Melbourne Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd, 1997, p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

Often young adult read book especially adapted to their experience. They demand that their literature reflect the world they know and inhabit.<sup>11</sup> They are reading for some different purposes: emotional satisfaction, information and aesthetic adventure. Some young adult enjoy several type of literature such as popular and serious fiction, useful non-fiction and poetry collection.<sup>12</sup>

### **History of children's literature**

Hillman divides the history of children's literature into 5 periods:<sup>13</sup>

#### *1. Before 16<sup>th</sup> century*

Literature in this period was initiated by traditional literature taking several forms such as oral tradition, story-tellers and ritual. However, the invention of printing machine in 1440s helped the publication on several subject like social politic and economy to meet people's need at that time. Firth publication of children literature was Aesop's Fable, Morter D'Arthur and History of Reynard the Fox.

#### *2. 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century*

Several types of literature were produced such as picture book like *Orbis Pictus*, and fairy tales. The first children's book made was chapbook and hornbook.<sup>14</sup> The content of books in this period was religious didactic.

#### *3. 18<sup>th</sup> century*

The tradition of mother goose nursery rhymes was developed. The theme used varied: political satire, human straits, and human folly. The important moment in this period was that the childhood aspect in literature was recognized that means that modern literature had come. Some books were published such as *Two Shoes* in 1744. Scientific didacticism replaced the religious one.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> Hearne, *Choosing books for children: a commonsense guide*, p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> Hillman, *Discovering children's literature* p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Hornbook is small wooden boards shaped like paddles and covered with a thin layer of transparent horn.

#### 4. 19<sup>th</sup> century

Children's literature in this period became more various such as collections of folklore such as Ugly duckling. The role of illustrator who used technology produced good picture books. This is era of Golden Age.

#### 5. 20<sup>th</sup> century

This period was marked by the explosion of picture books. The difference of children's interest on books grew. The genre of children's literature varied like fantasy, historical fiction, folklore, realistic adventure, animal stories, poetry and family stories.

### **Evaluation of Children Literature**

#### *Literary elements*

These five elements are only for fiction books. Those are:

1. Plot, an element relating to what happens in the story. It could be conflict of the main character: person-against-person, person-against-nature, person-against-person, person-against society. It could be chronologic,<sup>15</sup> flashback, or episodic.<sup>16</sup>
2. Characters. This is about the actors in the story. It could be a good character (protagonist) or bad character (antagonist).
3. Setting. This element is related to time and place where the story occurs. The setting could be vague and general, usually in folktales like: "long ago in a cottage in the deep woods."
4. Theme. This element address on what the story about. It can be expressed by means of complete sentence. Good theme for children should convey moral message

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<sup>15</sup> Chronologic is plot that covers a particular of time relate to events in order within the period of time.

<sup>16</sup> Episodic is a type of plot that tie together separate short stories or episodes, each an entity in itself with its own conflict and resolution. See Lynch-Brown, *Essentials of children's literature* p.26.

5. Style, an element that shows the way authors tell the story. It can be seen through words chosen by author, sentences (is it easy to understand), and the organization of the book.

#### *Visual elements*

Since most children books combine text and illustration, we need to look at the visual elements:

1. *Line* that marks the form of a picture to define the outline. The line generally defines the object within the picture.
2. *Color* that is used to convey the situation when the story occurs, for example calm described by soft color.
3. *Shape* that is produced by areas of color and by lines joining and intersecting to suggest outlines of forms.
4. *Texture* that is the impression of how a pictures object feels. It enables artists to provide contrast within the picture.
5. *Composition* that includes the arrangement of the visual elements within a picture and the way in which these visual elements relate one to the other and combine to make the picture.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Categories of Literature (genre)**

1. Fiction

There are some types of fiction books:

- *Poetry*, the expression of ideas and feeling through a rhythmical composition of imaginative and beautiful words.<sup>18</sup> It is condensed language and imagery.<sup>19</sup> Good poetry will depend on these elements: the music of poetry (melody and movement), the use of words (vigorous, rich, delicate words), and the content

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Lee Galda and B. Cullinan. *Literature and Children*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont: Wadsworth / Thomson learning, 2002, p. 122.

that is built around subject or ideas.<sup>20</sup> Also included in poetry: mother goose and rhymes

- *Folklore*. It explains the phenomena of nature.<sup>21</sup> The most familiar and the most appealing type of folklore is folktale. The motifs of folklore are various, to account these motifs is to count the heartbeat of the human race.<sup>22</sup> Each character represents a part of humanity, each part of life, each a part of existence.
- *Modern fantasy*. This genre was fully accepted in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are various sub-genre of modern fantasy: *animal fantasy* that shows a blend of human characters with animal quantities, *high fantasy* that refers to the seriousness of purpose and lofty idealism of the hero's quest, *time fantasy* in which the authors construct parallel worlds that touch the world in magical places, science-fiction that is a blend of rational technological explanation and a literary form.
- *Contemporary realistic fiction*. This fiction has a strong sense of actuality. It is possible that the stories are about people and events that could happen in the real world.<sup>23</sup> Realistic fiction illustrates the real world in all its dimension: humorous, joyful, etc.
- *Historical fiction*. It implies an author has created a story set in the past. Historical fiction tells the stories of history; as a distinct genre consists of imaginative stories grounded in the facts of our past but it is not biography.<sup>24</sup> The story is imaginary characters and plot based on realistic story in the previous time.<sup>25</sup> Historical fiction is realistic but it differs from contemporary fiction in that the stories are set in the past rather than the present.

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<sup>20</sup> Sutherland, *Children's Literature* p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.103.

<sup>22</sup> Hearne, *Choosing books for children*, p.148 .

<sup>23</sup> Galda, *Literature and children* p. 203.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 269.

<sup>25</sup> Hillman, *Discovering children's literature*, p. 123.



- Fables, myth and epics. These are a part of the great stream of folklore. Fable is brief narrative taking abstract ideas of behavior. Myth attempts to explain in complex symbolism the vital outlines of existence.<sup>26</sup>
- Picture book. It is a book that combines text and illustrations to contribute the meaning of the story.<sup>27</sup> This book is primarily good for young children that are acquiring language. Types of picture book are: baby books, interactive books, toy books, wordless book, alphabet books, concept books, counting books, picture-story books, easy-to read book and graphic novel. Information books using picture can be a picture book, but it is not fiction.

## 2. Non-fiction:

- Biography. It is a book that gives factual information about the lives of actual people, including their experiences, influences, accomplishments and legacies. Biography can be classified: authentic biographies, fictionalized biography, and biographical fiction.<sup>28</sup>
- Information books. These books can be written on any aspect of the biological, social or physical world, including outer spaces. This type of book was often seen as boring and difficult to read but in twentieth century, authors of informational books changed their writing style and make these books as interesting and engaging as fiction books.<sup>29</sup> Informational books are sometime presented in picture books primarily books for young children.
- Multicultural, a collection that refers to trade books, regardless of genre, that have the main character a person who is a member of racial, religious or language microculture other than Europe-American. [The value of good literature reflects many aspects of a culture such as value, belief, ways of life](#)

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<sup>26</sup> Suhterland, *Children...*, p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> Lynch-Brown, *Essentials of children literature*, p. 76.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

<sup>29</sup> Evelyn B. Freeman. Informational books in the United States: transitions and trends. *BookBird*, 41 (1): (2003: 141-148).

and patterns of thinking. In Indonesian setting, it is good to have Indonesian multicultural books, since there are many cultures in Indonesia.

- International literature. In United States is defined as literary selections that were originally published for the children in a country other than the United States in a language of that country and later published in the United States.<sup>30</sup> International book is important both for teachers' development and students' development. Good story form other cultures and languages help connect students to potential friends around the world.<sup>31</sup> Thus, this type of book is essential to develop understanding and appreciation for other countries and culture.

## **Children literature and curriculum**

### *Connecting children's literature with curriculum*

Literature is a part of curriculum in most elementary schools.<sup>32</sup> Even more, children's literature complements school curriculum. Teachers try to integrate curriculum and see all disciplines as interconnected.<sup>33</sup> Teachers found that children's literature is the source to connect integration of classroom that complements each area of study through providing purposeful readings. Each genre makes each distinctive contribution, for example realistic fiction that complements all subject areas. The plot and setting connect with social studies, science, arithmetic or fine arts. The theme advances psychological or philosophical reality that connects with reader.<sup>34</sup> Some efforts to connect children literature are made through some activities such as reading aloud.

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<sup>30</sup> Lynch-Brown, *Essentials of children's literature*, p. 185.

<sup>31</sup> Deborah Eville Lo and R.J. Cantrell. "Global perspective for young reader: easy readers and picture-read-aloud from around the world," *Childhood Education*, 79 (1): (2002: 21-25).

<sup>32</sup> Sutherland, *Children...*, p. 204.

<sup>33</sup> Bette Bosma and N. De Vries Guth. "Making the connection", in *Children's literature in an integrated curriculum: the authentic voice*, ed by Bette Bosma and Nancy De Vries Guth. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1997, p. 68.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

### *Function of literature in school curriculum*

Literature has leading role in formal education of children in three related areas:

#### 1. Instructional reading program

Most instructional reading programs recognize the importance of literature. Basal reading textbook recommend trade books to be used from the beginning of formal reading instruction.<sup>35</sup> Through trade books children will gain pleasure in reading. In teaching reading, teacher use library-based program in which they plan instruction using trade books. It is an approach to teach reading through the use of trade books.<sup>36</sup> Teachers can use children books to provide the base for the reading and language and arts curriculum of any primary and middle schools.<sup>37</sup> This approach is based on the theory that children learn by searching for meaning in the world around them, constantly forming hypothesis, testing them to determine whether they work, and subsequently accepting or rejecting them. By this method, children hear literature read aloud several times a day and they discover that good books can entertain them. As a result they would constantly practice reading books they have chosen because they are interested in the topics. Many books are available to perform activities such as read aloud, for example, Red-Eyed Tree Frog that can be used to read aloud. This book has connection to curriculum in term how children become understand about frog for example what they eat.<sup>38</sup>

#### 2. Subject matter areas

In this areas related to the use of literature for learning in several areas such as social studies and sciences. Traditionally, these areas depend on textbook for learning in entire classes. However, information on textbook is limited in terms of the content since it survey broad areas of knowledge.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, trade books are important to

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<sup>35</sup> See *Encyclopedia of education*, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Lynch-Brown, *Essentials of children's literature*, p. 222.

<sup>37</sup> Hillman, *Discovering children's literature*, p. 243.

<sup>38</sup> Blass, Rosanne. *Booktalks, bookwalks and Read-Alouds: promoting the best new children's literature across the elementary Curriculum*. Wesport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, Teacher Ideas Press, 2002, p. 157.

<sup>39</sup> *Encyclopedia of education*, 2003.

fulfill this limitation. Non-fiction books provide more in-depth consideration of particular topics. Furthermore, literature offers its value of content area subject using literature across curriculum. Recently, the phrase literature across curriculum is often related to children's literature. The phrase means the use of literature as teaching materials in the context areas of social studies and history, science, health and math.<sup>40</sup> Literature and other curricular areas can be integrated in a variety of patterns. Literature is often combined with other sources of knowledge to broaden the study of a topic in science, social studies, mathematics or the arts.<sup>41</sup> Many non-fiction books (science, social studies, mathematics, language study, arts) are available in which children can explore almost any topic that interests them.<sup>42</sup> Research on Literature across curriculum performed by Morrow in 1997 shows that students who received yearlong literature based reading and literature-based science instruction scored higher than control group in reading and total language score on the California.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. Literature program

School literature programs vary widely. Some schools promote either reading for pleasure or formal study of literature. Most schools admit children's need for some pleasurable experiences with literature that enable them to think critically.<sup>44</sup>

## **How to write children books**

Writing books for children are interesting for some people primarily who have great concern on children books. There are some aspects need to consider writing children books as explained by Berthe Amoss and Eric Suben:<sup>45</sup>

### 1. Fundamental Preparation:

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<sup>40</sup> Lynch-Brown, *Essentials of children's literature*, p. 221.

<sup>41</sup> Joan I. Glazer. *Literature for young children*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 2000, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> Galda, *Literature and children*, p. 303.

<sup>43</sup> Lynch-Brown, *Essentials of children's literature*, p. 256.

<sup>44</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Education*, 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Berthe Amoss and Eric Suben. *Writing and illustrating children's books for publication: two perspectives*. Cincinnati: Writer's digest Books, 2005, p. 98.

- Read. This activity is important to look at closely what kind of book published for children, what children most like, etc. Talking to booksellers can help us to know what books are selling best and why. Reading a good writing in the area we interested in is important.<sup>46</sup>
  - Remember. Remembering our own childhood in terms of story and books we like best will be a good start to analyze why we like.
  - Watch. Children are a good object of our observation. We need to consider their ages, interest and skill.
  - Write. This is the important step in writing books. We can start writing on what we know<sup>47</sup> through journal that we should keep.
2. Literary aspects that are related to theme, plot, character, setting (time and place) as well as format and age level. When we decide to choose certain topic, for example dinosaur, we should also decide to what age level we would like to write.
  3. Organization that consists of beginning, middle and ending. To make children books interesting, good opening words are important to grab readers' attention. We need to make readers to keep turning the ending pages.<sup>48</sup>

Writing children book is important for librarian because the number of children's book, primarily in developing countries, is limited and also the price is expensive. Thus, one of strategies to acquire children books is writing books for children. In North America, many parents are very interested in developing children books by writing by themselves.

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<sup>46</sup> Kathy Stinson. *Writing picture books: what works and what doesn't!*, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited, 1991, p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.87.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94.

## **Concluding Remarks**

As an educator and as a librarian we have to admit that children's literature has a great impact on children's development. Children's books are not only for pleasure but also, at the same time, books have an essential function to support learning integrated within curriculum. In another word, children's books have academic and personal values. Therefore, the knowledge on how to recognize the good books for children and how to use them to support learning process is important both for teachers and librarians.

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