

Impact of Moral Values, Gender Role and Cultural Practices on Children Literature

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Abstract. We are aware of the profound connections between children's literature and our society. Developing the child from an early age to various stages is crucial. Developing good manners, behavior, and moral character is its main objective. It also aims to help children improve their mentality, morals, literature, cleanliness, and personal development. Maintaining peace in our community and maximizing our social, cultural, and national potential are crucial. Literature is unquestionably an art form that combines amusement, cultural understanding, and imagination. In many ways, literature aids in a child's development and teaches them how to interact with others. Children are both a national imperative and a prerequisite for cultural growth in their decade of globalization. The majority of educational systems share characteristics, such as a significant emphasis on cognitive learning, objectively measurable outcomes, and an emphasis on knowledge, skills, and competencies. And the effectiveness of culturally authentic literature in fostering children's intercultural awareness and comprehension is well known. The works were authentically cultural, and readers could see how they would fulfill their roles as multicultural literature. It was explored how the books will serve as windows and mirrors for intercultural education and what it meant for multicultural children's book publishers, authors, and illustrators. Therefore, rivalry and achievement do not generate adequate interest in children's inner lives. Children's personal development greatly benefits from literature since it emotionally connects the reader to the story, which benefits both the individual and the educational process as a whole.

Keywords: Globalization; multicultural; imagination; education process; intercultural education.

Children's literature unquestionably has a lasting influence and plays a critical part in shaping the characters of future generations. Therefore, providing a diverse range of books is crucial to their future development and well-being. In this case, we need to focus more on how adults, parents, teachers, and other caregivers oversee and mediate the reading process and the caliber of these books. Children need to be encouraged to read

more and engage with these books less. According to numerous scholarly research and critical pieces, children's books can benefit a child's emotional and spiritual development in addition to their cognitive growth. The youngster may benefit from these books in developing social skills, emotional intelligence, and a high enough degree of success moving forward. However, these works could be used to uplift the emerging younger generations in accordance with the particular moral and noble standards that society demands. The reader can trace the following benefits and beneficial effects on the child's personality to begin with the positive aspects of children's books. In order to teach the child a lot about his customs, values, beliefs, and history, these books first depict the cultural background of a particular nation or collection of nations. Children's literature is crucial in this sense, according to Donna Norton and Sandra Norton, "since it teaches young boys and girls to value both their own and other cultures" (Norton & Norton, 33).

Second, these books encourage young readers to develop their language skills (vocabulary and sounds) and use their imagination. Third, during this process, the young boys and girls can improve their ability to comprehend both themselves and other people. Fourth, when reading about other ethnic communities, these books can teach kids to respect and value the backgrounds of others. Fifth, despite their seeming contrasts, these books may teach kids how to collaborate, play, and engage with others. They can learn how to successfully avoid their hurdles and work together to overcome their challenges. In the end, kids can come to understand the importance of humanity and the fact that everyone experiences the same emotions, including the same degree of fear and anxiety.

As a result, they might have a deeper comprehension of the ideas of equality and justice. However, children's books that are of poor quality and improper content can negate all of the benefits and attributes listed above and give kids a lasting bad opinion of particular genders or groups. From this perspective, we must choose high-quality books with caution and skepticism and thoroughly screen their content before recommending them to young children. In general, these novels should refrain from stereotyping, discrimination based on socioeconomic status or ethnic background, and any other bias toward particular groups.

Children's books are essential for forming young brains, teaching morals, establishing gender roles, and capturing cultural customs. Children's perceptions of personal identity and social conventions can be greatly influenced by the stories and characters they encounter. Moral lessons have traditionally been communicated through stories. Children are given frameworks for moral behavior through fables and stories, which frequently depict values like honesty, kindness, and perseverance. For example, timeless stories like "The Tortoise and the Hare" emphasize the importance of perseverance over conceit. Children's literature helps children build their moral compass and reinforces society values by depicting situations in which virtue prevails over evil.

The Idea that men are more significant or engaged members of society may be sustained by this discrepancy. But in recent years, there has been a deliberate attempt to provide more balanced representations, with tales that challenge conventional stereotypes by showcasing strong female protagonists and male characters in nurturing roles. Cultural norms and customs are also reflected in children's literature. Young readers can develop empathy and a global perspective by being exposed to a variety of customs, languages, and lifestyles through books. Stories set in many cultural contexts, for instance, might shed light on a range of social systems and customs. But it's imperative that these portrayals are truthful and considerate. Stereotypes can be strengthened or particular groups marginalized as a result of misrepresentations or cultural insensitivity. One prominent example is Jamie Oliver's children's book "Billy and the Epic Escape," which was withdrawn because of concerns of dehumanizing and demeaning content after receiving backlash for how it portrayed a First Nations character. To sum up, children's literature is an effective instrument that has the capacity to either support or contradict social standards. We can make sure that young readers gain a comprehensive grasp of the world and their position in it by encouraging varied, fair, and respectful storylines and encouraging critical engagement with the content.

Gender Role and Moral Values in Children's Literature

By introducing characters, stories, and cultural expectations that affect young readers' perceptions on ethics, conduct, and identity, children's literature plays a critical role in forming moral beliefs and gender roles.

1. Moral Principles in Children's Books:

Children's literature frequently seeks to impart moral teachings that mirror cultural standards and ideals. Although these values differ from culture to culture, they typically center on Integrity and Honesty. The penalties of lying are emphasized in books such as *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. Narratives promote honesty as a crucial quality for fostering social trust.

- * **Compassion and Understanding:** Charlotte's Web and other books emphasize selflessness, compassion, and camaraderie. Characters understand the importance of assisting others in several stories.
- * **Perseverance and Courage:** Positive thinking and perseverance are lessons learned from tales like "The Little Engine That Could". Adversity frequently presents obstacles for heroes and heroines, who use them to strengthen themselves.
- * **Obedience and Respect:** Respect for elders, teachers, and social norms is emphasized in traditional literature, particularly in folktales (such as those found in African and Asian folklore). In certain cultures, family dignity and harmony are associated with obedience.
- * **Equity and Justice:** Fairy tales that penalize misbehavior and reward good behaviour include "Cinderella" and "The Lion and the Mouse". The notion that justice and fairness produce favourable results is reaffirmed by these tales.
- * **Responsibilities and diligence:** Work ethic is encouraged over indolence in "The Ant and the Grasshopper". Kids learn the value of responsibility from several great stories.

2. Roles of Gender in Children's Books

Although modern books are progressively challenging old preconceptions, gender roles in children's literature have always followed societal expectations. Conventional roles for women male characters such as Prince Charming, knights, and adventurers are frequently portrayed as strong, courageous, self-reliant, and problem-solvers.

- * **Characters who are female:** Often depicted as docile, caring, or in need of saving (e.g., Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella).

- * **Family Roles:** In traditional fairy tales, for example, men are shown as guardians or providers, while women are frequently portrayed as caregivers.
- * **Development of Gender Roles**
 - Stereotypes are contested in contemporary literature : Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* and Roald Dahl's *Matilda* both feature strong, self-reliant female protagonists.
 - Male characters in caring positions: Some modern novels, such as Eric Carle's *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me*, show fathers in caring roles.
- * **Empowerment and Feminism**

Real-life heroes who challenge gender stereotypes are featured in *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*. Many authors today advocate for women's autonomy and self-determination.
- * **Inclusivity and LGBTQ+**

Diverse gender identities are introduced in books such as *I Am Jazz*. Acceptance and portrayal of all identities are promoted by inclusive literature.

Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature

One of those controversial topics that tends to come up again and again in children's books is cultural authenticity, which always evokes strong feelings and a variety of viewpoints. Based on their individual sociocultural experiences and philosophical stances, authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, educators, librarians, and researchers all hold varying opinions about authenticity. The intricacy of the topics being discussed was evident in our first analysis of the literature on the subject, but we also discovered that the arguments were frequently reduced to straightforward insider/outsider divisions, particularly the question of whether or not white authors ought to create books about people of color. In order to pinpoint the problems and variety of viewpoints, we made the decision to carry out a more comprehensive critical analysis of the essays and studies that have been published on cultural authenticity. Finding trends in the existing literature and offering potential avenues for further

investigation into cultural authenticity in children's books were the objectives of this review.

Determining cultural authenticity was the first conundrum we ran into. We discovered that the majority of educators and children's writers are more inclined to use intuitive language when discussing cultural authenticity than to explain it precisely. Bishop (2003) asserts that cultural authenticity cannot be described, but that "you know it when you see it"—that is, when you read a book about your own culture as an insider. Many people seem to agree with this statement. According to Howard (1991), readers can tell a book is "true" because they instinctively say, "Yes, that's how it is." (1) Howard maintained that while establishing cultural authenticity, educators must consider the impact a book has on the reader. Cultural authenticity is most commonly understood as the reader's perception of how a particular cultural experience has been conveyed in a book, especially when the reader is an insider to the culture described in that book.

Cultural authenticity criteria are also influenced by issues of the universal and specific. For instance, according to Howard (1991), a book is considered authentic when a universality of experience infuses a narrative that is situated inside the particularity of the characters and place. When the universal and the specific are combined, the result is a book that "will know that it is true, will identify and be affirmed, and readers from another culture will feel that it is true, will identify and learn something of value about both similarities and differences among us" (92). Given the variety of experiences within any cultural group and the fact that "every book reading is a unique transaction that leads to various interpretations" (Rosenblatt, 189), this definition of cultural authenticity immediately suggests why there are so many arguments regarding the legitimacy of a specific book.

In fact, the diversity and complexity both within and between cultures serve as a significant backdrop for any conversation on cultural authenticity in children's books. "The shared patterns that set the tone, character, and quality of people's lives" (216) constitute culture, according to Geertz (1973) (216). Language, religion, age, sexual orientation, country, gender, race, ethnicity, social class, geographic locations, and so on are some examples of these patterns. According to the majority of social scientists, culture is mostly made up of "the ideational, symbolic,

and intangible facets of society—the beliefs, symbols, interpretations, and viewpoints that set one group of people apart from another” (Banks, 43).

Even though cultural groupings share common patterns and experiences, cultures must be seen as wholes rather than as collections of discrete components since “they are always dynamic, complicated, and changing” (67). Although there are always distinctions within a community, educators have put forth a number of options for assessing that group’s cultural authenticity. According to Mo and Shen (2003), for instance, “cultural authenticity is the degree to which a book captures the beliefs, values, and facts that people in a culture as a whole believe are important”(198). The degree to which a book captures the worldview of a particular cultural group as well as the authenticating aspects of language and daily life for members of that group is another way Bishop (2003) suggested defining cultural authenticity. She points out that “although there will never be a single representation of life in a particular cultural setting, each cultural group’s underlying ideology, literary characteristics, and topics can be utilized to assess cultural authenticity”. (25)

Conclusion

Children’s literature have the ability to influence young brain development. It teaches moral principles, but it must strike a balance between teaching and letting kids come to their own moral conclusions. Though preconceptions must be challenged, gender roles in literature are changing. Books’ cultural practices ought to uphold authenticity while encouraging diversity. Children’s literature must be critically analyzed by parents, teachers, and writers to make sure it conveys moral, gender-equitable, and culturally diverse stories.

While gender roles influence how people perceive themselves and what society expects of them, moral principles in children’s books serve to impart ethical teachings. Modern literature is becoming more varied, encouraging equality, inclusivity, and individual agency, whereas classic novels frequently perpetuate stereotypes. Cultural practices have a significant impact on children’s literature because they shape the stories, morals, and representations that are found in books. Children’s reading experiences are enhanced by a variety of cultural viewpoints, which promote appreciation for various customs and global understanding.

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