





The Very Hungry Caterpillar (1969) by Eric

Introduction: This project seeks to explore the evolution of children's literature over time in Europe and the United States. Children's literature is used to teach children about life, different places and people, and how to treat people in their environment. People of all ages, young kids to teenagers to adults, love children's books and the idea of being read to. Children's literature dates to the 15th century and has evolved a great amount to bring us to what we read to children and as children today.

This project explores children's literature in England during the late 1700's into the 1800's where the genre really took off evaluating aspects such as...

- the use of illustrations to help aid in storytelling over time
- the advertising of these books in journals and books for parents to see which books are the "best" for their children
- the process of how these books where printed and published to overall discuss how children's books have changed over time to get us to where we are today.

Research will mainly focus on the genre of children's literature in England in the late 1700s and early 1800s but will connect to how we use children's literature today in the United States as a comparison to discover how this genre impacts the lives of both children and adults.

Methodology:

- Historical Background of important figures that had influence in children's literature such as John Locke and his influence on what children's books should be and include and Sarah Trimmer analyzing her influence on parents choosing books for their children to read.
- Close reading and Examination of various articles surrounding the importance and meaning of illustrations in children's literature, the process and print culture of children's literature, and ways of advertising children's literature to parents such as specific journals, specifically The Guardian of Education produced by Sarah Trimmer from 1802-1806 to assist parents in choosing literature for their children to read in England in the late 1700s into the early 1800s.
- Analysis of illustrations of children's literature from the late 1700s into the early 1800s dissecting how they have changed over time and what they represent and children's books such as *The Parent's Assistant* written by Maria Edgeworth in 1796 looking at notes written to parents.

THE EVOLUTION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Results:

Illustrations

Illustrations in children's books have been used to raise appeal for a book and helps to aid readers in what is happening in a book to learn from the content and relate to the characters.

A study was completed to analyze different covers of Cinderella from 1800 until 2014 in order to discover the change over time to what the character looked like. The study found that...

- Early books mostly depicted the character of Cinderella in her rags and in a downtrodden state
- Modern books have the character dressed in her ballgown and as a princess

This information leads researchers to believe that through these visuals, the meaning of the character changes from someone that is a model of humility that girls want to emulate to a display that girls want to look like and imitate.

John Locke advocated for illustrations to be used in children's literature because it would help children to better understand the material due to the importance of using the senses and observation. Locke believed that illustrations would help children become more acquainted with the world and would help teach them morals and manners so they would behave better.



Contrasting Illustrations of Cinderella





Little Pretty Pocketbook (1787) by John Newberry

Advertising to Parents

Parents in the early 1800's were anxious about choosing books for their children to read as the idea was still somewhat new. Some parents feared their children being exposed to stories that would scare them through the characters or the events of the story itself. To help them, journals were created to discuss books and the ideas within in them so that parents could choose what to read to their children.

One of these journals was *The Guardian of Education* by Sarah Trimmer that ran from 1802-1806. The journal contained sections like book reviews and essays on education. Trimmer used the journal to express her thoughts on education, types of literature like fairy tales, and how literature could enhance children's life overall.

Authors of children's books would also include notes to parents in their books to let them know what the content in the book would be like. An example of this can be found in the 1796 book *The Parent's Assistant* by Maria Edgeworth. Before the stories begin, Edgeworth include a preface to parents that discusses her values about the stories included and what children could take away from the stories.



NORTHERN **COLORADO**

Results cont.

The Process

The first children's books were printed by William Caxton in the 15th century. John Newberry is a very influential figure in children's literature as well as John Locke and his ideas during the Enlightenment period about both reading to learn and reading to entertain.

Illustrations changed the print culture and changed the ideas people had about printing such as how print is only words. Moveable books were also a big shift in printing that stemmed from Locke's ideas about using books in order to learn. Movable books became almost exclusively for children by the 19th century largely because of Locke's ideas about the importance of materiality when reading books and using them to educate.

Conclusion: Children's Literature has evolved over time but has kept the same overall goal; entraining and educating children. John Locke wanted kids to gain knowledge and learn how to enter the world and books was and is an accessible way to do that. Printers and publishers were able to expand their businesses and audiences by including new things into books like illustrations, and eventually expand even more to making moveable books that children could interact with. Parents were given help and assistance with journals and notes from authors so that they knew what they wanted to read their children and would eventually help children decide what they would want to read to their own children someday.

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