

# **Anglophone Literature for Children and Juvenile Readers**

Silvia Pokrivčáková



University of Trnava  
Faculty of Education  
2018

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite an ever increasing popularity of various kinds of new media, literature still remains an important part of children's lives, bringing entertainment, new experience, and knowledge. Since it also makes up a significant part of children's education, teachers should be both familiar with it as well as, most importantly, understand it. Undoubtedly, the importance of children's literature makes it one of the most important courses in teachers' training curriculum, irrespective of whether they are going to be teachers of their mother tongue or a foreign language.

The textbook *Anglophone Literature for Children and Juvenile Readers* is meant as a thorough and easy-to-use outline of this burgeoning field of literary study. It is intended mainly for university students – future teachers of English as a foreign language at preliminary, elementary and secondary schools. It can be useful for in-service teachers of English as well as for all those who are interested in children's literature written in English language.

The book consists of 9 chapters, each of them designed as a relatively self-contained text. It provides readers with the basic knowledge of history and most works of both British and American children's literatures. Although it covers literary genres from the very oldest ones – fables, myths, folk tales, nursery rhymes – up to the latest innovations in the field, the emphasis lies on the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries classics.

The current edition of the textbook has originated in the textbook *Children's Literature in English* (2008). Apart from the change in its format (from a print to electronic publication), the original text has been extended by several additions. First of all, information on new literary works and trends that occurred during the last decade have been added. Second, brand new chapters on picture books and electronic literature were included. Last but not least, in relation to the new format of the textbook, new hypertext links were incorporated as well. In addition, the electronic textbook is accompanied by an electronic course in the LMS Moodle (University of Trnava).

The textbook has been written primarily to support students (and teachers) knowledge on literature written for and read by children and young readers. However, the secondary motivation was to open the window to the vivid, colourful and sometimes magic world of literary stories and characters which create the skeleton of English-speaking cultures.

Author



## 1 CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND ITS STUDY

The term *literature for children and young readers* (known also as *children's literature, children's and juvenile literature* etc.) is used for a set of literary texts (fiction, drama, poetry, and some non-fiction), both in their oral and written forms, intended especially for children and young readers, the age of which may be framed as from their birth to the age of sixteen (even though there are no clear boundaries). Literature for children and young readers (hereafter children's literature) should not be confused with literature about children or literature written/performed by children, although there is a large overlap between these three categories.

Despite the fact that children must have been continuously surrounded by art and literature (intended for adults) since the beginning of humanity, it was only in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that children's literature could first be clearly recognised as a distinct and independent form of literature with its own stylistics, artistic characteristics and dynamics of development. Contemporary children's literature includes a wide range of works, including ancient folklore forms, famous classics, picture books, and its own branch of digital (electronic) literature and, generally, literary scholarship distinguishes its **three basic sub-categories**:

- **children's folklore** (for more see chapter 2 Folk genres),
- **non-intentional literature** for children and young adults formed by literary texts that were originally meant for adult recipients but, over the course of time, they have become – either in original or adapted versions - an inseparable part of children's bookshelves (e.g. the majority of folk tales, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, J. F. Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and many others).
- **intentional literature for children** and young adults which encompasses literary texts created primarily for young readers in mind (e.g. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*,. However, in many occasions, intentional children's literature has been read by adults. Also, it

creatively influences adults' literature by its playful poetics, fresh imagery, and ideological clearness.

This textbook pays attention to texts from all three of these subcategories.

What is characteristic for children's literature and its children's readers (younger than 10 years)?

1. **Children's point of view** (children's aspect) – the authors compose their works with regard to the psychology of children. They usually write on topics interesting for children, use language elements typical for children, and write in a way that can attract and keep children's attention, curiosity, and interest.
2. Children prefer **short dynamic stories** and reject long descriptions and explanations. The most typical question for them to ask is: "What will happen next?"
3. Children are sensitive for a clear **moral determination of characters** – they need to know who is good and who is bad; what is true and what is false; what is nice and what is awful.
4. It seems that children prefer literary characters in their age whom they may see as **equal partners** (remember, this is the case with Harry Potter). Similarly, personified animals and toys (acting as allegories of human qualities) are extremely popular as well.
5. Children perceive the world mostly through pictures, noises, smells and touches, not through mere words. Therefore they want these **sensual elements** to be present in the texts as well.
6. Children like books full of **concrete imagination**, they like picture books and texts with funny graphics (palindromes, letters of various sizes and colours, words substituted by small pictures, etc.). As for sound, frequent and popular ones are expressive rhythms, rhymes, alliteration, paronomasia, onomatopoeia, anagram, acrostics, telestics, calambur, etc.).
6. The language of children's books is based on the real style of **children's speech**. A simplified syntax and sensually-rich concrete diction are typical for children's literary texts.
7. The most natural and important activity for children to enjoy is **a play**. Since children's plays are based on fantasy and imagination, they expect them also in books they are going to read: children like books with nonsense, fantasy, and imagination.

Only a short time ago, children's literature was not even considered a legitimate field of research in literary scholarship. Critics hardly saw it as a proper subject for their work. It was usually studied by teachers, but they were, understandably, most often interested in its educational value and not in its qualities as a representative of a literary art. Nowadays, children's literature is

respected as an interesting subject for serious literary research. Several critical approaches to children's literature have been developed, studying it as:

- **part of national history and culture** – literature written and read by children is understood as a relatively independent part of the history and culture of any particular nation; such an approach could be identified in many textbooks of children's literature (Townsend, 1990);
- **literature in literature** – children's literature is studied as a special part of a whole complex of national literature (Stanislavová & Žemberová, 2000);
- **a component part of general aesthetic and literary education** – children's literature is considered as a medium through which children's ability to perceive and produce beauty is developed;
- **an instrument of language education** – this method is frequently used, not only in mother tongue acquisition (mainly through nursery rhymes, fairy tales, animal stories, etc.), but also in foreign languages, making children's literature an inseparable part of teaching foreign languages to younger learners at our schools.

Contemporary children's literature encompasses not only a wide scale of genres, types, and themes, but also a rich array of scholarship, criticism, and history research. It has been developing and refining also thanks to its own **institutions**: critics, periodicals, publishing houses, theatres, libraries, associations, exhibitions, conferences, competitions and prizes.

The results of literary research focused on children's literature are published mostly in journals: [Achuka](#) (the U.K.), [The ALAN Review](#) (a leading print journal in Young Adult Literature, also online), [The Bulletin of the Centre for Children's Books](#) (a leading review journal in the U.S.A), [Canadian Children's Literature, Children's Literature](#) (online), [Children's Literature in Education, The Lion and the Unicorn](#) (a leading scholarly journal of children's literature, online), [The Looking Glass](#) (an online scholarly magazine), [The Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy](#) (print and online journal), [Riverbank Review of Books for Young Readers](#) (print journal), [Signal: Approaches to Children's Books](#) (the U.K.), [Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults](#) (Australia).

Authors, critics, and educators interested in children's literature are associated in numerous organisations and associations, e.g. *ALAN* ([The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents](#)), [The Canadian Children's Book Centre](#), [Children's Literature Association](#), [Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators](#) and others. The web pages of the named organisations and associations are sources of latest news, hot trends and up-to-date information.

## 2 CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE

Folk genres come under the umbrella term folklore. Folklore represents expressive culture within a particular nation, region or community, including folk tales, music, dance, legends, oral history (myths), proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, customs, etc. First, pieces of folk poetry spread among the very young children called nursery rhymes will be discussed.

### 2.1 Nursery rhymes

As already mentioned, nursery rhymes are traditional poems or songs of folk origin popular mostly among very young children. For centuries they were spread orally from generation to generation (either from parents to children or from older children to younger children). Only later, mostly in 19th century, they were collected and noted by nowadays well known authors. In the British context, **John Newbery** (1713-1767) was the first person who decided to publish collections of nursery rhymes and other books for children (*Tales of Mother Goose*, 1700).

Nursery rhymes have some specific literary characteristics. As an example we can use the nursery rhyme Hey, Diddle Diddle:

*Hey, diddle, diddle,  
The cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon.  
The little dog laughed  
To see such fun,  
And the dish ran away with the spoon.*

The nursery rhyme is built upon a concrete imagery. A cat, a cow and a dog are animals that children could meet everyday in their homes. A fiddle, a dish, a spoon and the moon were objects they could frequently see or use. Even the verbs "to jump" and "to run", and "to laugh" express activities children have always liked best. The concrete objects and activities are combined in the way that they create the nonsense quality. The humorous image of a cow jumping over the moon must have been funny to every child, making it pleased and happy. Moreover, no one can see any educational intent in the nursery rhyme which makes it even more attractive to children.

Literary characteristics of nursery rhymes in general can be summarised as follows:

- concrete imagery,
- action and dynamics,
- brevity,
- musical quality of the rhymes,
- regular rhythm as a determining aspect,
- humorous play with sounds (alliteration, onomatopoeia, and other sound patterns) and meaning of words (homonymy, puns, etc.).

Because of the above qualities, nursery rhymes have been an inspiration for many outstanding authors (e.g. Lewis Carroll made the compositional principles of nursery rhymes the core of his *Alice Books*, James Joyce famously incorporated Irish and Celtic myth and folklore in his prose, Agatha Christie used folklore elements when composing her famous detective stories, e.g. in her *Three Blind Mice and Other Stories*). Since there are a number of nursery rhyme forms (many of them associated with music, specific actions, motions, or dances), many subgenres of nursery rhymes can be recognised:

**1) Lullabies** are songs usually sung to babies or small children before they go to sleep.

*Hush little baby, don't say a word,  
Papa's going to buy you a mockingbird  
And if that mockingbird don't sing,  
Papa's gonna buy you a diamond ring.*

**2) Children from 3 to 7 love action rhymes** especially, including rhymes for running, hopping, skipping, knee-riding rhymes, hand-clapping rhymes, finger-and-toe rhymes and ball-bouncing rhymes because they can be active and they can involve the whole body. Examples include notoriously known songs "If you're happy and you know it" and "My head, my shoulders, my knees...!" Here is an example of a finger rhyme:

*Ten fat sausages sizzling on the pan (2x)  
One went "POP!"  
And another went "BANG!"  
There were eight fat sausages sizzling on the pan.  
Eight fat sausages sizzling on the pan (2x)  
One went "POP!"  
And another went "BANG!"  
There were six fat sausages sizzling on the pan, etc.*

(Note: Children start each verse by holding up the correct number of fingers and clap their hands on "pop" and "bang".

3) **Cumulative and inclusive rhymes** are popular especially among children from 5 to 10. Their principle lies in substitution or linking new words to the rhyme pattern. The English carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas" represents cumulative songs. The rhyme "There's a fox..." is the example of an inclusive rhyme:

*There's a fox in a box in my little bed,  
my little bed, my little bed,  
There's a fox in a box in my little bed,  
And there isn't much room for me.  
There's a goat in a coat in my little bed...  
There's a snake in a cake in my little bed...  
There's a pup in a cup in my little bed...  
There's a lamb in some jam in my little bed...  
There's a mouse in a house in my little bed...  
There's a bear in a chair in my little bed..., etc.*

4) An obvious purpose of **alphabet rhymes** is to practise an alphabet with children.

*A was an archer who shot a frog,  
B was a butcher and had a big dog,  
C was a captain all covered with lace,  
D was a drunkard and had a red face...*

5) Riddles are witty metaphorical short rhymes usually in the form of question. They play on shifting the meanings of words, which is based on play of associations or visual similarity. The task of children is to guess the primary meaning and answer the question.

*Riddle me, riddle me, what is that?  
Over the head and under the hat? (hair)  
Two brothers we are,  
Great burdens we bear,  
On which we are bitterly pressed.  
The truth is to say,  
We are full all the day,  
And empty when we go to rest. (shoes)*

6) **Tongue-twisters** are funny, usually nonsense phrases designed to be very difficult to articulate properly. According to Guinness World Records, the hardest tongue-twister in English is *The sixth sick sheikh's sixth sheep's sick*. Apart from the fact that practising tongue twisters is great fun, they help to fix appropriate pronunciation.

*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,  
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.  
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,  
How many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?*

- 7) Through **rhymes of infantile mathematics**, including counting-down rhymes, children learn numbers, their sequences and basics of arithmetic.

*One, two, three,  
look at me.  
Four, five, six,  
pick up sticks.  
Seven, eight, nine,  
life is fine.  
Ten! (children clap their hands)*

- 8) If children need to choose somebody among themselves or if they must be divided into smaller groups, they usually introduce **counting-out rhymes**. Pointing to someone at the end of the rhyme means that he or she must leave the circle.

*Ink, mink, pepper, stink, alley, cally, poo.  
Out spells out and out goes you.*

- 9) **Carols** are festive songs, generally religious. Well-known examples are Christmas or Easter carols:

*I saw three ships come sailing in  
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;  
I saw three ships come sailing in  
On Christmas day in the morning.  
And what was in those ships all three,  
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?  
And what was in those ships all three,  
On Christmas day in the morning?  
Our Saviour Christ and His lady,  
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;  
Our Saviour Christ and His lady,  
On Christmas day in the morning.*

- 10) **Proverbs and sayings** are expressions of practical truth or wisdom. Popular examples include:

*"When the cat is away, the mice will play"  
"Hunger is the best cook".  
"All that glitters is not gold."  
"First think, then speak."*

**11) Nearly all children love humorous **short stories in verse**.**

*Wise men of Gotham,  
Went to sea in a bowl.  
If the bowl had been stronger,  
My story would've been longer.*

**Origin of nursery rhymes**

Only some nursery rhymes were created to entertain children. However, many of them are, sometimes, of curious origin. It is said that majority of English nursery rhymes originated in the 17th century as street cries, oral political anecdotes or advertisements (open naming or free speech could get the author imprisoned). For instance, some interpretations say that the character of Humpty Dumpty refers to King Richard III of England. During the battle of Bosworth Field, he fell off his horse and was said to have been "hacked into pieces".

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again!*

Some critics believe that the nursery rhyme Hickory Dickory Dock relates to the period of the Commonwealth and one-year reign of Richard Cromwell as Lord Protector of England.

*Hickory, dickory, dock,  
The mouse ran up the clock.  
The clock struck one,  
The mouse ran down!  
Hickory, dickory, dock.*

It is also said that the nursery song Three Blind Mice alludes to Queen Mary I of England who agreed to execute three Protestant bishops.

*Three blind mice,  
See how they run!  
They all ran after a farmer's wife,  
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife.  
Did you ever see such a sight in your life,  
As three blind mice?*

The nursery rhyme Jack and Jill could be a curious lesson of marketing: when King Charles I wanted to reform the taxes on liquid measures, he was blocked by Parliament. Then he ordered that the volume of a Jack (1/2 pint, usually marked with a crown on the glass) be reduced (Jack fell down and broke his crown), but

the tax remained the same. Of course, the smaller volume of gill (Jill) dropped in volume as well (Jill came tumbling after).

*Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
And Jill came tumbling after.*

While many nursery rhymes were originally inspired by historical and political events, the origin of Hey, Diddle Diddle can be explained in a very different way. The rhyme probably reflects the planet constellations visible only in April. Nearly all characters appear then in the sky: the cat (the Lion), the fiddle (the Lyre), the cow (Taurus – the Bull), the Moon; the Little Dog (Canis Minor), the dish (Crater – a dish shaped constellation), and the spoon (Ursa Major – the Big Dipper). When all of these constellations were visible in April, farmers knew that it was the time to sow the crops.

Apart from being little gems of literary art, nursery rhymes are great source for EFL (English-as-a-foreign-language) classrooms. They may be irreplaceable in practicing pronunciation of English phonemes, as well as rhythm and intonation of English sentences. There are countless collections published in both print or digital formats, however, many of questionable quality. For educational purposes, materials produced by respected publishers are recommended, e.g. *The Complete Book of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays, and Chants* by Jackie Silberg & Pam Schiller (2002) or BBC's Nursery songs and rhymes section ([online](#)).

## 2.2 Folktales

**Folktales** are general terms for different genres of traditional (folklore) narrative. Similarly to nursery rhymes, they are of uncertain origin and were passed from generation to generation through oral presentation. The telling of stories appears to be a universal need of all cultures. Ethnologists claim that there are numerous similarities in structure and motives of folktales from very distant cultures. Folktales for children were usually simplified or adapted versions of ancient myths, fables, legends, fairy tales or other forms originally told to adults.

**Myths** are stories of symbolic meaning (usually related to the particular religious tradition, e.g. Christian myths) which explain the origin of events, objects, creatures, places, the world, or of humankind itself. Myths are usually inhabited by characters with supernatural powers, such as gods, great heroes, witches, fairies, or beasts. Myths and their events are set in an unspecified time, creating the impression of their existence apart from ordinary human experience. Some ancient nations created complex myths called **mythologies**, e.g. Greek

mythology artistically immortalised by Homer in the *Iliad and the Odyssey*. English mythology, which is related directly to England, combines and integrates elements from Celtic mythology, Anglo-Saxon mythology, Christian mythology, as well as elements of Norse and Welsh mythologies. Scotland, Ireland and Wales have their own mythologies stored and spread in their languages.

Myths are usually available to children readers only in simplified versions, such as those in Enys Tregarthens' collection *Fairy Tales Myths and Legends, Stories for Children: Kids books from Cornwall and the British Isles* (Tregarthens, 2016), or *The Usborne Book of Myths and Legends: Stories for Young Children* (Milbourne et al., 2007).

**Fables** are short animal stories with allegorical meaning and some moral clearly stated at the end. The story is brief, interesting and clearly composed. Animal characters are always highly anthropomorphised, representing a certain type of a human character. Fables can be in verse or prose. Some critics have called into question the folklore origin of the genre probably because the earliest known fable came from Hesiod (about 8th century B. C.) and the most famous fables in European tradition are those of Aesop (about 600 B. C.).

**Legends** are stories inspired by some historical characters, events or locations. Legends explain history in a fictional way which may include fantastic characters (wizards, dragons, elves, etc.), miracles, and magic objects. The most popular legends in British literatures are legends about King Arthur and Robin Hood.

**Legends about King Arthur** were inspired by a real historical person (Uther, a leader in Wales, Cornwall and Northern Britain against the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century AD), but the description of historical events is pure fiction where together with kings, knights, queens and ladies, pagan gods (Mordred), mythical figures (Lady of the Lake), wizards (Merlin, Morgan le Fay) and magical objects (sword Excalibur) appear.

Although there are many variations of the Arthurian legends, the basic story is always the same. Arthur was a illegitimate son of Uther Pendragon, king of Britain, and Igraine, the wife of Gorlois of Cornwall. Young Arthur was nursed in secrecy. Being sixteen, he won acknowledgment as the only true king of Britain after he had magically withdrawn a sword from a stone. The magician Merlin then disclosed the new king's origin. King Arthur had his court at Camelot, one of the most famous fictional castles. Arthur, being the possessor of Excalibur, the miraculous sword, was believed to be an invincible warrior and wise king (known for example for organising the Round Table meetings). Yet, he was not so happy in his private life. His wife Guinevere had an affair with Sir Launcelot, which destroyed the unity of Arthur's court. Arthur's sister Morgan le Fay and

nephew Mordred were his most dreaded enemies. After the final battle during which Mordred was killed and Arthur fatally wounded, the king was buried in the Isle of Avalon. From that moment, he has been expected to one day return to his people.

The famous version named *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, adapted for children and richly illustrated by Howard Pyle (1903) which has been serving as a prototext for many successive rewritings is available [online](#) and as [an audiobook](#).

The second popular circle of British legends revolve around **Robin Hood**, a medieval hero, who is described as a man fighting for justice, robbing the rich and supporting the poor. The legend is set in Sherwood Forest. The evil villains of the legend are the Sheriff of Nottingham and Prince John of England who persecute the poor to get means to figure John's brother Richard the Lionhearted. The versions adapted for children readers focus mostly on the moral point of the story and the silly aspects of the Merry Men's life in Sherwood Forrest.

Old myths and legends have always been a bottomless source of inspiration for many of the greatest British authors, including William Shakespeare, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.

**Fairy tales**, such as *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Three Little Pigs*, *Rapunzel* or *Little Red Riding Hood* remain the most popular genre of children's literature. Fairy tales are fantastic fictional stories populated by both human and fantastic characters (fairies, giants, talking animals, elves, trolls, witches). Originally, fairy tales were told to adult audiences (hence many horror motives), only later were they adapted for children. For example, the immensely popular folk tale Little Red Riding Hood was originally a story of paedophilic attack and it was usually told advising young ladies to avoid some men – predators (see the direct warning closing of Perrault's version of the fairy tale: "Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf", but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all".)

In later editions this aspect of the fairy tale has vanished and it has become a happy ending story about child's disobedience and its punishment. The question of folk tale transformation has been worked by in details by English folklorists Iona and Peter Opie (1974) who analysed texts of twenty-four well known fairy tales from the textual point of view, summarising the history of each tale.

### ***Fairy tales collectors***

Fairy tales, together with other genres of folk texts, started being massively collected in the era of Romanticism when they were considered to represent true folk wisdom and compactness of human beings with nature. English folk and fairy tales were collected and published in numerous books. For instance, a Celtic scholar **John Francis Campbell** (1822-1885), published the bilingual 4-volumed *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-1862) and many Scottish Gaelic tales. Scottish poet, novelist and anthropologist **Andrew Lang** (1844-1912) retold classical fairy tales in a beautifully illustrated [\*Blue Fairy Book\*](#) (1889), later followed by many other collections of fairy tales today called as Andrew Lang's Fairy Books. Inspired by Charles Perrault and the Brother Grimm, **Joseph Jacobs** (1854-1916), edited several collections of fairy tales which have become classic. They were published from 1890 to 1912 in 5 volumes: [\*English Fairy Tales, More English Fairy Tales, Celtic Fairy Tales, More Celtic Fairy Tales, and European Folk and Fairy Tales\*](#).

Afro-American folk tales come from African Americans brought to southern parts of the USA as slaves. Their cultural heritage is rich in music, songs, verbal games, and folk tales. The first important collector of black tales from plantations was **Joel Chandler Harris** (1848-1908) who published them in newspapers (from 1880) and now they are known as the [\*Uncle Remus Stories\*](#). Harris introduced the stereotyped figure of a wise old black Uncle telling the stories to a curious white boy. The typical protagonists of Afro-American folk tales are animals, such as in Brother Fox and Brother Rabbit, Raccoon, Alligator, Wolf, and others (Příbylová, 2003).

The father of American folklore **Richard Mercer Dorson** (1916-1981) was both a respectable theorist and the author of numerous collections of retold folk tales of American origin, e.g. *American Folklore* (1959), *American Negro Folktales* (1967). Dorson edited the *Folktales of the World* series, published between 1963 and 1979 by the University of Chicago Press.

An English poet **Ruth Manning-Sanders** (1888-1988) collected and retold fairy tales from all over the world. Her collections included (among others) *Peter and the Piskies: Cornish Folk and Fairy Tales* (1958), *Red Indian Folk and Fairy Tales* (1960), *The Red King and the Witch: Gypsy Folk and Fairy Tales* (1964), *Stories from the English and Scottish Ballads* (1968), *The Glass Man and the Golden Bird: Hungarian Folk and Fairy Tales* (1968), *Jonnikin and the Flying Basket: French Folk and Fairy Tales* (1969), *Scottish Folk Tales* (1976), *Folk and Fairy Tales* (1978) and *Tales of Magic & Mystery* (1985).

### **Composition of fairy tales**

The following features are typical for fairy tales as literary genre of children's literature:

- undefined setting ("Once upon a time in a kingdom far, far away"),
- fairy tale characters are "flat", without inner psychological or physical development, they are rather general types, not individuals,
- various metamorphoses are possible (e.g., the beast turns into a handsome prince, the child turns into a bird, bread can be changed into gold, etc.),
- contrast is a crucial principle in building the story, e.g. distinct border between the good and the bad, the poor and the rich, etc.,
- a moral is clearly stated,
- physical appearance usually corresponds with the character (witches are ugly, good girls are beautiful),
- the hero is often isolated and must act alone,
- occurrence of repetitious elements that help to remember the story,
- presence of magical numbers three, four, seven, twelve, etc.),
- a happy ending.

Published nearly 100 years ago, probably the most influential study of fairy tales' composition by V. Propp (*Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 1928) identified 7 basic types of fairy tale characters:

1. **The hero:** usually the (male) character who bears all the virtues. He usually acts as a response to some stimulus (a disaster, changed circumstances) or searches for adventure and reward. He always needs to fight a villain and is frequently helped by a donor (or magical helper).
2. **The villain:** Each hero needs his villain to distinguish himself and prove that he is worthy of the reward. As a rule, the villain lacks any virtues.
3. **The princess** (or the prince): is the reward for the hero. He/she brings the hero not only love and marriage, but also wealth and power (usually half of the kingdom).
4. **The donor:** helps the hero by awarding him/her some magical power or object.
5. **The dispatcher:** is the character which helps the villain.
6. **The king or the princess' father:** In some tales he gives the hero the task of saving the kingdom from the villain. He sometimes identifies the false hero and often gives her daughter's hand to the hero as a way of payment for his resolution of the evil attempts carried out by the villain.
7. **The false hero:** tries to take credit for the hero's actions and sometimes even tries to marry the princess/prince.

Together with basic types of character, Propp identified a set of 31 functions which enable the development of the story and the particular ending of the tale. A

function here means “an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action“ (Propp, 1968, p. 21). Here are some examples of fairy tale functions:

**Function I:** *One of the members of a family absents himself from home;*

**Function VI:** *The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings;*

**Function XL:** *The hero leaves home;*

**Function XXVIII:** *The false hero or villain is exposed, etc.)*

The typical characters and functions mentioned above could easily be identified in any (folk/traditional) fairy tale. However, in recent years it has become a popular strategy among authors to subvert these old bricks of the ancient genre (subversion = leaving established conventions, mocking the traditional concepts). As model examples of such subversion might serve Roald Dahl’s [\*Revolting Rhymes\*](#) (1982) or movies like *Shrek* (2001) and *Hoodwinked* (2005).

Two subgenres of folk tales were developed in the area of the USA – tall tales and urban tales.

**Tall tales** are humorous oral stories close to anecdotes and told by and about hunters, scouts, boatmen, cowboys, and farmers. An important role is played by nature and natural phenomena (wild rivers and waterfalls, killing deserts, dark woods, unstable weather, etc.).

**Urban tales** are stories which never happened, however they are told as being true. As an example can be mentioned stories about alligators said to live and hunt for people, mostly children, in a city’s sewers. They are believed to be flushed down the toilet by their previous pet owners, now living on wastes and human preys and growing to an enormous size.



## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- If you had kids, which tales would you read to them, or alternately, which tales would you refuse to read them? Why?
- Would you use the behaviour of young girls in folk / fairy tales (Cinderella, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood etc.) as a model for your potential daughter?

- In many fairy tales, the hero wins the hand in marriage of the princess. How is this situation any different from an arranged marriage?
- Who seems to be the target of violence in most of the tales? Can you notice any patterns?
- Compare several versions of the same fairy tale and search for possible trends in its changes.

## 3 BEGINNING OF MODERN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

### 3.1 Moralist literature

The birth of modern children's literature, as in opposition to traditional folklore forms, was not easy, which was related to the social and legal position of the child in the society. In ancient times, children were considered as a possession of their fathers and, as such, they could be abandoned, sold or even killed without any punishment. The lack of understanding and respect toward children was dominant in the Middle Ages, also, with the important exception of several philosophers and educators, including **Comenius** who published the first picture book for children - [Orbis Sensualium Pictus](#) (*The Visible World in Pictures*, 1659).

Even in modern times, almost by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a child was not seen as an independent human being, but as "a pre-adult", a scaled-down adult. Therefore, the main purpose of stories and other literary pieces offered to children (if there were any) was to moralise, instruct and educate – in other words, to prepare children for the future role of a good and moral adult. Literature available to children included shortened and simplified versions of Bible stories, adult classics (e.g. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver Travels*), or moral/educational literature influenced by Puritanism, e.g. [A Token for Children](#) (1671) by **James Janeway**; both [Pilgrim's Progress](#) (1678) and [Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhymes for Children](#) (1686) by **John Bunyan**, as well as the [Divine and Moral Songs for Children](#) (1715) by **Isaac Watts**.

*Against Idleness and Mischief*  
*How doth the little busy Bee*  
*Improve each shining Hour,*  
*And gather Honey all the day*  
*From every opening Flower!*  
*How skilfully she builds her Cell!*  
*How neat she spreads the Wax!*  
*And labours hard to store it well*  
*With the sweet Food she makes.*  
*In Works of Labour or of Skill*  
*I would be busy too:*  
*For Satan finds some Mischief still*

*For idle Hands to do,  
In Books, or Work, or healthful Play  
Let my first Years be past,  
That I may give for every Day  
Some good Account at last.*

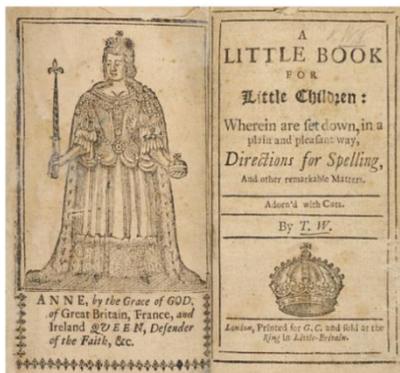
The following verses from [The Babees' Book](#) (1868) can serve as another example of such didactic literature books of manners or morals:

*Child, climb not over house nor wall  
For no fruit nor birds nor ball.  
Child, over men's houses no stones fling  
Nor at glass windows no stones sling,  
Nor make no crying, jokes nor plays  
In holy Church on holy days.*

The first sign of the changing times could be traced in the first decade of the 18th century, when a book called [A Little Book for Little Children](#) (1702) and signed by "T.W." appeared. Despite being only a tiny 12-pages long, it paved the path for more ambitious projects, such as John Newburry's [A Little Pretty Pocket-Book](#) (1744) which addressed the children's readers directly and consisted of both texts and pictures, nursery rhymes, jingles, games, and fables. However, the first true children's literature in anglophone countries was published in the form of nonsense literature.



For more details on history of anglophone literatures for children and young adults, study sessions "England" and "United States" from: Fadiman, C. (2017). [Historical sketches of the major literatures](#). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Available [here](#).



The cover page of *A Little Book for Little Children* (1702) by T. W.

### 3.2 Nonsense literature

A stream of nonsense literature intended just for children's entertainment occurred in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Wim Tigges in his *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense* (1988) defines nonsense as an "unresolved tension between sense and its absence", where sense may be understood as a set of events which are in accordance with "reality situations and models known and experienced in everyday life". Nonsense may be in the form of texts without meaning, or texts bearing absurd or ridiculous ideas.

From the narratological point of view, nonsense literature is characterised by "a free play of words and strange events on the surface structure, caused by the lack of meaningful opposition (...) in the deep structure" of a literary work (Sala, [online](#)). As for poetics, the following literary techniques are typical for nonsense literature, both written for children or adults: wit, humour, word plays, puns (paronomasia), obscure words and meanings, clever rhetorical excursions, oddly formed sentences, various word games, including manipulating words, 'topsy-turvy' inversions or contradictory combinations of words, neologisms, coins, anagrams, cryptograms, acrostic, palindromes, pangrams, lipograms, distortion of language and alliterations.

The tradition of children's nonsense literature in English literature is rather long, as its origins can be traced back to nonsense nursery rhymes and nonsense folk verse. The first of nonsense jingles and nursery rhymes can be found in *Mother Goose's Melody* (c. 1765), or in *Nursery Nonsense, or Rhymes without Reason* (1864). There are also many examples of nursery rhymes originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, e.g.:

*Eena, meena, mona, mi,  
Bassalona, bona, stri,  
Hare, ware, frown, whack,  
Halico balico, we, wi, wo, wack*

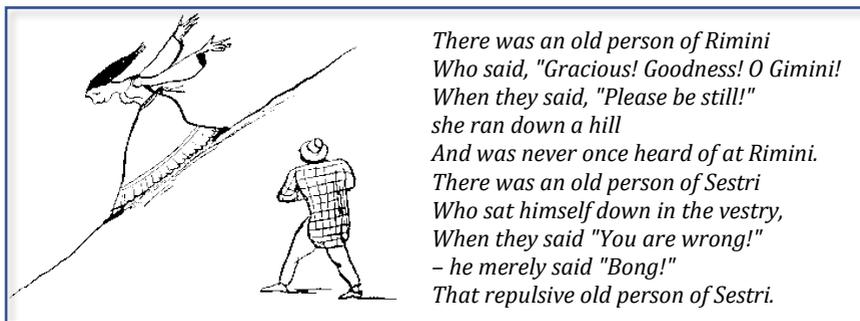
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*The elephant is a bonnie bird.  
It flits from bough to bough.  
It makes its nest in a rhubarb tree  
And whistles like a cow.*

Continuing in the rich tradition of English children's nonsense, two men whose names have become almost synonyms to the genre should be discussed here. They are Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson).

**Edward Lear** (1812-1888) worked as an illustrator of zoological and ornithological encyclopaedias (e.g. *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots*, 1830). As a form of relaxation, he started writing short humorous poems of a specific structure – limericks.

**Limerick** (also the name of an Irish town) – is a short, usually humorous or bizarre poem. Its couplet scheme is *aabba* and its meter is rather strict: the first, second, and fifth lines are long with three metrical feet and rhyming with each other; the third and fourth lines are shorter with two metrical feet and rhyming with each other as well. The rhythm can be recognised as anapaestic (created of two short syllables followed by a long one – the reverse of dactylic rhythm). Rhymes and pronunciation are usually intentionally distorted, e.g.:



*There was an old person of Rimini  
Who said, "Gracious! Goodness! O Gimini!  
When they said, "Please be still!"  
she ran down a hill  
And was never once heard of at Rimini.  
There was an old person of Sestri  
Who sat himself down in the vestry,  
When they said "You are wrong!"  
- he merely said "Bong!"  
That repulsive old person of Sestri.*

The first of Lear's book of limericks was published with his own illustrations in 1846 as [A Book of Nonsense](#). After that, in 1867, his best-known piece of nonsense *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* was published, which he created for the children of Edward Stanley, the 13th Earl of Derby.

The list of the most popular and famous works by Edward Lear also contains the poems *The Dong With The Luminous Nose*, *The Quangle Wangle Quee*, and *The Jumblies*. Moreover, there are also two short stories *The Story of the Four Little Children Who Went Round the World* and *The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple*.

Lear wrote more than 200 limericks, though with adapted structure; the last lines of his limericks are simply a repetition, a variant or a reversal of the first line. This led some critics to rename his works *Learicks*, as they are not true limericks.

Reverend *Charles Lutwidge Dodgson* (pseudonym **Lewis Carroll**, 1832-1898) was a Professor of mathematics in the Christ Church in Oxford. In the world of children's literature, Dodgson is famous as an author of extraordinary books for children: [Alice's Adventures in Wonderland](#) (1865), [Through the Looking-Glass](#) (1872), and [The Hunting of the Snark](#) (1876).

Before the Alice books, Dodgson wrote several pieces of poetry and short stories of moderate success which were published in various magazines under

the pseudonym playing on his real name: Lewis was an anglicised form of *Ludovicus* (for Lutwidge in Latin), and *Carroll* was an anglicised version of *Carolus* (the Latin form of *Charles*). This play with names is thus a good example of Dodgson's poetics used in his literary works.

In his free time, Reverend Dodgson used to go to picnics or row in a boat up the River Thames with three of Dean Henry Liddell's daughters Lorina, Alice and Edith. During one of these journeys he made up a story about a small girl and her meeting with a white rabbit in order to entertain the girls. He later developed it into *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The book was published in 1865 and became a great success. Later, in 1872, he published the second Alice book – *Through the Looking Glass*.

The plot of the Alice books is quite simple: Alice, a small girl, was bored whilst on a picnic with her sister and she fell asleep. In dreams she saw a white rabbit, dressed in a topcoat and muttering "I'm late!" She was very curious about him and followed him down a rabbit's hole. Thus she entered a bizarre dream world full of paradoxes, the absurd and the improbable. She went through many unexpected adventures (e.g. being trapped in the rabbit's house, swelling and lessening, visiting a never-ending tea party, etc.) and met a lot of strange characters (The Mouse, the Duck, Dodo, Lory, the Eaglet, Bill the Lizard, the Caterpillar, Gryphon, the Duchess, Cheshire Cat, the March Hare, the Hatter, Dormouse, the King of Hearts, the Knave of Hearts and many others). Alice reacts to them first with puzzlement, sometimes with anger. She quickly learns to deal either with creatures or with the situation. Some psychologists claim that Alice's experience in Wonderland resemble experience of all children who have to live in the world of adults who seem to them as odd as Wonderland characters and their behaviour is likewise incomprehensible. [The Mad Hatter's Tea party](#) can be taken as an example.



The Mad Hatter's Tea Party, the illustration from the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by John Tenniel.

It seems that all the rules of polite table manners were broken here in this party. Three characters behave in a very strange way following some crazy rules that Alice does not understand. Similar is the situation of the child expected to follow many correct social rules that it does not understand at all.

In the second book, Alice went through the looking glass into another world whose inhabitants are either chess-pieces or characters from nursery rhymes. The story ends with Alice waking up underneath a tree, being back with her sister.

Both Alice books have been much read among both children and adults and they have been made into several drama performances, films and cartoons. The importance of Alice books is given by the fact that they are the earliest books for children told from child's point of view. The intellectual curiosity is represented as a normal part of a child's personality. Moral-teaching element is surprisingly absent. The fact that the protagonist is a girl points to the belief that curiosity and competence are characteristics not limited by sex.

By her acting Alice breaks the stereotype of a demure, passive Victorian girl. The main profits of Carroll's writings for children consist in his use of free imagination, fantasy and nonsense. He built his story upon the principle of a play – a play with reality and words. He used dreams (a motive originated in the age of Romanticism) as a source and "philosophy" of specific poetics. He created an external frame for completely free fictional imagination not tied up by any chronological, spatial, good v. bad, or reason v. consequence, relationships (which is typical for folk tales). Unlike folk tales, Andersenian or Wildean stories, Carroll's books do not have any exact exposition or conclusion; there is no classical conflict and no moral point.

The Alice books are nonsensical not only in their plots, but also in their language, as can be seen in Jabberwocky, one of the most famous nonsense poems occurring in *Through the Looking-Glass*:



#### *JABBERWOCKY*

*"Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.  
Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*

...

*Jabberwocky*, the illustration from the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by John Tenniel.

Lewis Carroll uses language according to the rules of play rather than the rules of everyday communication or traditional poetry/prose. Such a play disconnects words from their usual meanings and calls attention to language as an artificial system of communication. An excellent word game based on seemingly illogical grammar can be found in the following dialogue:

*"Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.  
"I've had nothing yet," Alice replied in an offended tone, "so I can't take more."  
"You mean you can't take less," said the Hatter: "it's very easy to take more than nothing."*

Carroll's specific inverted verbal logic in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has led to quoting and analysing the book by thinkers in a variety of disciplines. Philosophers, psychoanalysts, linguists, and logicians have all examined Carroll's story for its insight into how words create their own meanings and, more importantly, how they create human identities. In addition to the facts mentioned, the story is highly metafictional: it is full of satirical allusions to the personalities of the Victorian age, the Oxford social life and also to many nursery rhymes and poems which British children had to memorise at schools ("How doth the little crocodile..." – a parody of the Victorian-era children's rhyme "How doth the little busy bee", "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat..." – a parody of Twinkle, twinkle, little star, etc.).

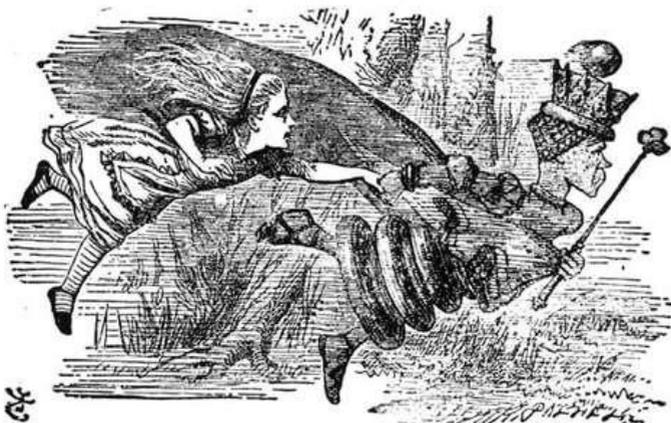
The Alice Books have been adapted for various media, the most popular became movies made in 1933, 1951, 1985, 1999. Over the years, a huge number of critical papers and books, focused on the Reverend Dodgson's books, have been written. Yet, there still remain many topics for further study; among them the questions of sexual and drug undertones are currently being discussed.

Reverend Dodgson was, moreover, the author of the two-volume novel *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889 and 1893), and, apart of this, the author of many mathematical papers signed by his real name.



## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- Alice almost drowns in her own tears. What might be Carroll's message to young readers?
- Why is the White Rabbit so concerned about the time?
- The Duchess calls her baby a pig and the baby later turns into a pig? What might be the significance of this image?
- The Mad Hatter's tea party spins around a series of riddles and puns and that is why Alice cannot carry on any real communication. Do puns and riddles always inhibit the effectiveness of communication?
- Pick out at least 5 situations in the book where everyday language or common logics are questioned. Explain the double meaning of each.
- Compare Alice's adventures in Wonderland with Dorothy's adventures in Oz. How do both characters deal with challenging situations? Could they be models for young readers?
- Which girl – Alice or Dorothy - faces more of an intellectual challenge and which one more of an emotional challenge?



Alice and the Red Queen, the illustration from the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by John Tenniel.

## 4 FANTASY IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

**Fantasy** (fantastic literature, literature of the fantastic) is a genre that has become extremely popular in recent years, especially thanks to a renewed interest (on the part of moviemakers) in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and the huge success of *Harry Potter* books by J. K. Rowling. It is a form of speculative fiction, which is an internationally recognised term for non-mimetic literature (not built rigidly on a mimesis principle, but, on the contrary, including both realistic and fantastic elements). Speculative literature encompasses, together with fantasy, such literary streams and genres as myth, legend, fairy tale, surrealism, magical realism, science fiction, horror, and psychological drama.

It can be said that fantasy is a representative of fiction literature par excellence. It is most typically set in a strange, bizarre or marvellous world which is quite different from the "real" world where we live our everyday lives.

Literary fantasy violates basic principles of classical logics in temporal, physical, geographical and casual areas. The fantastic/secondary/impossible (Ashline, 1995) worlds have their own rules, or they invert or subvert the ordinary logic and law of nature. Time shifts and imagery realms are quite frequent patterns. The "second" worlds can be entered by various ways: falling asleep or dreaming a dream, falling down a rabbit hole, going through a wardrobe, climbing up a beanstalk, being "kidnapped" by a tornado, etc. The strange world can also be a hidden part of a "normal world" and can be perceivable through occult forces and supernatural powers (foretelling future, communicating with animals, enemies or dead, possibilities of metamorphoses from human to inhuman, etc.). Fantastic worlds are inhabited by extraordinary creatures (talking animals and objects, mythical creatures, knights, damsels in distress, wizards, fairies, werewolves, elves, ghosts, dragons, etc.).

Fantasy has a long and distinguished history, beginnings in Greek and Roman mythology (Homer's *Odyssey*), Hebrew lyrics (*The Book of Job*), continuing with heroic epics (such as *Beowulf*) and medieval romance (*The Legend of King Arthur*), and leading to new-age literature (Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Carroll's *Alice Books* and others). In the mid-20th century the genre of fantasy caught a new breath: J. R. R.

Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Ursula K. Le Guinn's *Earthsea* series became great successes and they inspired the birth of many sequels.

Within a long history of fantastic literature, several sub-genres (types) of fantasy have been formed. For the purposes of this textbook and in relation to the children's literature only, we recommend the following classification:

- animal and toy fantasies,
- fantasies with eccentric characters and superhero fantasies,
- high fantasy,
- comic fantasy,
- dark (horror) fantasy.

Analogically to literature as a whole, fantasy can be escapist (looking for an escape from everyday boredom) or interpretative (searching for an interpretation of life). While some stories are based only on the mechanical enumeration of unbelievable adventures of fantastic, though flat characters, others try to communicate deeper truths of life (usually by using allegory or symbolism). As Pierce once said: "Fantasy gives many of those who read and write it a chance to toy with some of the most powerful ideas, characters and events from history, placing them in a different context to see how they might unravel if particular elements were changed". Moreover, quality fantasy literature is generally considered to be a good exercise of children's imagination and creativity. It also bears a serious deal of morality in itself; the struggle between good and evil, questions of loyalty and devotion to friends, problems of decision-making and personal responsibility are probably the most frequent motives in fantastic stories.

#### **4.1 Animal fantasy**

Stories about animals have always been extremely popular among children and young adults for various reasons. First, children naturally love animals and it seems that they feel a certain filiation with animals because they live a kind of relatively separated life from the world of adult human beings.

Second, describing the animal kingdom gives the opportunity to point out some of the truths about the human world. According to the prevailing way of artistic reflection, two basic subgenres can be distinguished within the genre of animal stories:

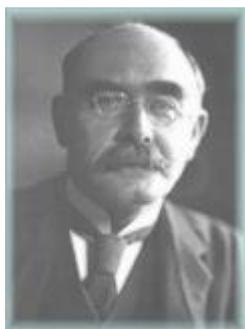
- a) animal biological stories (rather realistic stories about "real" animals, sometimes regarded as animal biographies),
- b) animal fantasies ("unrealistic" stories about highly humanised animals with human or magic abilities).

Moreover, the attractiveness of fantastic animal stories (animal fantasies) results from children's view of life and the world in which the ability of animals to act as human beings is absolutely realistic. In this context it should be pointed out that the motive of a close relationship between people and animals is not new in human culture at all: animistic image of the world (*animism*) is one of the oldest philosophical conceptions. In old stories and myths we can often find such relationships (even cousinship) between people and animals (a man as a son of a bear, a woman that gave birth to a dog, etc.). So, it is not surprising that animals came to written literature for children very early (see John Newbery's *A Pretty Book of Pictures for Little Masters and Misses; or Tommy Trip's History of Birds and Beasts*, about 1760). Since that time, animal stories have formed an inseparable part of literature written for children.

In this chapter our attention will be paid only to the former – animal fantasies. As mentioned above, animal fantasies can be defined as stories about highly humanised animals involving a remarkable level of imagery and magic. According to the level of implicated fantastic elements, animal fantasies can be divided into three groups:

- stories about talking animals who act as animals (with animal behaviour, skills) – involving a lower level of fantastic element,
- stories with animal characters that act as allegories of human beings – involving a medium level of fantastic element,
- stories about animals as gods or animals that have extraordinary (usually magical) abilities – involving a rather high level of fantastic element.

One of the most famous authors of classic animal fantasies in which animals keep their natural skills and instincts was a famous English author, R. J. Kipling.



**Rudyard Joseph Kipling** (1865-1936) was born of British parents in Bombay, India. He was educated in England and returned to India in 1882 where he worked as a journalist. His stay in this country gave him many opportunities to observe and study life in the jungle, as well as learn many Indian folk tales and stories about jungle animals. In 1889 he returned to England and settled in London. In 1893 he published a collection of short stories *Many Inventions* where the short story "In the Rukh" with a fictional character named Mowgli appeared. It tells the story about an English forest ranger Gisborne working in India who

discovered a young boy named Mowgli with extraordinary hunting talent and perfect knowledge of jungle animals. The secret of his skills was in the fact that

he had been lost in the jungle as a baby and had been raised by wild animals. Kipling then decided to write more stories on Mowgli's childhood (the character of Mowgli appeared also in Kipling's *The Jungle Play* (written in 1899, published in 2000).

His writing resulted in publishing two Jungle books – collections of short stories: *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895).

Mowgli was an Indian infant who was lost in the jungle after the tiger Sher Khan had killed his family. The Black Panther Bagheera brought him to a wolf family with a newborn litter. Mowgli was then adopted by Mother and Father Wolf and got a new name: Mowgli the Frog. Mowgli grew up among his brother wolves and other wild animals (with the help of his friends Bagheera and the bear Baloo) and was educated according to the Law of the Jungle.

Both books involve many of Mowgli's exciting and dangerous adventures in a short story form (fighting with Sher Khan, struggling with villagers who wanted to kill him and his adoptive human parents, battling against the red dogs and many others). At the end of the stories, Mowgli had to decide between life among animals or humans. It is rather important to note here that not all short stories in the *Jungle Books* are centred on Mowgli's adventures; there are some famous stories where Mowgli did not act at all ("Rikki Tikki Tavi", "Toomai of the Elephants", etc.).

Stories in *Jungle books* wittily mix fiction with facts. They are set in real geographical area of Indian cantonment during the Victorian era. People act as people and animals hold their animal skills and instincts. Kipling's stories represent the category of stories about animals that can talk and mainly act as animals.

The success of the *Jungle Books* has been proven not only by millions of readers, but also by many sequels (E. Nesbit's *The Wouldbegoods*, 1899; E. R. Burroughs' *Tarzan Books*; or P. Jakel's *The Third Jungle Book*, 1992) along with numerous adaptations for theatre, radio, movies, cartoons, musicals and comics.

Encouraged by the *Jungle Books*' success, Kipling continued in writing animal fantasies which were collected in *Just So Stories* (1902) and which has become classic as well. Analogically to ancient myths and folk tales, Kipling's short stories are based on an imaginative re-counting of natural phenomena ("How the Camel Got his Hump", "How the Leopard Got his Spots", and others) or on humorous explanations of verbal communication ("How the First Letter Was Written", "How the Alphabet Was Made", and others). The style of myths present in the stories is recognisable in the following extract:

*THE BEGINNING OF THE ARMADILLOS*

*This, O Best Beloved, is another story of the High and Far-Off Times. In the very middle of those times was a Stickly-Prickly Hedgehog, and he lived*

*on the banks of the turbid Amazon, eating shelly snails and things. And he had a friend, a Slow-Solid Tortoise, who lived on the banks of the turbid Amazon, eating green lettuces and things. And so that was all right, Best Beloved. Do you see?*

*But also, and at the same time, in those High and Far-Off Times, there was a Painted Jaguar, and he lived on the banks of the turbid Amazon too; and he ate everything that he could catch. When he could not catch deer or monkeys he would eat frogs and beetles; and when he could not catch frogs and beetles he went to his Mother Jaguar, and she told him how to eat hedgehogs and tortoises.*

*She said to him ever so many times, graciously waving her tail, 'My son, when you find a Hedgehog you must drop him into the water and then he will uncoil, and when you catch a Tortoise you must scoop him out of his shell with your paw.' And so that was all right, Best Beloved.*

....

Animals in *Just So Stories* are allegories of human beings or their traits. Each story ends with by a poem summarising its moral message. One of the best known is the poem – the credo of human curiosity – from "The Elephant's Child" which begins as follows:

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.*

R. J. Kipling was an author of numerous literary works which have become part of the cultural heritage of all humankind and for which he was awarded *the Nobel Prize* for Literature in 1907.

Illustrations play a very important role in any book written for children. It could be said that most of the books include them as attractive appendages to the verbal texts. There are, on the other hand, animal fantasies in which illustrations are of prominent importance. Such are the books – animal fantasies – by an English writer and painter **Beatrix Potter** who became famous for her charming and adorable pen-and-ink and watercolour illustrations of various animals accompanied by peaceful and funny stories.



**Helen Beatrix Potter** (1866-1943) was born in South Kensington, London, and in early years she lived with her overprotective parents who discouraged her friendships

with other children. She was only to keep animals (rabbits, pigs, dogs, cats, mice, snakes, frogs, lizard and others) as pets. She studied them with her brother and drew many of their sketches. Today it is believed that almost all of her pets became models of her loveable characters. At the age of 30 she started drawing greeting cards and later preparing a small book for children. It was published in 1902 as [The Tale of Peter Rabbit](#).



Left:  
Illustration from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter.

Right:  
The House of the Taylor of Gloucester, nowadays the museum of H. B. Potter in Gloucester (from the author's archive).



It became extremely successful (more than 50 000 copies were sold in several years). Over the next ten years she wrote and illustrated twenty more books, including: *The Tale Of Squirrel Nutkin*, 1903; *The Tale Of Benjamin Bunny*, 1904; *The Tale Of Two Bad Mice*, 1904; *The Tale Of Mr. Jeremy Fisher*, 1906; *The Tale Of Mr. Tod*, 1912; *The Tale Of Pigling Band*, 1913; *The Tale Of Johnny Town-Mouse*, 1918; *The Tale Of Little Pig Robinson*, 1930 and many others. Her animal characters are highly humanised (they speak, wear clothing and live in households kept in Victorian country style); however, they also exhibit specific animal traits (for more information see Dalby, 1991; Taylor et al., Warne, 1995).



The tradition of animal fantasy in British literature was later successfully developed by **Kenneth Grahame** (1859-1932) and his classic [The Wind in the Willows](#) (1908, later famously illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard). After the death of his mother, he was raised by his grandmother on the banks of the River Thames. The experience affected all his life. Grahame remained fascinated by the river, surrounding nature and a country life style. At the age of 16, he started

working as a clerk for the Bank of England and at the same time he engaged himself in several artistic groups in London (together with Alfred, Lord Tennyson, John Ruskin and Robert Browning).

The only illustration from the first edition of the *Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Graham Robertson.



It is believed that the tales later collected in his best known book *The Wind in the Willows* were originally told by Grahame to his 4-year old son as bed-time stories. It is a peaceful and slow-moving series of funny ventures with likable everyday English animals that live along rivers. They all are strong characters: mild-mannered Mole, brave Rat, powerful Badger, and arrogant Toad (Mr. Toad was voted as the 38th of [100 Best Characters in Fiction Since 1900](#) by *Book* magazine (2002).



The birth place of Kenneth Grahame in Edinburgh  
(from the author's archive)

Animals in the book miss nearly all animal characteristics; in fact, they are allegories to types of human beings (they talk, live in small houses, can drive cars and ride horses, etc.). The

setting of the book is pastoral, praising nature and freedom, which can be seen in the very opening paragraph: The only signs of industrial progress are motorcar and railway that cause Toad's troubles. Evil and danger are represented by weasels and other animals living in Wild Woods. The stories, in a form of allegory, taught children basic truths of human life: that having friends is great fun, being a friend is serious responsibility, cruelty to others brings punishment, and no money can replace love and support of loved ones.

The book was adapted for theatre by A. A. Milne (*Toad of Toad Hall*, 1929) and for movie. In the 1990's William Horwood wrote three sequels (*The Willows in Winter*, 1993; *Toad Triumphant*, 1996; and *The Willows and Beyond*, 1998).

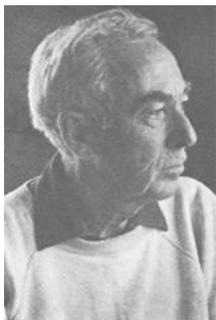
### ***The River Bank***

*The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said 'Bother!' and 'O blow!' and also 'Hang spring-cleaning!' and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, 'Up we go! Up we go!' till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.*



The ideal co-existence of humans and animals is presented in the later famous and popular series of animal fantasies centred on the character of Doctor Dolittle by **Hugh Lofting** (1886-1947). The series involved six books: [\*The Story of Doctor Dolittle\*](#) (1920), [\*The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle\*](#) (1922), [\*Doctor Dolittle's Circus\*](#) (1924), [\*Doctor Dolittle's Post-Office\*](#) (1924; *Doctor Dolittle's Zoo* (1925), *Doctor Dolittle's Caravan* (1927). The fantastic character of Doctor Doolittle was the result of his ability to speak with animals in their own languages which helps him in taking care of them. The Doctor

Dolittle stories have inspired several movie adaptations (1967, 1998).



In American children's literature, the genre of animal fantasy was enriched by **Elwyn Brooks White** (1899-1985), a journalist, essayist and an author of three famous children's books which were originally written for his niece. The first was *Stuart Little* (1945) – the story of a young boy named Stuart Little who lived with his family in New York City and looked like a mouse. Stuart was well-mannered, educated and friendly to people and animals. Because of his physical appearance his everyday life was full of extraordinary situations. The tale was adapted into a movie of the same name in 1999 (with a sequel, *Stuart Little 2*, in

2002). In the story, E. B. White introduced his clear, elegant and easy-to-read style of language that made him respected also as an expert in the English language and its stylistics (in 1959 he published a book *The Elements of Style*, a standard manual of written English, which became a main high-school and college textbook for English courses in the U.S.A.).

In 1952 E. B. White published the much more successful [Charlotte's Web](#) (illustrated by Leonard Weisgard) about which he wrote: "*As for Charlotte's Web, I like animals and my barn is a very pleasant place to be, at all hours. One day when I was on my way to feed the pig, I began feeling sorry for the pig because, like most pigs, he was doomed to die. This made me sad. So I started thinking of ways to save a pig's life. I had been watching a big grey spider at her work and was impressed by how clever she was at weaving. Gradually I worked the spider into the story that you know, a story of friendship and salvation on a farm*" (Harper Childrens, [online](#)).

As already mentioned, the book brings the tale about a little pig named Wilbur and his best friend Charlotte A. Cavatina. Charlotte was a big and a very nice spider that lived with Wilbur in the same barn. After Wilbur had got into a danger of life, Charlotte helped him by a clever plan and probable self-sacrifice. Both of White's books were jointly awarded the major prize for children's literature authors – the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal – in 1970. In the same year, his third children's book, *The Trumpet of the Swan*, was published. In addition, E. B. White was also awarded a special *Pulitzer Prize* for his work as a whole in 1978.

Other famous animal fantasies include: Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (1970), Joan Aiken's *Arabel's Raven* (1972), Dick King-Smith's series on adorable pigs (*Babe the Gallant Pig*, 1984; *Ace, The Very Important Pig*, 1992; *Ace*, 1999; *All Pigs are Beautiful*, 1995; *Babe, the Sheep-Pig*, 2000), Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* (1994), and many others.

#### 4.2 Toy fantasy

Very close to the sub-genre of animal fantasy is the so-called toy fantasy, with its main distinguishing feature being, analogically, its character – a humanised toy. Among the most well-known toy stories in the history of children's literature novels and poems belong the tales of a stuffed bear named Winnie the Pooh by **Alan Alexander Milne** (1882-1956). The first of the novels, [\*Winnie the Pooh\*](#) (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), were published with illustrations by E. H. Shepard. Milne later wrote two books of children's poetry with several poems about Winnie the Pooh: *When We Were Very Young* (1924) and *Now We Are Six* (1927).



Winnie the Pooh is a small, highly humanised teddy-bear who talks and acts like a human being. He is a great fan of composing poetry and eating (especially milk and much honey). Being a "Bear of Very Little Brain", he went through many crazy enterprises caused by his naivety and lack of reason. In the book, he has several assignments – F. O. P. (Friend of Piglet), R. C. (Rabbit's Companion), P. D. (Pole Discoverer), E. C. and T. D. (Eeyore's Comforter and Tail Discoverer) – as commemorations of his qualities. Winnie is not the only toy in the story: there are Piglet, Kanga, Roo, Owl, Rabbit, Tigger – his friends and all of them are stuffed animals.

They often needed somebody to solve their serious problems and crazy situations, and the important role of "A Wise Man" is played by a small (5-year old) boy named Christopher Robin (A. A. Milne's son).

Analogically to other classics, there are numerous Winnie the Pooh Books sequels and adaptations (mostly produced by Disney). Quite interesting is the fact that Benjamin Hoff used Milne's stories and characters to explain the basic principles of some Eastern philosophies (*The Tao Of Pooh*, 1983; and *The Te Of Piglet*, 1993).

The list of other famous toy stories includes: Rumer Godden's *The Doll's House* (1947), Russel Hoban's *Bedtime for Frances* (1960) and *The Mouse and his Child* (1967), Ted Hughes' *The Iron Man* (1968), etc. Recently, Lynne Reid Banks's *The Indian in the Cupboard* (1980) has become rather popular. It is a story of a boy called Omri and his two gifts: an old cupboard and a special key.

When Omri put his plastic toy Indian called The Little Bear into the cupboard before falling asleep, the magic began and all toy figures there became alive. It is a story about friendship, love and responsibility toward those we love (at the end Omri decided, though he would miss it bitterly, to send his Little Bear back to his own world of toys. The novel was followed by four sequels: *The Return of the*

*Indian* (1985), *The Secret of the Indian* (1989), *The Mystery of the Cupboard* (1992), and *The Key to the Indian* (1998).

Another famous toy fantasy is *The Doll People* (2000, illustrated by Brian Selznick) by Ann Martin and Laura Godwin. It is the story of two doll families: the Dolls who are antique China dolls and the Funcrafts who are modern dolls made of pink plastic. Their daughters Annabelle Doll and Tiffany Funcraft were on their way to find Annabelle's Auntie Sarah who has been mysteriously lost.

### 4.3 Fantasy with eccentric characters and superhero fantasy

There are numerous classical books in English literature written for children



and young adults falling into the subgenre of fantasy where an eccentric (= unconventional, strange, odd) character is the most distinctive feature and his/her adventures weave the skeleton of the story. Some of the world-wide famous eccentric heroes are Peter Pan, Mary Poppins and nowadays, probably the best-selling children's hero, Harry Potter.

The first book that should be mentioned in this subgenre is an interesting, highly symbolical book [\*Water Babies\*](#) (1864) by Reverend **Charles Kingsley** (1819-1875). Its hero is a small chimney-sweep called Tom who becomes a water baby. Water babies are "all the little children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not; all who are untaught and brought up heathens, and all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect."



In 1898, an American author **L. Frank Baum** (1856-1919) started publishing a series of 14 *Oz books*. The series is a marvellous combination of animal and toy fantasy, high fantasy and adventure stories. Its protagonist is an American girl called Dorothy who was "kidnapped" (together with a house and her dog Toto) by tornado to a mysterious country of Oz in the first book entitled [\*The Wizard of Oz\*](#) (1899). Dorothy's falling house accidentally killed the Wicked Witch of the East; thereby Dorothy became a hero of the Munchkins. The Good Witch of the North gave her a pair of silver shoes and advised her to go to the "Emerald City" and ask the Wizard of Oz to help her to return to Kansas.

On her way down the yellow-brick road to the Emerald City she met various extraordinary creatures: the Scarecrow, who wanted to ask the Wizard of Oz for brains instead of straw in his head, the Cowardly Lion, who wanted to ask for

courage, and the Tin Man, who wanted a heart. Together, they overcame all problems and obstacles along the way.

Because of its enormous success, the first Oz book was followed by 13 sequels: *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), *Ozma of Oz* (1907), *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz* (1908), *The Road to Oz* (1909), *The Emerald City of Oz* (1910), *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* (1913), *Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914), *The Scarecrow of Oz* (1915), *Rinkitink in Oz* (1916), *The Lost Princess of Oz* (1917), *The Tin Woodman of Oz* (1918), *The Magic of Oz* (1919, posthumously published), and *Glinda of Oz* (1920, posthumously published). All fantastic characters of the series bore human characteristics and the entire series brought significant moral point. The Oz books have inspired many musical, film and theatre adaptations. The most famous of them was probably the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* with Judy Garland as Dorothy.



Peter Pan's literary father was **Sir James Matthew Barrie** (1860-1937), better known as J. M. Barrie, a Scottish journalist, novelist and dramatist. He wrote several novels and theatre plays before becoming famous for *Peter Pan* books. Peter Pan was written as a stage play with a premiere in London at Christmas in 1904 for sick and orphaned children (Barrie also proved his strong social feelings by giving the perpetual rights of *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London.) The play was subsequently adapted into a novel published as [\*Peter and Wendy\*](#) in 1911 (now published again and entitled *Peter Pan*).

*Peter Pan* is the tale of a boy who decided not to grow up. After he had escaped his home, he lived in the fantastic country of Neverland with a group of boys (the Lost Boys). Having some extraordinary skills – he could fly – Peter became the gang's leader. During his trips to the "normal" world he visited the children of the Darling family and after some time invited the girl named Wendy to be a mother for his gang. After many adventures (mainly with and against Captain Hook) Wendy decided to go back and live with her family.

The story has been adapted several times for various media: musical versions in 1924, 1950 and 1954; an animated film by Disney in 1953; and the famous movie *Hook* (1991) by Steven Spielberg. In 1987 Gilbert Adair wrote a sequel *Peter Pan and the Only Children* in which Peter Pan and the Lost Boys live under the sea.

Barrie also wrote a sequel entitled *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (illustrations by Arthur Rackham). Probably because of this, Peter Pan's statue stands in Kensington Gardens, London.



Mary Poppins is the main character of books written by **Pamela L. Travers** (1899-1996) as well as of a movie based on the book. The Mary Poppins series of books includes the following titles: [Mary Poppins](#) (1934), *Mary Poppins Comes Back* (1935), [Mary Poppins Opens the Door](#) (1943), *Mary Poppins in the Park* (1952), *Mary Poppins in the Cherry Tree Lane* (1982), *Mary Poppins in the House Next Door* (1988).

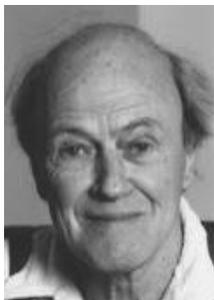
Mary Poppins is an old-fashioned, exacting, and "practically perfect in every way", British nanny who came to the well-to-do British Banks family (the father is busy in his bank job, the mother in her social engagements) living at Number Seventeen Cherry Tree Lane, London, and was employed to take care of their four (slightly neglected) children: Jane, Michael and the twins. But under Mary's strict surface there was much fun, love and magic hidden, and Mary used it to charm everybody who needed it. She entertained children in every fantastic way: they fly on the east Wind, have tea on a ceiling, travel around the world in a moment, visit polar bears, jump into chalk pictures, past gold star paper to the sky, etc.



The list of eccentric characters also includes the Borrowers, miniature people living in the hidden places of people's houses. Their author, **Mary Norton** (1903-1992), wrote a six-novel series: [The Borrowers](#) (1952), *The Borrowers Afield* (1955), *The Borrowers Afloat* (1959), *The Borrowers Aloft* (1961), *Poor Stainless* (1966), and *The Borrowers Avenged* (1982).

They are centred on the Clocks, a borrower family who lived under the floorboards of an old country house in England. The family consists of father Pod, sharp-nosed and neurotic mother Homily and their 13-year-old daughter Arrietty. They are called borrowers because their whole lifestyle is characterised by "borrowing" leftovers and oddments from human households. Pod is very skilful, Homily is neurotic, and Arrietty is very independent and curious (mostly about humans). The series' attractiveness and popularity probably lies not only in the oddity of their miniature world (the same as with Gulliver's Travels), dangerous borrowers' adventures and slightly humorous tone of writing, but also in things that "bother" all children and teenagers in all ages: life in a normal (far from perfect) family, problems connected with growing up, struggles with over-protective parents, breaking family taboos, etc.

Mary Norton is also the author of the famous *Bedknob and Broomstick* series consisting of *The Magic Bed-Knob, Or How to Become a Witch in Ten Easy Lessons* (1943), *Bonfires and Broomsticks* (1947), and *Bedknob and Broomstick* (1957).



Within the children's literature of the 20th century, a special room belongs to British author of Welsh origin **Roald Dahl** (1916 – 1990) who started to write children's books in the early 1960s. His stories are usually told from the child's point of view. Typically, each story features at least one adult villain who hates children, and one "good" adult to help and encourage the child characters. Occurrence of numerous adult characters with blameful behaviour and acting is referred to the abuse that Roald Dahl (in his own words) suffered during his school years.

Roald Dahl was the author of many unforgettable stories, including *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Magic Finger* (1966), *Fantastic Mr Fox* (1970), *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* (1973), *Danny, the Champion of the World* (1975), *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), *The Twits* (1980), *George's Marvellous Medicine* (1981), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983) and others.

Roald Dahl became both popular (translated into 35 languages around the world) and scorned for the specific poetics of his works. As Eva Preložnikova (2003, p. 121 – 122) has it, "in his fantasy tales for children, violence and humour and controversial morals are blended together to make a new form of modern fantasy for children referred to as a subversive fantasy" the common features of which are "a tendency to exaggeration and caricature, subversive humour, surprising plots, unconventional, unexpected endings and expressive language".

Dahl's subversive view is most obvious on the level of the relationships between children and adults. On the contrary to traditional children's literature in which adults and parents especially were described as models of all positive traits, in Dahl's fantasies adults are described, with a few exceptions, as bad, stupid, cruel and nasty creatures harming children, animals and other innocent and powerless creatures (e.g. Mr and Mrs Twits harm themselves, frighten children and torture animals).

Besides, Dahl wittily subverts the language both as a medium of communication and means of characterisation. He plays with language, uses its deformations (e.g. in *The BFG*) and opens space for radical language humour. Apart from the specific poetics and subversive techniques, Dahl was a very traditional author. First, continuing in the traditions developed by P. L. Travers (*Mary Poppins*) or Mary Norton (*The Borrowers*), he wrote "fantasy in reality", which meant that his stories were set in the real world that can be easily recognised and understood also by contemporary children. In other words, the common reality as we know it is saturated by fantastic creatures, magic elements and unexpected situations.

Second, Dahl proceeded in the tradition of a neglected-children theme typical for Charles Dickens. On the contrary to Dickensian children, all those poor and neglected child protagonists in Dahl's stories are not passive anymore and they fight to change their destiny for good. Poetic similarities with Dickens include also building up typical black and white characters and passion for hyperbole, grotesque and caricature (ibid., pp. 127-128).

Radical subversion is manifested also in Dahl's children's poetry, represented in three collections: *Revolting Rhymes* (1982), *Dirty Beasts* (1983) and *Rhyme Stew* (1989). Revolting rhymes contain six poems retelling traditional fairy tales in an unexpected way. In '[Cinderella](#)', for instance, one of the horrible stepsisters changes her shoe with Cinderella's lost one. However, when the prince learns whom the shoe fits, he orders her stepsister's head to be cut off. After such a course of events, Cinderella wishes to be married to a decent man. Her fairy godmother grants this wish and marries her to a simple jam-maker. In '[Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf](#)', the hungry wolf traditionally visits the grandmother's house to eat both grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood. Little Lady Riding Hood discloses the wolf's trick, calmly pulls a pistol out of her knickers and shoots the wolf providing herself with a new wolf skin coat. Little Red Riding Hood later appears also in '[The Three Little Pigs](#)', where the third pig (after the wolf has eaten both his brothers) asks her to come and deal with the wolf. Thus, Red Riding Hood happily gains a second wolf skin coat and a pigskin travelling case. The "court" illustrator of Dahl's stories and poems was Quentin Blake. Eva Preložníková (op. cit., p. 131) claims that his illustrations correspond with Dahl's style of black humour, exaggeration and caricature and "therefore they add much to the humorous effect of Dahl's stories underlining their subversiveness. In some places of his texts Dahl directly refers to the pictures, calling his child readers to participate in an interesting verbal-visual dialogue."



Recently, we have witnessed mass popularity, or even hysteria, accompanying the publishing of each new volume in the series of novels about a young wizard Harry Potter by an English writer **Joanne Kathleen Rowling** (1965). Her life itself has resembled a fantastic fairy tale: she started writing about Harry Potter as a divorced and unemployed single parent living on public assistance. A popular urban tale says that she wrote her first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, at a table in the cafe Elephant House in Edinburgh (see the photo below, from the author's archive) during her daughter's naps. In 2007, Rowling completed the series of seven Harry Potter books: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry*

*Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007).

Harry was an ordinary 11-year-old orphaned boy living with his tasteless and cruel relatives – the Dursleys – who do not appreciate his presence in the family at all. Harry thus lived a life full of neglect and injustice, and struggles with his cousin Dudley. Everything changed on his 11th birthday when he found out he was not a Muggle (an ordinary man who cannot conjure), but a wizard. He instantly left the Dursleys house, as he was accepted by The Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry, the most prestigious wizard school of all. While there, he met many adorable people (Albus Dumbledore, Hagrid) and made some real friends (Ron Weasley and his brothers as well as Hermione Granger), but also some enemies (Severus Snape, Draco Malfoy). However, over all the exciting adventures and secrets Harry had gone through whilst living in Hogwarts (each school year means a new dangerous intrigue), the inevitable struggle against Lord Voldemort, the personification of absolute evil who killed Harry's parents, has been bestridden. The Harry Potter series thus can be regarded as a kind of *bildungsroman* – a literary work describing the physical and mental development of an individual. Harry learned a lot about friendship, loyalty, hatred, lies, smarts and courage, and that it is our decisions, not skills, that make us what we are.



Harry Potter books have won numerous awards, among them the British Book Awards Children's Book of the Year and the Smarties Prize and has become "a contemporary classic". Perhaps as a curiosity it can be pointed out that, mostly in the U.S.A., some schools and parents charged *HP books* with promoting children's interest in the occult, and asked for their removal from classrooms and school libraries.

#### **4.4 Superhero fantasy**

"When men are growing up, reading about Batman, Spider-Man, Superman, these aren't just kid fantasies. These are career options," was Jerry Seinfeld's answer to the question why literature and comics on various bizarre creatures are so popular and widely read among young boys aged 6-16. The genre of children's and juvenile literature with such protagonists is called superhero fantasy. A superhero is a fictional hero gifted either by supernatural abilities far

beyond those of normal human beings (Superman, Spiderman) or by extraordinary intellect, physical power, or technical equipment (Batman). Superheroes as extremely positive characters usually fight super-villains saving numerous average people of the whole civilisation.

Several characteristic (even cliché) traits of superheroes can be recognised: a special costume, a secret identity, super powers or skills or equipment, a strict moral code, a willingness to fight against evil and risk his/her life, a regular enemy. Some superhero fantasies mostly of American origin are *Batman* (DC Comics), *Spiderman* (Marvel Comics), *Wolverine* (Marvel Comics), *Incredible Hulk* (Marvel Comics), *The Punisher* (Marvel Comics), *The Demon* (DC Comics), *The Ghost Rider* (Marvel Comics). Though superheroes are mostly masculine, there are some feminine ones as well: Wonder Woman or *The Cat* (both Marvel Comics). Curiously, comics introduced the first gay superhero – *Northstar* (Marvel Comics).

#### 4.5 High fantasy

High fantasy is a sub-genre of fantastic literature the most recognisable feature of which is a spatial and temporary setting in parallel, or completely "new", invented worlds. As opposed to comic fantasies, high fantasies are always serious in tone, often dealing with the theme of the struggle between good and extreme evil. Stories of high fantasy are typically peopled by mythical or fantastic characters (kings, knights, princes and princesses, wizards, elves, dwarves, gnomes and others) who communicate by unknown languages (generally invented by their authors). However, in some high fantasies there are "real" characters (e.g. children from a real world) who were transported to secondary worlds (usually by accident).

Some of the most popular high fantasies include J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea Tetralogy* (*A Wizard of Earthsea*, 1968; *The Tombs of Atuan*, 1970 and 1971; *The Farthest Shore*, 1972; and *Tehanu, The Last Book of Earthsea*, 1990), Tad Williams's *The Memory, Sorrow and Thorn Trilogy* (*The Dragonbone Chair*, 1988; *Stone of Farewell*, 1990; *To Green Angel Tower*, 1993), Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series, but only some of them are appropriate and have been adopted by children (or, more precisely, young adult) readers.



Probably the greatest popularity among high fantasy stories has been reached by the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* by the English writer J. R. R. Tolkien.

**John Ronald Reuel Tolkien** (1892-1973) was Professor of Anglo-Saxon, Old and Middle English at the University of Oxford (1925-1959) writing several critical works on

*Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Tolkien, 1983). He was a founding member of The Inklings – the Oxford discussion group of linguists and literates, together with Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis and others (Carpenter, 1978). Tolkien's deep interest in linguistics led him to invent several artificial languages just for fun. Recovering from his war injury he started writing short stories – fairy tales for his children, based upon his studies of ancient mythology and folklore, set in a pre-historic era and in the Middle-earth (an ancient expression for the everyday world between Heaven and Hell) inhabited by Men, Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Trolls and Goblins (Orcs) who lived there speaking languages Tolkien had invented earlier (e.g. Qenya, Goldogrin, Sindarin).

In 1937 he published, rather unwillingly, *The Hobbit: There and Back Again* (1937). The story tells the adventures of the hobbit Bilbo Baggins who, involved in numerous dangerous adventures, travelled across the lands of Middle-Earth with Gandalf the Wizard and a group of Dwarves. During his travels he found a ring (not very important to the narration yet) and kept it, absolutely unaware of its horrible power. After coming home, Bilbo retired for more than "a half dozen decades", but on his eleventy-first birthday he ceded the mystery ring to Frodo Baggins and left Hobbiton (a country of Hobbits) for good.

*The Hobbit* serves as a preface to the series of novels [\*The Lord of the Rings\*](#) (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1954; *The Two Towers*, 1954; and *The Return of the King*, 1955). The trilogy starts as a group of hobbits, led by Frodo Baggins, go through numerous dangerous adventures on their way to destroy Bilbo's ring with stunning, but horrific power. They are drawn into serious events and fights that plague their world. Sauron, the embodiment of evil, is trying to regain his lost ring which could restore his power. The inscription on the ring explains the mythological history of the fundamental conflict:

*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,  
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,  
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.  
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,  
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

Tolkien in his trilogy created a complete mythology for his Middle-Earth (languages, symbols, writing – runes, genealogies of characters, histories).

Though meant as story for children, the trilogy engendered deep interests of millions of adult readers and, it could be proved, by the end of the 1960s it had become the Bible of the "Alternative Society". So, it is not surprising that the

trilogy has been adapted for radio and movie, despite many serious technical challenges with presenting numerous bizarre creatures and a completely odd setting. The latest movie adaptations were released in 2001 and 2002; the last part in December of 2003.

After J. R. R. Tolkien's death, his son Christopher continued publishing background material on the creation of Middle-earth: *The Books of Lost Tales* (1953-54), *The Lays of Beleriand* (1985), *The Shaping of Middle-Earth* (1986), *The Return of the Shadow* (1988), *The War of the Ring* (1990), *Sauron Defeated* (1992), *The War of the Jewels* (1994), *The Peoples of Middle-Earth* (1996) and others.



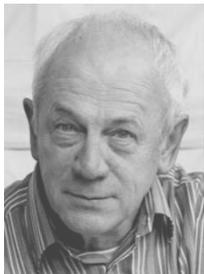
Another famous author of children's fantasy, J. R. R. Tolkien's close friend and a member of the Inklings as well, was **Clive Staples Lewis** (1898-1963), an Irish writer and scholar in Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature (his study of late medieval narratives like the Roman de la Rose resulted in *The Allegory of Love*, 1936, and *The Discarded Image, An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, 1964). Along with his scholarly work, he wrote several novels, including a famous series of seven fantasy novels for children *The Chronicles of Narnia* ([\*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe\*](#), 1950; [\*Prince Caspian\*](#), 1951; [\*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader\*](#), 1952; [\*The Silver Chair\*](#), 1953; [\*The Horse and his Boy\*](#), 1954; [\*The Magician's Nephew\*](#), 1955; [\*The Last Battle\*](#), 1956 – but this order is not based on the chronology of events in Narnia). C. S. Lewis was a winner of the Carnegie Medal in literature.

The first and most popular book in the series is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) which describes the adventures of four English children (Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy) who, evacuated, were spending World War II in a large house owned by an old Professor named Digory Kirke. While playing a game of hide-and-seek, Lucy went into a wardrobe and through it entered the mysterious land of Narnia where animals could talk and magic was excessive.

Narnia was tyrannised by the White Witch whose reign is sustained by her power to turn her enemies into stone and to make it "always Winter, but never Christmas". After some time all four children went to Narnia and learned about Aslan, the Lion, who, it is believed, will come to save Narnia. They wished to help him so they were given many useful presents by Father Christmas. After meeting Aslan, it became clear that in order to save Narnia (and Edmund) Aslan had to pay with his life (which is signed as a "Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time"). The following events were foreseeable: Aslan was killed by the Witch on the Stone Table but later a "Deeper Magic from before the Dawn of Time" raised him from

the dead, the Witch was defeated, and the four children became the Kings and Queens of Narnia. After many years of their happy reign they returned home – to the "real" world – where they discovered that no time had passed since they left. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is usually considered to be an allegory of Christian ideas (Aslan being an alternative Christ), combined with Greek and Roman mythology, and with English and Irish folk tales as well.

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, the genre of high fantasy has been dramatically enriched and developed. The list of high fantasy books written and read by children and young adults has been growing each month (see relevant web sites [Fantastic fiction](#), [SciFan](#), [NEIU](#)). From this long list we have chosen a contemporary and highly successful author of high fantasy – **Alan Garner** (1934).



He became popular among children mostly for his fourth book, *Elidor* (1965). It is the story of four children who are mysteriously transported from Manchester in the 1960's into the dying land of Elidor (which is a literary allusion to Manchester dying because of industry and the resulting environmental pollution). The children tried to save Elidor but their success is contingent on the self-redemption of the beautiful unicorn Findhorn who must sing, but his song means his death. *The Owl Service* (1967), *Fairytales of Gold* (1980), and *Thursbitch* (2003) are other successful works by Garner mostly read by children and teenagers. Garner's books have been accepted not only by readers, but also by critics: he has won the Guardian Award (1968) and the Carnegie Medal (1968).



One of the most successful series of fantasy novels in recent times is named *A Song of Ice and Fire* by American author **George R. R. Martin**. The first volume was published in 1996 and gave the name to the extremely successful movie adaptation *A Game of Thrones*. Originally planned as a trilogy, the series today consist of 5 volumes out of a planned seven. The events of the series revolve around a dynastic war among several families for control of Westeros and eventually their ultimate battle against the zombie-like 'Others'. As for its moral aspects, just as other high fantasy works, the novel series questions values such as pride, obedience, loyalty, piety, and consciousness.

## 5 ADVENTURE FICTION

Adventure fiction can be defined as a genre centred on exciting and dangerous adventures of literary characters with the intention of entertaining or thrilling readers. The genre includes such popular sub-genres as historical adventure (J. F. Cooper), horror story (R. L. Stevenson, A. E. Poe, A. Hitchcock, S. King), and detective story (A. E. Poe, A. C. Doyle, A. Christie).

One could say that the first adventure fiction was Homer's *Odyssey* describing Odysseus's dangerous travels while coming home to Ithaca. The literary writing centred on the adventures of seamen was inspired by great geographical discoveries since the 15th century. Memories, travel reports, exciting stories of sailors and pirates became very popular. The genre of adventure fiction also involves the first English novel, the famous [\*The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner\*](#) (1719).



**Daniel Defoe** (1660-1731, born as Daniel Foe and later added the aristocratic sounding "De" to his name) was a famous pamphleteer, journalist and novelist. The novel *Robinson Crusoe* tells the story of a man's shipwreck (based on the true story of Alexander Selkirk) on a desert island. At its most basic level, *Crusoe* is an exciting *bildungsroman* and story of a prodigal son as well. The story starts when *Crusoe* was a rebellious seventeen year-old boy and ended when he was in his late sixties.

Being born (like Defoe) to a merchant family, *Crusoe* was expected to continue in his father's career. He refused his parents' wishes and went to sea to seek his fortune. After becoming a colonist in Brazil, his ship was wrecked in a storm while on its way to Guinea to buy slaves. As the only survivor, he was made to live isolated on a deserted island. While struggling with himself (he was depressive, of course) and with a hostile environment, he was keeping a diary in which he chronicled his daily life, reminiscent of the history of all humankind: he started as a hunter and fisherman, continued as a shepherd, and finished as a farmer and craftsman. *Crusoe's* monotonous life (enlivened by his occasional attempts to escape from his island) was changed after he discovered a single footprint in the sand. He met 'Friday' and found out that his island was a fiestaplace for cannibals. Finally, after twenty eight years spent in isolation, *Crusoe* was taken back to England by an English ship.

While children around the world read Robinson's diary as probably the most interesting and exciting book, the critics' opinions have remained split: they point out many signs of racism, British elitism and superiority, colonialism, religious intolerance involved in the novel (parents or teachers should discuss these problems with children). As James Joyce noted, Robinson Crusoe can be considered as a true symbol of British imperialism: "*He is the true prototype of the British colonist... The whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe: the manly independence, the unconscious cruelty, the persistence, the slow yet efficient intelligence, the sexual apathy, the calculating taciturnity*". The book is often interpreted as an embodiment of Western individualistic culture. In his narrative, Defoe joins several sources and genres, including travel writing, diary keeping, theology, philosophy, economic theory, and spiritual autobiography.

Robinson Crusoe, as the *Guinness Book of World Records* claims, is the most widely read book together with the *Bible*. By the end of the twentieth century, "Crusoe" appeared in more than 750 editions, translations, adaptations, and imitations. There have been children's versions, radio and film adaptations, plays, operas, and comic books produced.

The number of imitations and sequels to Robinson Crusoe led to the origin of a new sub-genre of adventure fiction - **robinsonade** (the term comes from German): *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812) by Johann David Wyss, Frederick Marryat's *Masterman Ready, Or the Wreck of the Pacific* (1841), Michel Tournier's *Vendredi* (1972), J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), and Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* (1994).

Daniel Defoe as one of the most prolific authors in English literature wrote (individually or with assistants) several hundreds of works. The most well-known of them were [Captain Singleton](#) (1720), [Moll Flanders](#) (1722), [Colonel Jacque](#) (1722), [Roxana](#) (1724), [General History of the Pyrates](#) (1724), [John Sheppard](#) (1724), and *Jonathan Wild* (1725).



The motive of sea travels and dangerous adventures in unknown territories created the narrative skeleton for a famous series of four novels entitled [Gulliver's Travels](#) (1726) by **Jonathan Swift** (1667-1745), an Irish writer and satirist. From the tetralogy, only the first two books have been adopted by children's readers as a *travel fantasy*. The series describes the experiences of an English surgeon named Dr. Lemuel Gulliver who, in the first quarter of the 18th century, mostly unwillingly, visited four unknown countries with strange cultures. In the beginning of the series, he is an average English man with a respectable profession and ordinary family life and the only

things he long for are good food, comfort and security. He is satisfied with his life style and with the society he is a member of. He shows no ambitions to change his life, to leave the country and to experience any adventures. That is why readers consider his travel notes as true and objective.

In the first book, Gulliver depicted his enterprises in the land of Lilliputs – people 6 inches tall. In the second part, Gulliver was set among huge giants of Brobdingnag. In the third book, Gulliver satirised British Academia and science through his description of bizarre Laputa, Balnibardi, Luggnagg, Glubbudubdrib, and Japan. And finally, the fourth book called *Houyhnhnm*, brought Gulliver into an ideal society of noble and intelligent horses for which degenerate humans serve as beasts of burden.

Although the books are fantasies, they contain detailed and even anthropology-like precise descriptions of appearance, characters, and properties of inhabitants living in four fantastic countries. Since dr. Gulliver is open-minded, naturally curious and linguistically proficient, he is able to master the strange rules and habits of the cultures very quickly. This enables him to compare other cultures with England of that time and to point a satirical finger to many contemptible aspects of the human race in general and of contemporary English society in particular. Swift's view of humankind is a pessimistic one.

Only a few intelligent, moral and admirable people occur in *Gulliver's Travels*, yet none of them receive any gratitude or praise from Gulliver. Although *Gulliver's Travels* were meant as sharp satire of British society of Swift's times, the books of Lilliputs and Giants are still popular among children all around the world. Children like the combination of realistic and fantastic elements in the story, breaking the rules of "normal" life, and funny situations (originally very satirical) such as the conflict over low or high heels, or the conflict over beating eggs. As a good example of Swift's humour/satire can serve the episode with articles to regulate Gulliver's stay in Lilliput:

*These articles were brought to me by Skyresh Bolgolam in person attended by two under-secretaries, and several persons of distinction. After they were read, I was demanded to swear to the performance of them; first in the manner of my own country, and afterwards in the method prescribed by their laws; which was, to hold my right foot in my left hand, and to place the middle finger of my right hand on the crown of my head, and my thumb on the tip of my right ear. But because the reader may be curious to have some idea of the style and manner of expression peculiar to that people, as well as to know the article upon which I recovered my liberty, I have made a translation of the whole instrument, word for word, as near as I was able, which I here offer to the public.*

*"Golbasto Momarem Evlame Gurdilo Shefin Mully Ully Gue, most mighty Emperor of Lilliput, delight and terror of the universe, whose dominions*

*extend five thousand blustrugs (about twelve miles in circumference) to the extremities of the globe; monarch of all monarchs, taller than the sons of men; whose feet press down to the centre, and whose head strikes against the sun; at whose nod the princes of the earth shake their knees; pleasant as the spring, comfortable as the summer, fruitful as autumn, dreadful as winter: his most sublime majesty proposes to the man-mountain, lately arrived at our celestial dominions, the following articles, which, by a solemn oath, he shall be obliged to perform:*

*"1st, The man-mountain shall not depart from our dominions, without our license under our great seal.*

*"2nd, He shall not presume to come into our metropolis, without our express order; at which time, the inhabitants shall have two hours warning to keep within doors.*

*"3rd, The said man-mountain shall confine his walks to our principal high roads, and not offer to walk, or lie down, in a meadow or field of corn.*

*"4th, As he walks the said roads, he shall take the utmost care not to trample upon the bodies of any of our loving subjects, their horses, or carriages, nor take any of our subjects into his hands without their own consent.*

*"5th, If an express requires extraordinary despatch, the man-mountain shall be obliged to carry, in his pocket, the messenger and horse a six days journey, once in every moon, and return the said messenger back (if so required) safe to our imperial presence.*

*"6th, He shall be our ally against our enemies in the island of Blefuscu, and do his utmost to destroy their fleet, which is now preparing to invade us.*

*"7th, That the said man-mountain shall, at his times of leisure, be aiding and assisting to our workmen, in helping to raise certain great stones, towards covering the wall of the principal park, and other our royal buildings.*

*"8th, That the said man-mountain shall, in two moons' time, deliver in an exact survey of the circumference of our dominions, by a computation of his own paces round the coast.*

*"Lastly, That, upon his solemn oath to observe all the above articles, the said manmountain shall have a daily allowance of meat and drink sufficient for the support of 1724 of our subjects, with free access to our royal person, and other marks of our favour. Given at our palace at Belfaborac, the twelfth day of the ninety-first moon of our reign."*

Along with **robinsonade**, the subgenre of **sea novels** was formed in the 19th century. Sea novels describe the romance of sailing, adventures, intrigues, dangers on seas, or battles with pirates. Some of the most famous sea novels are: Frederick Marryat's *The Pirates* (1836), *The Children of the New Forest* (1847), and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836), James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pilot* (1823) and *The Red Rover* (1827), Raphael Sabatini's *Captain Blood* (1922), and above all Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851). Within children's literature a sea novel *Treasure Island* (1883) by R. L. Stevenson has taken a significant place.

**Robert Louis Stevenson** (1850-1894), a Scottish essayist, poet and author of many travel books and novels, who is known especially for his adventure fiction. Since his childhood Stevenson suffered from lung disease, so he spent considerable time in bed, composing stories before he could read. In an attempt to improve his health, Stevenson travelled a lot to warmer countries and these travelling experiences provided much material for his writings (*An Inland Voyage*, 1878; *Travels with a Donkey*, 1879), major contributor to the genre of horror and detective story of the late 19th century. In 1885 he published *A Child's Garden of Verses* consisting of many poems that have become popular as songs, including the famous "My Shadow" and "The Lamplighter".

World-wide fame met Stevenson after publishing his three novels: [Treasure Island](#) (1883), [The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde](#) (1886), and [Kidnapped](#) (1886). At the beginning of writing *Treasure Island* (1883) there was a map that Stevenson had drawn for entertaining his twelve-year-old stepson Lloyd Osborn. Later he added a story of lost treasure to it and published them both in a magazine for boys. The story's protagonist was a boy called Jim Hawkins whose mother owned and kept an old inn near the coast in the West Country.



The bust of R. L. Stevenson in [The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh](#) (the author's archive).

One day Jim met an old pirate, Billy Bones who possessed a map showing where Captain Flint's treasure was hidden. After Bones was killed by his enemies – previous companions, Jim, his mother, and Pew discovered the desperately wanted map and, aware of danger, sailed together with Captain Smollett, Squire Trelawney, and Dr. Livesey to mysterious Treasure Island. On the journey Jim found out that there were pirates led by a one-legged villain Long John Silver (a cook) on the ship. The "good" had to act: after several

incidents the pirates were defeated and the treasure was found. During the journey back to England Jim befriended Long John Silver, but after some time John escaped from the ship, stealing as much gold as he could carry.

*Treasure Island* enthralled both children and adults by suspenseful adventures,

mysterious atmosphere, and numerous remarkable characters. The story sustains its thrill from the beginning to the end because of its unusual structure. Since originally published as a series of magazine stories in weekly frequency, the author composed each episode with its own climax at the end, which was expected to keep readers attention and make them to buy a new issue. Consequently, the novel has not got one climax but several "mini-climaxes" coming in regular waves. Unusual for literature of Stevenson's times was the occurrence of morally ambiguous character (Long John Silver), which is a typical means of modern literature. Contemporary readers might have got some problems with reading the original wording of the book, because of the old-fashioned style with long descriptions, moral commentaries written in complicated sentences. These aspects are, however, balanced by rich visualisation of Stevenson's language. Characters and situations are described in such a way that readers can see, hear and even smell them.

*THE OLD SEA DOG AT THE "ADMIRAL BENBOW"*

*Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen in the year of grace 17--, and go back to the time when my father kept the "Admiral Benbow" inn, and the brown old seaman, with the sabre cut, first took up his lodging under our roof.*

*I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow; a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man; his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards:*

*"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest -*

*Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum*

*in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken*

*at the capstan bars.*

*Treasure Island* is written in the form of a bildungsroman, tracing the moral development of Jim Hawkins. It is one of the most frequently adapted (for radio, movie, theatre, etc.) novels in English literature.

Stevenson's influence on English and European literature and film remains very strong. He became the father of numerous cultural clichés: treasure hidden on an isolated island; mysterious map with the cross mark "X" on it showing the place where treasure was buried, pirates as horrific, dirty and warlike creatures; and a pirate captain with one leg and a parrot on his shoulder.

*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) is centred on the subject of degeneration from civilised rationalism to primitivism (the same motive can be found in O. Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891; and B. Stoker's *Dracula*, 1897) as a critical reaction to Darwin's evolutionary theory. The novel, based on a motive of dual personality, appealed deeply to readers of the Victorian era; however, it has become an icon of popular culture, too. It has been adapted to theatre, radio and movies over 30 times.

As critics claim, typical for Stevenson's fiction are catching stories, colourful location, supernatural elements, and a horror atmosphere. His stories are often set in attractive and exotic places where his characters can forget the restrictions of Victorian social manners. Arguing against realism, Stevenson underlined the "nameless longings of the reader", the desire for experience.

The genre of sea novels was enriched also by *The Sea Wolf* (1904) by **Jack London** (1876-1916). The book (a classical *bildungsroman*) tells the story of a gentleman, Mr. Humphrey Van Weyden, who was saved by the schooner Ghost after a boat crash. After this, his life was suddenly and cruelly changed – previously being a literary critic (and so doing nothing) he had to work hard and fight for his survival every day among "wild" men. An important role in the book is played by Captain Larsen known as "Wolf" (a wolf as a dangerous predator was a quite frequent motive in London's writings). Wolf Larsen was a pure representation of natural strength – a genial seaman and fearless fighter with incredible intellect and no respect for human life or suffering. Humphrey and Wolf surprisingly ended up in a kind of friendship endlessly discussing the philosophy of life which gave London an opportunity to provide readers his own interesting philosophical arguments and unique outlooks on life.

An interesting variation of a motive typical for adventurous (horror) fiction – an individual or a group of individuals trapped and endangered in an isolated place (on an island, in an old castle, etc.) – was used also by one of the most famous and popular British writers **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (1859-1930) in his novel *The Lost World* (1912).



Conan Doyle never avowed his ambition to write a popular "boy's book" full of suspense and adventure. *The Lost World* describes the adventures of four men who travelled to jungles of South America where they discovered a plateau inhabited by pre-historic dinosaurs and ape-men. Conan Doyle was so enthusiastic about this book that he even dressed as one of the main characters, Professor Challenger.

*The Lost World* became so popular that it became a model for the first American silent movie in 1925. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, an English author of Irish descent born in Scotland, became popular mainly for his detective stories. A detective

story

is a sub-genre of adventure fiction that "deals with crimes, their detection, criminals, and their motives". An American author Edgar Allan Poe is generally called a father of detective stories thanks to his "dark stories" [The Murders in the Rue Morgue](#) (1841), *The Mystery of Marie Roget* (1842), and *The Purloined Letter* (1844).



The birthplace of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh (from the author's archive)

Conan Doyle wrote more than 50 short stories and four novels on a famous fictional Londoner, detective Sherlock Holmes: e.g. [A Study in Scarlet](#) (1887), [The Sign of Four](#) (1890), [The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes](#) (1892), [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#) (1902), *The Valley of Fear* (1914), *His Last Bow* (1917), *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927) and many others. Sherlock Holmes got famous for his passion for a pipe and Scottish clothing, for his incredible observation skills and "deductive reasoning". The vast majority of Holmes stories is told by Dr. John H. Watson, Holmes's friend and companion, who – by his mediocrity and emotionality – creates a contrast to the cold detective's logics.



As the Guinness Book of World Records states, the best selling British author of all times – together with William Shakespeare – is Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa, Lady Mallowan (1890-1976), best known as **Agatha Christie**. Her 80 detective novels and short stories remain the classics of English literature. She created many unforgettable characters, among them the Belgian detective settled down in London named Hercule Poirot and an amateur detective, clever elderly spinster Miss Jane Marple.



A relatively new subgenre of adventure fiction, rooted in the second half of the 19th century, is science fiction (also marked as both SF and sci-fi). Science fiction is typically based on stories about "how the world could appear if..." The result is a picture of possible or alternative worlds where very important role is played by scientific knowledge and inventions. The origins of science fiction go back to ancient myths, sagas, and utopias. The compositional principles of the sub-genre in English literature were set in the 19th century by **Mary Shelley** (1797-1851) in her book [\*Frankenstein\*](#). Contemporarily, temporal or spatial settings of science fiction stories are usually significantly different from known reality. Frequent are stories where timetravel or faster-than-light space travel are possible, where robots and different races from various planets are as possible as human beings.



One of the most popular contemporary authors of science fiction stories that are mostly read by children and young adults is a prolific American author **Michael Crichton** (1942). He met world-wide success after writing the novel *Jurassic Park* (1990, a movie 1993) and its sequel *The Lost World* (1995, a movie 1997) about adventures of a group of scientists and children among them, liven up the Jurassic dinosaur beasts.

The book questions the possibility to control nature by human beings through the inventions of cloning and genetic engineering. An American billionaire John Hammond who finances the restoration of dinosaur DNA and the cloning of prehistoric beasts is a prototype of superciliousness, narcissism and a thirst for money. On the contrary, palaeontologist Alan Grant and his student – palaeontobotanist Ellie Sattler are models of common sense and

scientific circumspection. Crichton wrote many comparatively popular novels all of which became keystones of Hollywood movies, among them *Congo* (1980) about scientists looking for special industrial diamonds in a forgotten city in the African jungle who met and had to fight with a new race of guarding gorillas.

The special sub-genre of science fiction is a **dystopian novel** which has become one of the most popular genres in contemporary literature intended to young readers. Within the sub-genre, it is worth mentioning two series which have caught the extraordinary attention of readers.

*The Hunger Games* is a trilogy written by American novelist **Suzanne Collins** (*The Hunger Games*, 2008); *Catching Fire*, 2009; and *Mockingjay*, 2010). The events of the novels are set in an unspecified future and a post-apocalyptic country Panem which consists of the rich and ruling Capitol and 12 considerably poorer districts. The title of the series comes from the motif of the regular event organised for the Capitol's entertainment in which the participants from poorer districts are forced to fight in a game-like battle and many of them do not survive. The story follows the adventures of young fighter Katniss Everdeen.

Similar to *The Hunger Games* (both in the topic and structure) are two other exceptionally successful dystopian series for young readers, both written by American authors: *The Maze Runner* (2009) by **James Dashner** and *Divergent* (2011) by **Veronica Roth**.

## 6 HISTORICAL FICTION

Various readers have various tastes. While many teenagers like reading sci-fi, high fantasy, detective stories, or horrors, a remarkable group of young readers prefer looking back to past times. They read historical fiction.

**Historical fiction** as a genre can be recognised mainly by its setting in historical times or, more generally, by a setting in a time which predates the time of the first publication. Along with this, it is characterised by historical characters who are involved in historical events. The genre (mostly represented by historical novels) became extremely popular in the 19th century thanks to Romantic possession by national histories.

Numerous literary techniques of depicting history have been developed: some historical fictions may be focused on real historical characters or events and they are based on writers' serious research; some historical fictions are centred on fictional characters and plots (usually myths and legends) that are seen in historical circumstances. Moreover, in some historical novels historical elements (characters, events) are in focus; in others historical circumstances simply create a background for conflicts that are eternal (love, the struggle between good and evil, etc). Several subgenres have been developed: adventurous historical novels, historical romances, historical biographies, historical social novels, etc. Historical fiction can have various aesthetic and social functions: it can serve as an allegory, parody or satire to interpret contemporary problems; it can help to encourage teenagers' interest in the national or general history, or it can arouse patriotism (or, in a worse case, nationalism).

Though the genre was originated in the 19th century, there were several predecessors, one of them being a gothic novel [\*The Castle of Otranto\*](#) (1765) by **Horace Walpole**.



A famous Scottish novelist **Walter Scott** (1771-1832) is considered to be the father of the genre. He passionately collected old Scottish myths, ballads, legends and chronicles from his very young age. In 1814 his first historical novel [\*Waverley\*](#) was published and brought him immense popularity. It was set in Scottish history depicting a tale of the last Jacobite rebellion in the United Kingdom in 1745,

which was aimed at restoring a Scottish family to the British throne.

Scott later wrote more than 25 novels, including the famous [Rob Roy](#) (1818) and [Ivanhoe](#) (1819). *Rob Roy* is the story of a Scottish Robin Hood, highlander Robert Roy MacGregor. The most famous of Scott's novels, *Ivanhoe* (1819) is a tale set in the age of Richard the Lion-Hearted. Its protagonist, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, was a scion of one of the remaining Saxon noble families in England of the 12th century. As one of King Richard's companions in the crusades, he was drawn into the conflict between the Lion Heart and his brother John, as well as into a conflict between Norman and Saxon nobility. Among numerous historical characters, Robin Hood called Locksley appears as well.

Sir Walter Scott's Monument in Edinburgh  
(from the author's archive)



Through his works, Scott established a model of historical novel that endured for more than a hundred years of literary tradition: his plots are set in ages full of changes, struggles and turn-about. His heroes were not historically real (historically documented), nor had they any special qualities or special position in society. Important personalities (King Richard) were usually of secondary importance in a story. The plots were typically built upon strong and emotionally exposed (life or death) situations, intrigues, frequent motive of surprise and masking. Love was always important and an inseparable part of the stories. Men and women were usually schematically characterised: female protagonists were beautiful and tender, male protagonists were handsome and psychically strong.



The first American popular novelist **James Fenimore Cooper** (1789-1851) started as an author of essays and travel books. He became popular after publishing his novels on Natty Bumppo, also called Leatherstocking or Hawkeye, representing an archetype of brave American Pioneers, and his Indian companion Chingachgook. Five novels were later grouped and entitled *Leather-Stocking Tales* (1823-1841): *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the*

*Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841). The novels depicted events in the colonisation of Northern America in the 18th century, as well as the tragedy of American Indians.

The second of the novels, *The Last of the Mohicans* has remained the most popular novel among them. The plot is set in 1757, during the Seven Years' War between the French and the British, and chronicles the massacre in Fort William Henry. A group of English civilians, including Bumpo, his Red Indian friends Chingachgook and Uncas, and two Colonel Munro's daughters Cora and Alice, being betrayed by their Indian guide Magua, had to fight for their survival. At the end, after many battles, ploys, chases, and escapes, Bumpo killed Magua revenging the death of both Uncas and Cora. Chingachgook was left as The Last of the "wise race of the Mohicans". The novel ends as follows:

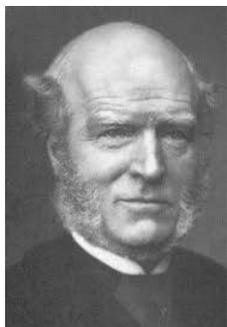
*...Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in an attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas like drops of falling rain.*

*In the midst of the awful stillness with which such a burst of feeling, coming as it did, from the two most renowned warriors of that region, was received, Tamenund lifted his voice to disperse the multitude.*

*"It is enough," he said. "Go, children of the Lenape, the anger of the Manitou is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans." (chapter 33)*

Along with describing the blameful process of extermination of Red Indians in the North America, the story gives readers the opportunity to think about people as curious, brave, and strong-minded creatures, as well as bloodthirsty, hostile, and racist killers. It builds a clear moral point by opposing two easily distinguishable groups of characters: good and bad.

J. F. Cooper was a prolific writer, publishing 32 novels, 12 works of non-fiction, a play and numerous pamphlets and articles. His works have been frequently adapted to films, TV or radio series, theatre performances or visual arts.



The genre of children's satirical historical fiction is represented also by **Thomas Hughes'** (1822-1896) semi-autobiographical series of novels on Tom Brown. The first of them was published as [\*Tom Brown's School Days\*](#) in 1857. The story is based on controversies between its protagonist Tom Brown and Harry Paget Flashman, a notorious school bully. Though Flashman constantly betrayed his friends, runs from danger, or cowers in fear, he arrives at the end of each book with medals, praise from the mighty, and the love of one or more beautiful and enthusiastic women. At the end of the series, Flashman became one of the most notable

and honoured figures of the era.

A Scottish novelist, Robert Louis Stevenson, already mentioned as being famous for his adventurous stories, relieved in a genre of historical novel as well, by his *Kidnapped* (1886). The novel brought "Memoirs of the Adventures of David Belfour in the year 1751", into the background of the Jacobite difficult situation between England and Scotland. Its protagonist, David Belfour, was kidnapped, involved in murder and after a shipwreck lived on a desert island.

The novel continued in the tradition of the glorification of Highland culture. The genre of historical fiction was successfully growing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well. Let's name some of the most recognisable and popular; In 1942 a novel entitled *The Robe* by Lloyd C. Douglas was published. Its events are set in ancient Rome (under the reign of Tiberius, the Emperor) after the Crucifixion of Jesus. Valerie Tripp's popular girl historical novel *Felicity Learns a Lesson* (1951) describes the story of nine-year-old Felicity who, shortly before the Revolutionary War, was trying to save her friendship with an English girl Elizabeth. A highly touching and human historical fiction is represented by Eva-Lis Wuorio's novel *To Fight in Silence* (1973) that deals with holocaust mutiny in World War II. On the contrary, a more fanciful face of life is uncovered in the novel *Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)* by Elizabeth F. Howard, published in 1991. Within a framework of the usual family Sunday-afternoon tea meetings at Aunt Flossie's old house, children were trying on old hats stored in a loft. This gave them good opportunities to brush off both nice and sad family memories. T. C. Boyle's *The Road to Wellville* (1993) represents a genre of comic historical biography describing some of the episodes from the life of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the inventor of the cornflake, set in 1907. One of popular historical novels with anti-racist message was E. Coleman's *White Socks Only* (1996).

## 7 ANIMAL STORIES

The genre of animal story is very old, maybe the oldest of all stories, which can be proven by the oldest myths and folk tales, or even by cave painting all around the world (e.g. Altamira). In general, animal stories can be roughly characterised as stories with animal characters. According to various criteria, many definitions and classification of subgenres have been formulated. As an illustration, Richard Adams distinguishes four kinds of animal stories:

- a) "anthropomorphic fantasies" in which animals and birds talk and behave like people, involving some degree of social comment or satire (e.g. fables),
- b) "animal stories – parables" describing animals dealing with God or Providence (e.g. Kipling's *Just So Stories*),
- c) stories with animals represented as divine agents of a supernatural power,
- d) plain animal stories without any secondary meaning (Adams, 1981, p. 7-9).

In this textbook, we have adopted the classification by J. R. Townsend (1990) who defined two basic kinds: *animal fantasies* and *biological stories* (see the chapter on animal fantasy). Both of them have always been popular among children and young adults. With many exceptions, of course, it can be stated that while pre-teenagers prefer animal fantasies, teenagers and young adults turn more frequently to realistic or biological animal stories.

Biological stories are rather realistic; animal characters act here in accordance with biological rules and their biological instincts. Their origin probably lies in the days "when the First Caveman told the Second Caveman about the mammoth he hunted last Wednesday" (ibid., p. 9). However, the animals are sometimes described as if they had human-like ethics and rational thinking, which gives the stories a more intensive emotionality. Children can learn about the life of animals in nature and about their specific features and relationships.

During a long development of the subgenre, several types have been formed:

- a) stories about animals written from the human point of view (describing life of animals from the "outside"),
- b) animal stories written from an animal point of view (describing animal life from the "inside" and involving fictional animal psychology),
- c) stories where only animals act,
- d) stories showing the relationship between man and animal.



**Anna Sewell** (1820-1877) was born in Norfolk in 1820. As a fourteen-year-old girl Anna suffered a fall, injured her knee and became unable to walk without a crutch. Due to her injury and later disability, she was used to using a horse-drawn carriage. Because of this, she learnt a lot about horses. By using her experience and knowledge of the abusive treatment given to horses and other animals in the Victorian era, she wrote only one book which became famous – *Black Beauty* (1877). It tells the sad story of such a mistreated horse. The book's uniqueness lies in the fact that it is written as a firstperson narrative told by the horse.

### ***My Early Home***

*"The first place that I can well remember was a large pleasant meadow with a pond of clear water in it. Some shady trees leaned over it, and rushes and water-lilies grew at the deep end. Over the hedge on one side we looked into a plowed field, and on the other we looked over a gate at our master's house, which stood by the roadside; at the top of the meadow was a grove of fir trees, and at the bottom a running brook overhung by a steep bank.*

*While I was young I lived upon my mother's milk, as I could not eat grass. In the daytime I ran by her side, and at night I lay down close by her. When it was hot we used to stand by the pond in the shade of the trees, and when it was cold we had a nice warm shed near the grove.*

*As soon as I was old enough to eat grass my mother used to go out to work in the daytime, and come back in the evening.*

*There were six young colts in the meadow besides me; they were older than I was; some were nearly as large as grown-up horses. I used to run with them, and had great fun; we used to gallop all together round and round the field as hard as we could go. Sometimes we had rather rough play, for they would frequently bite and kick as well as gallop."*

The book describes, in quite a sentimental and patronising tone, Black Beauty's happy life as a foal, his experiences with both good and bad owners, and his difficult life as an old and no longer useful animal. In all situations, Black Beauty keeps his character as a wise, patient and good-tempered being. Through reading the story, children can learn much about animal life and ways of treating them. Anna Sewell died only three months after the book was published, so she never saw its great success and the consequential improvements in animal breeding caused by her story.



Another author who became famous for writing so-called animal biographies was a Canadian author **Ernest Seton-Thompson** (1860-1946). Although he was born in South Shields, England, his real home was in Canada where he moved with his family in 1866. He became a respected wildlife illustrator and naturalist, a best-selling storyteller and the founder of the American Scouting movement (named as "the Wolf"). His stories are realistic and full of interesting details from the lives of wild beasts. Children can learn about animal habits, their ways of communication, voices, foot-prints,

relationships, etc. Moreover, in all his books ethical points can be found.

Most of Seton's books show nature not only as romantic and beautiful, but also with its "shady" sides such as animal cruelty during their fights and hunting. E.g., one of his biographies, *The Biography of Grizzly* (1900), describes the life of a bear Wahb from his very "childhood" continuing through his adventurous adult life to the image of a dying old bear.

Some of his other animal stories include: *Wild Animals Ways* (1898), *Animal Heroes* (1905).



*"Nature is my religion. And my desire... my ambition... the great goal I wish to achieve is to take my readers with me into the heart of this Nature. I love it, and I feel that they must love it... if I can only get the two acquainted,"* these words were the life-motto of **James Oliver Curwood** (1878-1927), a well-known American journalist, nature-lover and cult author of popular animal stories, along with Jack London.

Starting as a nine-year-old boy, Curwood's first short stories were published while he was a teen. During his lifetime he published more than 30 books and dozens of short stories and essays. As a passionate hunter, he also experienced fearful moments: while on a hunting trip in the *Rocky Mountains* (1885), he tried to shoot a giant grizzly.

One day he met Thor face to face and the bear chose not to kill him even though he had a good chance. This changed Curwood's relationship with nature and made him a persuaded environmentalist and conservationist. As said in the preface, the author offered the book with *"a confession, and a hope; the confession of one who for years hunted and killed before he learned that the wild offered a more thrilling sport than slaughter – and the hope that what I have written may make others feel and understand that the greatest thrill of the hunt is not in killing,*

*but in letting live.*" Moreover, the experience became a basis for one of Curwood's most famous novels – [The Grizzly King](#) (1916), made into a movie in 1989 as [The Bear](#) (directed by J.-J. Annaud). It is the story of Thor – a large grizzly, a bear cub called Muskwa that lost his mother and two hunters: a wise and experienced Bruce and enthusiastic Jim (Curwood himself). Let us name some of Curwood's other books (many of them were adapted for films as well): *The Wolf Hunters* (1908); *Kazan* (1914); *God's Country and the Woman* (1915); *Nomads of the North* (1919); *The River's End* (1919); *The Valley of the Silent Men* (1920); *The Flaming Forest* (1921); *The Alaskan* (1923); *The Black Hunter* (1926).

In his stories and novels the motive of the survival of an animal growing and maturing through various and more or less dangerous adventures on a long journey (*Kazan*, *Nomads of the North*) dominates.



And finally, the genre of animal biological stories (or wild nature, or in American tradition also outdoor adventurous stories) became popular and widely read also thanks to books by **Jack London** (1876-1916). He wrote more than fifty books or novels (experimenting with numerous literary forms, including war novels, sentimental love stories, social-critical stories, fantasy and science fiction), political essays, and journalistic articles (some of them have been translated into more than seventy languages) – stories on life in wild nature being the most popular: [The Son of the Wolf](#) (1900); [The Call of the Wild](#) (1903); and [White Fang](#) (1906). "No writer, unless it were Mark Twain, ever had a more romantic life than Jack London," Ernest J. Hopkins once wrote (in *The San Francisco Bulletin*, December 2, 1916). Always open to any adventure and fun, he spent many months hunting in the forests of Alaska, fishing and sailing (he set out on a long journey to the South Pacific and Australia in 1907-09 in a small boat). Later he found himself in farming and country life.

Jack London was one of the first writers who understood how to use media to market himself and create a cult – in his case a cult of poor-boyturned-success, and became the best paid, most popular novelist and short story writer of his days. After his death, however, his image of deep alcoholic womaniser abusing drugs and committing suicide (he officially died of kidney disease at the age 40) was developed. Moreover, London was among the first writers to work with the movie industry, and saw a number of his novels made into films.

The popularity of his books is usually explained by the fact Jack London centred the stories on the "*big moments of living*" and pointed the readers' attention to the universal (or even archetypal) values of human life: fight for survival, personal dignity and integrity, courage, loyalty, freedom and obedience,

etc. He personalised these universal concepts by both human and animal characters usually set into the hostile environment of the northern wilderness.

The main character of the novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903) is called Buck. "He" was a huge, physically strong, and well-trained domestic dog who, after being dog-napped and sold to Canadian government mail couriers, got to Klondike in the era of the Gold Rush when good and strong dogs were highly in demand. Surrounded by cruel men and nature, Buck soon rediscovered his natural instinct, the "primordial urge" that was referred by London as "*the Call of the Wild*". Buck soon learned that survival was the most important thing and he could survive only thanks to his tooth and fang (the basic rule of the wild: kill or be killed). After serving several masters he finally found a kind master John Thornton but, after struggling between obedience and freedom, he definitely decided for his natural urge and life among wolves. This gives London the opportunity to describe in many interesting details the nature of wild animals and their environment.

The book is written in the third person – from the human point of view. In spite of an appearance of absolute naturality, Buck is a mixture of human qualities and animal instinct. His human features and skills – sharp wit, rational reasoning, quick thinking, and grounded common sense – makes him an allegory of man's struggles.

*White Fang* (1906) is the story of a half-dog and half-wolf of the same name that was born in the wild of Alaska but soon domesticated by Indians. Being sold to white men he had to serve as a sled dog in the era of the Gold Rush. He had two owners: one cruel (Beauty Smith) and the second kind (Scott). Unlike Buck from *The Call of the Wild*, White Fang "found his peace" with a man – Scott. White Fang's loyalty to his master is unlimited and at the end of the story he saved the lives of Scott and his family. The story is written in both dog's and Scott's point of view.

## 8 REALISTIC STORIES WITH THE CHILD PROTAGONIST

In the very first chapter of this book, it was stated that according to many literary and psychological studies it seems that child readers usually prefer reading about children, not adults. Child protagonists act as psychological partners and virtual models of behaviour. Authors of children's literature have been aware of the fact since the very beginnings of the written literature for children.



The first American author who created famous literary characters at a young age was **Jacob Abbott** (1803-1879). He, like Lewis Carroll, was a Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Amherst and also the author of numerous children's books. He understood literature for children as an instrument of gentle education and advised all parents to read stories with children to hold Christian values (he wrote a work with a very long title that explains everything: "[\*Gentle Measures in the Management and Training of the Young Or, the Principles on Which a Firm Parental\*](#)

[\*Authority May Be Established and Maintained, Without Violence or Anger, and the Right Development of the Moral and Mental Capacities Be Promoted by Methods in Harmony with the Structure and the Characteristics of the Juvenile Mind\*](#)" (1871). He was the author of two literary series: Rollo series for boys (*Rollo at Work*, 1837; *Rollo at Play*, 1837, *Rollo at School*, 1838; *Rollo's Travels*, 1839 and others) and Lucy books for girls (*Cousin Lucy's Conversations*, 1841; *Cousin Lucy's Stories*, 1841; *Cousin Lucy at Study*, 1842; *Cousin Lucy at Play*, 1842 and others).



In the same time as first Abbott's books on Rollo appeared, one of the greatest English authors of the Victorian Era **Charles Dickens** (1812-1870) published his second novel and the first novel in English literature to centre throughout on a child protagonist called [\*Adventures of Oliver Twist: The Parish Boy's Progress\*](#) (1838). As many other Dickens's novels,

Oliver Twist is the social novel describing social injustice and various social evils of the early Victorian Era. Dickens uses grotesque, hyperbole and sarcasm to criticise child labour and the recruitment of children as criminals. His characters are either black (caricatures) or white (idealised). For example, *Oliver Twist* is an ideal young boy who is unrealistically good under any circumstances, even while living in a horrible orphanage or while being "educated" for a gang of young pickpockets. Many scenes are entirely sentimental, which was very popular in Dickens's times, however, nowadays they evoke the opposite effect. The ridiculing effect is even fortified by frequent fairy-tale-like happy coincidences (e.g. Oliver Twist finds out that the family who randomly rescued him from the pickpockets are his relatives!). Dickens critics believe that such literary technique is a manifest of author's deep humanism and belief that the good will finally win.

The novel *Oliver Twist* has been adapted to many films and TV series and it has become the basis for a successful musical *Oliver!* Dickens's first book about a girl protagonist was [\*The Old Curiosity Shop\*](#) (1841) telling a story of a beautiful but lonely girl named Little Nell. She lives with her grandfather in his shop of curiosities. Her grandfather is eager to save some money to leave her rich and to get a chance to marry well. He wants to get rich by winning at cards which leads him to the hands of the evil Quilp, a moneylender.

After her grandfather lost all of his money, he and Little Nell live as beggars and try to escape Quilp and rapacious relatives. After many difficult months full of obstacles and intrigues, Little Nell dies before her friends could find her and help her. The very long scene where Little Nell is dying was in Dickens' time one of the most admired literate scenes. The contemporary reader, however, would rather agree with Oscar Wilde who once said that: "One would have to have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing."

Dickens famous bildungsroman [\*David Copperfield\*](#) (1850) shows the protagonist's life from childhood to maturity. David, orphaned at 6, hates his relatives who move into the house "to look after him". David is educated in several schools, among them in a horrible Salem House managed by a heartless Mr. Creakle. Then David experiences hard work in a factory in London, later he escapes and goes through many "adventures", meeting various people, learning about life, maturing emotionally and morally.

The last novel of huge popularity with a child protagonist written by Charles Dickens is called *Great Expectations* (1861). It is divided into three stages: the first expectation deals with Pip's life with his sister and her husband. Pip is rather happy and satisfied until he meets Miss Havisham who hires him as a companion to her and her adopted daughter Estella. From that time on, Pip forgets about his friends and family and desires nothing but to be a gentleman. At the end, another of typical Dickens' happy coincidences occurs and Pip is informed by a London

attorney, Mr. Jaggers, that an anonymous benefactor will fund his education and training to be a gentleman.

In the second and third stages, Pip lives in London where he learns to be a gentleman. It seems that Pip's transformation to upper class representative is almost perfect. He readily adopts the physical and cultural norms of his new status throwing always his previous virtues. The main theme of the novel is the influence of rise in social class on human character resulting in moral destruction.



The novel *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 and immediately became one of the most famous of British novels. Although the book was signed by the pseudonym Currer Bell, its author was **Charlotte Brontë** (1816-1855), the eldest out of the three famous Brontë sisters. Similarly to other novels intended for young readers, it is written in the form of bildungsroman following the childhood and womanhood of an untalkative, intelligent and affectionate English orphan, Jane Eyre. As a 10-year-old child, she lives at Gateshead with her cruel aunt and cousins John, Eliza, and Georgiana, who

bully and neglect her. Then she leaves them for the Lowood School directed by egoistic Mr Brocklehurst. The story continues after 8 years. After working at Lowood as a teacher, she decides to become a governess at Gothic Thornfield Manor to teach a little and loveable French girl named Adele Varens. Here she desperately falls in love with the much older Mr Edward Rochester, her employer. During a short time spent with the Riverses at Marsh's End, Jane finds out that her uncle, John Eyre, has died and left Jane his fortune of 20, 000 pounds. Jane shares her inheritance with the Riverses (who – by Dickensian happy coincidence) turn out to be her cousins. Then she decides to meet Edward Rochester again but she finds only ruins where the manor house used to stand. Jane then learns that Rochester's mad wife set a fire and then committed suicide by jumping from the roof. Rochester himself, while rescuing servants from the burning mansion, lost his hand and eyesight. Jane finds him in a small manor house Ferndean. Jane without any hesitation agrees to marry him. Sentimentalism of the story is confirmed by a happy ending – Rochester partly recovers his sight in one eye and thus he can see their first-born son when the baby is born. Jane after ten years summarises:

*I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no*

*weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character—perfect concord is the result.*



Perhaps the most popular American novel for girls *Little Women* by **Louisa May Alcott** (1832-1888) was first published in 1868 and became an overnight success.

Both public and critical responses were awesomely positive and the charming novel was soon called a classic. The partially autobiographical story deals with the lives and loves of four sisters – vain Meg, hot-tempered Jo, shy Beth and selfish Amy growing up during the American Civil War. The book shows their life and their eventual learning about life rules, virtue, and morality in order to become good mothers

and wives.

It appears that Alcott's primary purpose was to instruct girl readers through mistakes and lessons of the Marches girls. The theme of poverty seems to be dominant – both poverty in money and love. The girls frequently discuss ideas of sisterhood, home, motherhood, marriage, pride, intellect, and education.

By their opinions and behaviour they act as model characters to show how to overcome obstacles and problems in life of girls and young women.



Talking about literature with a child protagonist, one must not forget two American novels that became national myths – *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) by **Mark Twain** (1835-1910).

The story of the former novel goes around a mischievous orphan Tom Sawyer who lives with his strict Aunt Polly. Tom's days are full of more or less funny adventures near the river Mississippi involving his friends, Joe Harper and Huckleberry Finn. Tom Sawyer's main life missions are to race bugs, to impress girls and to mark adults. The best known passage in the book describes how lazy Tom persuades his friends to paint a long fence for him discovering that work is the best fun.

The latter novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is more serious in tone than the story about Tom Sawyer. It shows a miserable journey of Huckleberry Finn

and runaway slave Jim down the Mississippi River. The scene when Huck and Jim travel on their raft is believed to be one of the most memorable images of human solidarity, escape and freedom in all of American literature. Some critics consider it the first Great American Novel. Its main theme declares that the right thing must be done even though others think otherwise. The story combines fresh children's humour, dynamic narrative and social criticism. Twain as the first American author used colloquial speech and dialect as a literary language.



Literary reputation of a popular English-American writer **Frances Hodgson Burnett** (1849-1924) was almost completely based on three children's books: [\*Little Lord Fauntleroy\*](#) (1886), [\*A Little Princess\*](#) (1905), and [\*The Secret Garden\*](#) (1911). The last one mentioned tells the story about a orphan girl called Mary Lennox. She was born in India where she lived with her parents until they died because of a cholera epidemic. Then she moves to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her rich uncle in England. The only person who is interested in the little girl and who talks to her is a chambermaid called

Martha. One day, she tells Mary about a walled garden that no one has entered since Mary's uncle's beloved wife died. Her grieving husband locked the garden and buried the key no one knows where. While walking around, Mary discovers the key and finds the entrance to the garden with the help of a robin. Mary discovers a desolate rose garden and decides to tend the garden herself. One night Mary discovers that she has got a cousin Colin, who lives ill and lonely in a hidden part of house. Mary is strong enough to work in the garden and to look after Colin and teach him to walk.

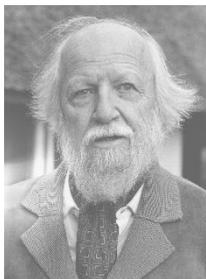
The *Secret Garden* has always been primarily read by female readers mainly because of the themes as importance of a mother figure and the capability to look after anybody or anything which are typical characteristics of literature for girls (Foster & Simons, 1995, p. 174).

Above all of this, Roderick McGillis points out that *The Secret Garden* is full of literary allusions – to fairy tales, to ancient Greek myths (Colin as Hermes or as Pan), to the Biblia (the snake that occurs in chapter 1, the garden itself as allusion to the Eden garden, etc.). The story is not only a bildungsroman, it is also the story of Mary's eventual change from "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen" to a female authority (Foster & Simons, op. cit., p. 172-174).



An American writer **Jerome David Salinger** (1919-?) published the novel [\*The Catcher in the Rye\*](#) in 1951. The story

is told by seventeen-year-old "angry teenager" Holden Caulfield who describes his experiences in New York City in the days just after his throwing out from an elite preparatory school when he was 16. The book is notable not for its story which is very simple, but for its specific literary language and the character of a narrator. Holden became the iconic persona for generations of American teenagers. The story is told in the first person. Holden is over-critical and depressed which is manifested in his cynical and jaded voice. The style of the novel corresponds with the theme. The text resembles records of Holden's speaking out loudly. His narration is combination of disjointed episodes and digressions organised randomly. Holden is an example of an unreliable narrator. The novel was banned in several countries because of its subject matter and vulgar language. One parent counted 237 occurrences of "goddamn", 58 "bastards", 31 "Chrissakes," and 6 "fucks" (Whitfield, 1997).



One of the most controversial and valued books for young readers is **William Golding's** (1911- 1993) novel [\*Lord of the Flies\*](#) (1954). The story begins with a group of 6 to 12-year-old boys who survived an airplane crash and stranded on a tropical island with no tools but a knife. Their plane was shot down while they were being evacuated from the country during an atomic war. From the very beginning, the boys begin to discuss who should be their leader and the question is a constant cause of disagreements.

The boys start a signal fire causing a big fire that destroys a big part of the island. One of the boys goes missing during the fire and is never seen again. Life on the island becomes more and more chaotic. The boys create two rival tribes. The situation gets worse and some children start hunting and killing other children. During one of the battles, the children set a forest fire that is seen by a passing naval ship.

*Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel with rich allusions to mythology, classical literature and Christian religion. The title is a reference to the Hebrew name Beelzebub which is a synonym for Satan. It shows weakness and fragility of civilisation. The novel was voted by *TIME* magazine readers as one of the 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to the present.



## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) How have ideas about child behaviour changed from the Victorian Era to the present day? Do children have the same status today as then?
- 2) Summarise Oliver Twist's, Elisabeth Bennet's and Jane Eyre's philosophy of life and values. How would she fit into today's society?
- 3) Choose any three female characters in the works discussed in the chapter and examine them as "victims". What causes restrictions in their lives? Can they change their situation? Do they need the help of others?
- 4) Make a comparative survey of the idea of beauty in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*. How important was beauty then? How important is beauty now? What has changed, if anything, about the value of beauty versus brains?
- 5) Based on reading the literary works, describe at least three inversions of plot (or character) in which apparent good turns bad or vice versa. What do these inversions contribute to the story?
- 6) Compare and contrast Holden and Huckleberry Finn. How does their adolescent inexperience permit their creators, Salinger and Mark Twain, to assert moral values?
- 7) The school children in *Lord of the Flies* are left alone on the island without adult supervision. Does this account for the change in their behaviour? The group of schoolmates is made up entirely of boys. Do you think a group of girls would have acted differently under the same circumstances?

## 9 DIGITAL LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

The global rise of digital technologies is changing the face of literature as well. The Digital Age (the time period in history which began with the mass use of the Internet in late 1980s) is characterised by the common use of various digital technologies (computers, internet, email, electronic games, digital photos and videos, etc.) in nearly all areas of life. It can also be referred to as the “information age”, or “computer age”. The area of culture – including literature – is no exception.

Digital technologies have influenced literature on all levels: it transformed the way literature is produced, received, and reviewed, which leads to the birth of new – “born-digital” – literary forms and new reading media (Hammond, 2016; Kirchof, 2017, n.p.). In some aspects, the transformation has been quite radical, or as Heick (2012, n.p.) expressed it, “for staunch traditionalists, digital poetry likely challenges their definitions for what poetry should be, looking more like a maddening, interactive website or irreverent game than the violent emptying of Wordsworth's soul”. Combining traditional verbal texts with multimedia elements led to the expansion of brand new forms and genres, many of which caused important shifts in the theory of literary communication (e.g. hypertextual communication) and the ways in which readers can perceive a literary text.

### Forms of digital literature

- a) **digitised literature:** entails “texts that exist originally in printed form and that are then as transferred for the virtual environment with programs such as PDF or EPUB” (Kirchof, 2017, n.p.);
- b) **digital literature:** is a sum of “digitally originated literary texts” (Unsworth, 2006). It “uses words, images, colours and sound” (Gamble & Yates, 2008, p. 173). Nelson (2011, n.p.), who concentrated only on poetry, adds: *“In the simplest terms Digital Poems are born from the combination of technology and poetry, with writers using all multi-media elements as critical texts. Sounds, images, movement, video, interface/interactivity and words are combined to create new poetic forms and experiences”* (Nelson, 2011, n.p.). To some degree, readers’ interaction is required. Digital literature brought a radical change

into the traditional idea of the reader as a passive recipient of an artistic text (example: imagine a story about a forest with illustrations. If the reader clicks on the picture, the objects in the picture start moving, animal characters start talking, or children can hear just “sounds of forests” for deeper sensual involvement. The text itself can be “talking” when the reader moves the mouse over it).

**c) e-literature (electronic literature):** is “digital born”, not digitised, but “a first generation digital object created on a computer and – usually – meant to be read on a computer” (Hayles, 2007, p. 4). It requires computation at every stage of its life – for its creation, preservation, and display. As Strickland (2009, n.p.) has it, “there is no way to experience a work of e-literature unless a computer is running it”. E-literature is not intended to be confined in a printed form. It is not static but necessarily interactive. It does not expect a passive reader, quite the opposite, it requires an active and interacting reader because, quoting Strickland again, “to read e-works is to operate or play them (more like an instrument than a game, though some e-works have gamelike elements).” To continue the running, the reader is usually asked to press a key, click somewhere or move some object on the screen, not necessarily, but sometimes solving simple logical tasks. In some cases, the reader becomes co-author of the text when he selects or determines the order of some elements or decides about the story compositions (for example, readers may be asked to choose from several alternatives and determine what the literary character should do. The story line is then changed accordingly).

Due to the fact that many variables must be taken into consideration, and because there are more similarities than differences, clean borders between digital literature and e-literature cannot be defined unambiguously. Therefore, some authors keep using them synonymously, or they use either of them to cover both phenomena. In this paper, both types are marked by an umbrella term of “digital literature”. Other terms (electronic literature, e-literature, e-lit, computer literature, online literature, virtual literature, cyber literature, ergodic literature, etc.) will be used only if necessary in quotation marks with no intention to bring in new or to distinguish their different meanings.

To keep the definition of the basic concept of the study clear, we adopt the characterisation of children’s digital literature by Prieto (2016) who defines its 3 key traits:

- a) **it is coded:** it involves a code processed in the computer
- b) **it is interactive:** it requires a bilateral cooperation of both the reader and the text;

- c) **it ruptures discursive linearity:** in contrast to traditional printed monomodal literature, digital literature opens up to multidimensional, multimodal and heterogeneous non-linearity.

### **Kinds and genres of digital literature**

Kinds and genres of digital literature not only span nearly all the types known in the printed literature, but also contain some new ones unique to digital technologies.

Analogically to traditional literature, digital literature can be further divided into three kinds:

- a) **digital prose** (digital narratives, hypertexts, audiobooks, etc.),
- b) **digital poetry** (visual and kinetic poetry, flash poems, etc.),
- c) **digital drama** (including interactive drama and animated comics).

As regards the media used and readers' senses involved, genres of digital literature may be divided also into:

- a) **verbal digital literature:** includes e-books, multimedia linear stories, and hypertexts that work only with a medium of verbal texts or, if other elements are incorporated, a verbal component remains a dominant element of the work (for more, see Glazier, 2014);
- b) **graphic and visual literature:** combines verbal and visual elements, the latter ones being dominant for readers' perception (for more, see Glazier, 2014);
- c) **audial literature:** combines verbal texts and sound elements (audiobooks, audial poetry, etc.);
- d) **kinetic literature:** consists of digital texts which have the ability to change their form in time and space, e.g. letters and words move after clicking on them, or the text changes its form and appearance after each reading. More sophisticated effects include: a running text with changeable pace of movement, freezes, replays, time lapses, time scans, stretching and shrinking texts, stroboscopic flashing etc. (for more, read Glazier, 2014).
- e) **3D literature:** combines various effects of visual and kinetic literature, e.g. rotating, rolling, flipping, zooming, scaling, or stratifying individual letters or blocks of text. It questions some reading stereotypes, e.g. the text may be composed in the form of a cube with several "layers" of text, which allows reading from front to back, or reading overlapping texts. The process of "layering" the text brings into contact whole blocks of texts which create new "word clusters" or "sentence clusters" which, consequently, may invoke new meanings.

Understandably, cotemporary theory of digital literature offers more classifications. For instance, Hayles (2007), considering mostly the technological aspects of their creation, defines the following genres of digital literature:

- a) **Hypertext fiction:** the term marks literary texts which break the traditional linear composition by including external hypertextual links which have become the distinguishing feature of the genre. Contemporary hypertext fiction (and hypertext literature in general) incorporates a much wider scale of navigation tools and schemes, including interface metaphors (for more, read also Glazier, 2014).
- b) **Network fiction:** is very close to hypertext fiction, but in this case hypertext links are interrelated and create a networked text of its own, or, as Ciccorino (2007, p. 7) has it, it is digital fiction that “makes use of hypertext technology in order to create emergent and recombinatory narratives”.
- c) **Interactive fiction:** is built upon continual interaction between the reader and a programme. It is very close to hypertext and network fiction, but it partakes of a more significant game aspect (Monfort, 2003). To run on a screen, it requires active participation (including physical responses) of the reader (clicking, touching, moving a mouse in a space, etc.).
- d) **Locative narratives:** integrate virtual narrative with real-world locations, or as Hayles (2007, p. 8) has it, it is “short fiction delivered serially over cell phones to location-specific narratives keyed to GPS technologies”. For example, to read a digital story set in a particular city, readers need to move around the city because they can receive parts of the narrative only in respective places (located by GPS or another location technology).
- e) **Installation pieces:** are multimodal artistic works using various electronic tools to create the illusion of 3D texts the reader might be involved (“incased”) in.
- f) **Codework** – plays with and integrates two semiotic systems: human-only language and machine-readable code. Hence its other name: “poetry for (AI) machines”.
- g) **Generative art** – is the product of either generating a text according to some randomised scheme or rearranging pre-existing texts (for more detailed definition, see Bootz, 1999). In a generative work, the reading process can result in “an unpredictable output that neither author nor reader can preview”. Which means that when the reader reads the same story (with the same beginning), it can finish in countless endings generated randomly by the programme with a genetic code.
- h) **Flash poems:** are short, impromptu written technology-based poems (for more, read Ciccorico, 2007).

Unsworth (2005, n.p.) in his ground-breaking book *E-literature for Children: Enhancing Digital Literacy Learning* limited the scale of digital literature genres intended for children's readers only to three groups: digital narratives, digital poetry, and e-comics.

Within the category of digital narratives, she further distinguishes 5 genres:

- a) **e-stories for early readers:** usually combine verbal text with audio and visual support and hyperlinks to help very young readers to comprehend a verbal text and acquire correct pronunciation,
- b) **linear e-narratives:** in their form these are narratives very similar to traditional narratives in print (very often illustrated) but instead of paper they are displayed on a computer or any other digital screen,
- c) **e-narratives and interactive story contexts:** these are e-narratives (like those in the previous category) with an elaborated context secured by an additional access to other digital materials, e.g. setting of the story is illustrated in the map; literary characters are provided with their "profiles" complete with photos and short biographies; or factual information incorporated into the story are linked for more details and explanations to encyclopaedias, news, etc.;
- d) **hypertext narratives:** frequently purely verbal (without visuals) focusing on the text structure created by hyperlinks;
- e) **hypermedia narratives:** are stories which contain numerous hyperlinks to other text and media (both visual and audio materials).

Digital poetry is in Unsworth's work divided into two genres:

- a) **e-poetry:** includes dynamic, multimodal poems without any physical involvement of a reader (no interactivity);
- b) and **digital poetry:** requires reader's active participation and interactivity (Unsworth later refers to this type of poetry, quite confusingly, as hyperpoetry).

And finally, when defining **e-comics**, he distinguishes it from animation. **E-comics** are seen as "comic strips that appear on screen and are composed of essentially still images with speech balloons. Although some contain some minimal dynamic images, no use is made of hyperlinks" (Unsworth, 2005, n.p.).

(When studying Unsworth's classification, it should be kept in mind that his book was published twelve years ago and since then the digital literature has changed significantly - new technologies such as iPad have been introduced, as well as many new communication platforms).

In her study “**The Impact of New Digital Media on Children's and Young Adult Literature**”, Kümmerling-Meibauer (2016) discusses 3 new genres of children's literature:

- a) **cell-phone novels**: are literary works originally written on cell phones and spread to readers via text messaging. A cell-phone novel consists of very short chapters (70-100 words) due to the limits on characters for one SMS. Today, the creative principle transformed other popular communication canals which led to the birth of new, similar-in-form genres, such as Twitter novels, Instagram novels, etc.).
- b) **transmedia storytelling**: is related to the situation where a story can be accessed across various media and platforms, e.g. printed verbal texts, webpages, mobile applications, games and movies,
- c) **fanfiction**: a rapidly growing genre where children take upon themselves combined roles of readers, active reviewers and authors of cross-writings.

New genres of digital literature have been emerging at a rapid pace, among them **facebook fiction, blog fiction, twitterature, e-mail novels, touchscreen stories**, chatterbots but it will require some time to analyse them and evaluate their potential.

### 3. New literature calls for new ways of reading

As stated in previous parts of this study, digital literature is, in some aspects, the product of very new creative processes which involve new technologies and convey, again in some aspects, an entirely new nature of a literary text and literary communication. Does it mean that this new literature need a new reader as well?

We agree with Hayles (2007, p. 1) who argues that the “practices, texts, procedures, and processual nature” of digital literature require “new critical models and new ways of playing and interpreting the works”. She then continues: “Readers come to digital work with expectations formed by print, including extensive and deep tacit knowledge of letter forms, print conventions, and print literary models. Of necessity, electronic literature must build on these expectations even as it modifies and transforms them. At the same time, because electronic literature is normally created and performed within a context of networked and programmable media, it is also informed by the powerhouses of contemporary culture, particularly computer games, films, animations, digital arts, graphic design, and electronic visual culture. (...) Electronic literature tests the boundaries of the literary and challenges us to re-think our assumptions of what literature can do and be” (Hayles, 2007, p. 4). For instance, Strehovec (2008, 2014) in this context adds that reading digital literature calls for the

ability of readers to put the text in forefront as a physical object that stimulates all senses.

Strickland (2009, n.p.), too, in her essay “Born digital” claims that “e-poetry is a poetry requiring new reading skills.” The need for these new reading skills is explained by Pokrivčák & Pokrivčáková (2002, p. 98), showing that in reading non-linear or hypertextual digital texts the reader generates a rich and theoretically endless net of free associations, which is the literary reception of a very different type than the traditional linear one. The reader who is invited to look for and play with various textual connotations, “is developing a new mode of reading: non-hierarchical, de-centralistic, subversive, and relativising.”

Another important change triggered by the rise of digital literature is its close interconnection with **new social conditions**. Strickland (2009, n.p.) clarifies: “Reading is being redefined in cultures that use programmed and networked media: a surfing, sampling, multitasking kind of reading is often elicited online, while in some online and video games, a problem-solving, focused, remembering attention is required. Deep, focused attention is what print readers are trained to have, but attention itself is being reshaped, becoming a mix of deep and hyper, or focused and mobilised.”

In summary, digital literature calls for the reader who is open to new ways of reading and more importantly, playing with a literary text. It requires the reader who is more active in his (even physical) responses and who is explicitly taking a decision about his reading processes, which institutes a qualitatively new and unique relationship between a text and a reader. To the extent that the reader becomes a legitimate co-author of the text he is reading.

Knowing this, the rapid advancement of digital literature triggered an unusually severe and polarised discussion among literary scholars and educators. While one group advocates digital literature fiercely, proving it is more dialogic (in Bakhtin’s perspectives) and thus democratic than strictly linear and sequential printed texts (Riffaterre, 1994; Landow, 2006, Pokrivčák & Pokrivčáková, 2001, 2002a, 2002b), the opposite group (backed up by latest findings of contemporary cognitive sciences) argue that increased requirements of sensual processing and decision making impair reading performance (DeStefano & LeFevre, 2005). Edwards & Hardman (1999) in this context warn about “lost-in-hyperspace” phenomenon caused by human working memory overload. However, they also conclude that once readers learn and get used to how to navigate, read and process hypertexts, their levels of reading comprehension may be even higher.

The discussion also reflects on the differences between younger and older generation, whom Prensky (2001) famously called “digital natives” and “digital immigrants”.

It may be then assumed that digital literature would be more natural to children’s readers who would be less prone “to be lost” in digital non-linear

literary worlds. However, Fesel et al. only very recently proved that “there is no consensus on positive or negative effects of hypertext reading on reading comprehension” (2015, p. 136).

### **Children’s digital literature at schools**

Regardless, the ongoing intense and contradictory research results, digital literature has become an integral part of children’s lives and cannot, or at least should not, be ignored by their literature teachers.

In this last part of the study, based upon the analysis of research studies, instructional essays and free-access lesson plans created by teachers all around the world, we summarised the ways in which digital literature is involved in contemporary literary education.

Incorporating digital literature into classes can be divided into 4 broader areas:

- 1) **Adapting/digitising printed literature** via digital tools
- 2) **Responding to literary texts** (both printed and digital) via digital tools (including social networks)
- 3) **Re-creating literary works** (both printed and digital) via digital tools
- 4) **Creating original digital literature**

#### **1) Adapting/digitising printed literature via digital tools**

- **Creating hyperlinked versions:** learners read their favourite (originally printed) literary text, now in doc, and add their own hyperlinks to other literary or non-literary texts, picture dictionaries, or encyclopaedias (for more see Vasileiou (2011) who documents creating a hypertext edition of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*; for technical procedure read Harris, 2011; Pallo, 2017).
- **Making audio books:** When reading longer literary texts, learners can read the text aloud (one by one) and record themselves to create a collective audiobook. They can choose from many easy-to-use digital tools such as *Audacity*, *Audioboo*, *AudioPal*, *Podomatic*, *SoundCloud*, *Shoutomatic*, *Vocaroo*, *Voki*, *Voxopop*, *Voices*, and many other ones. The activity may be exceptionally effective in foreign language classes when learners have the opportunity to practice speaking in a foreign language in both a new and meaningful (product-oriented) way (for more information on this language-educational aspect of creating learners’ recordings consult Pokrivčáková, 2015, pp. 53-56).
- Learners can also create **literature-focused podcasts** of shorter literary texts (by using any tool from the previous paragraph) and broadcast them on the classroom webpage, blog, Podcast Alley or any other platform (for more details see Hanson-Smith, 2009; for methodological inspiration and technical procedures consult Tulley, 2017).

- **Creating video books:** learners can adapt the printed text into the form of a videobook, too. They may use Windows *Movie Maker* or *iMovie*. The website *Perform a Poem* offers tips on creating and recording children's performances of literary texts with a video camera.
- **Creating modern (multimedia) adaptations:** learners are allowed to "accommodate" the chosen literary text to their "modern tastes". For instance, they can take a traditional fairy tale (originally in print) and "digitise" it by rewriting it into electronic form, adopting the text itself by using various fonts, text colours, page colours, framing, or by adding illustrations, animations, sound recordings, short video sequences, etc.

## 2) Responding to literary texts (both printed and digital) via digital tools

- **Digital text annotation:** when reading a digital or digitised literary text, learners are asked "to mark" the text. For instance, they can underline in different colours the parts they find most interesting, most entertaining, or most boring (they may add smile faces icons). They may add their notes comments, questions, or insights. Later, they can share and discuss them with classmates.
- Another way they can learn how to express their own opinions and how to learn about opinions of other people is to join **literature-focused social networks** individually or as a class. Some examples of such networks are: *Goodreads*, *LibraryThing*, *Red Lemonade*, *Pottermore* and many others (for more information read Parrott, 2017; Wiseman & Wagler, 2017).
- The class can **write their own blog** responding to reading literature and include their own original literary texts, as well. They may choose from many tools, such as Blog, Weebly, Wix, etc. (for more see Cimermanová, 2011, p. 39-40; Lewis, 2014, pp. 63-65; Hanson-Smith, 2009; Reimer, 2017).
- **Working on multimedia projects** instead of traditional written assignments such as writing reading journals or book reviews (for inspiration, see Hughes, 2017; Kinchen Smith, 2017). The task may have the form of electronic portfolios as well (Lewis, 2004, pp. 101-104).
- **Creating animations:** learners read a chosen literary text and create short animated dialogues between its literary characters. They can either adopt the existing dialogue from the literary text, or they can create their own original dialogues (e.g. "create a dialogue between The Little Red Riding Hood and her mother after the girl is saved from the Wolf's stomach). Learners can choose from various easy and children-friendly digital tools such as GoAnimate, Animoto, etc. (c.f. Stefani, 2017).
- **Creating digital literary maps:** learners read a text, or part of a text, and create a digital map of its spatial setting. For instance, they may create a map of real places (e. g. Sherlock Holmes' London), or fictional places (the map of

Narnia). They may tag and pin artefacts on Google Maps or they can choose any other digital format (for various methodological aspects, see Crowther, 2017; Valdez, 2017; Vankova Bozhankova, 2014).

- **Literary geocaching:** originally an outdoor recreational activity in which participants use any navigational technology to hide and hunt for little “caches” or “treasures”. This activity may be very motivating and satisfying when reading a legend related to a concrete historical place. Learners have to move around the place (or the museum), and find various realia mentioned in the legend (for more about the technological aspects of the activity, see Mathews, 2017).
- **Creating digital archives** may be another highly effective, but also challenging and time-demanding activity intended to enable learners to see literature from various perspectives. Following the examples of *The Rossetti Archive* (which collects scans of every known work including manuscripts, poems, paintings, sketches, and translations by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, as well as any critical work and secondary source related to Rossetti’s legacy), or *Holmesiana* which collects anything related to Sherlock Holmes stories, learners can create their own or classroom museums of favourite writers or literary characters (for more details on creating and managing digital archives, consult McGann, 2009; Swafford, 2016; Weingarten & Frost, 2017).
- Participating in **virtual literary worlds:** learners can participate in literary life via virtual worlds. They can create their own avatars and participate in the already established virtual worlds (e.g. *Second Life*). They may use also other virtual tools such as *Theatron* (online) which is a set of interactive 3D models of present and past theatres. There were studies (e.g. Cohen, 2011) documenting classes where Shakespeare tragedies were taught via installing a virtual play production in the virtual Globe Theatre (via *Theatron*). The resulting products made by learners may have a form of virtual plays, virtual tours, alternative reality games, or virtual museums (for more details on virtual literary worlds, see also Quijano, 2017; Webb, 2012).

### 3) Re-creating literary works (both printed and digital) via digital tools

- **digital word games:** help learners understand better how language works, how letters and words affect one another, and that one little change can cause a very important difference. Learners can, for example, copy a favourite nursery rhyme, change the rhyming words, and see how the meaning of all the text has been changed.
- **magnetic poetry:** learners read a literary text and then by using various digital tools, e.g. *Word Mover*, *Magnetic Poetry*, *MagPo*, create their own poetry or stories by moving words of the existing text.

- **fanfiction:** learners can rewrite a well-known literary text from the perspective of a different narrator, add some extra scenes to the story, finish the story by telling what will happen after the canonical story has ended. Learners can create so-called cross-stories, too, freely mixing up plot, characters or motives from more literary texts. Learners' fanfiction can be published on specialised portals (*Fanfiction, KidFanfiction, ArchiveofOurOwn*) where they will find many valuable models to follow as well.

#### 4) Creating original digital literature

- Writing interactive poetry: learners** can learn and practice poetry's special characteristics when composing their own poetry with help of various digital tools ([Poetry Idea Engine](#), [WritingwithWriters](#), various games at [Read Write Think - acrostic poems](#), [Line Break Explorer](#), etc).
- Collaborative writing of a literary text in the form of wiki stories:** this technique allows the whole group of learners work as a team and cooperate on creating an original literary work (for more, see Cimermanová, 2015; Hanson-Smith, 2009; Laflen, 2017; Rodrigo, 2017)
- Creating blog narratives:** learners write their original literary pieces and publish them on the blog either individually or in a series of collective narratives (for more, see Cimermanová 2015; Hanson-Smith, 2009; Reimer, 2017).
- Writing Twitter literature (Twitterature): learners** write a collective literary work via Twitter network. The limited number of words the author needs to accept for one tweet creates a special dynamic atmosphere of this genre (for more, see Johnson, 2017; Kunze, 2013; Parks, 2017).
- Writing visual literature:** learner may practice visual poetry or stories by using digital tools such as *PowerPoint, Animoto, Keynote, Prezi, Tagxedo, Wordle*, and so on. [To integrate verbal texts with pictures or videos, tools such as PicLits, iDevice, Phonto, PicLits, or VisualPoet](#) can be used.

#### Other issues concerning the use of digital literature in classroom

It is possible to agree with many previously mentioned authors that digital literature makes young learners better readers, writers and thinkers because it helps develop their textual, visual, and digital literacies. However, this may be true, or at least possible, only if adequate attention is paid to the quality of digital literature read by children.

Consequently, teachers' responsibilities do not end with allowing digital literature into the classes or with developing new reading skills of their learners. Donahoo (2012), for example, points critically to the fact that the rise of digital literature **challenges traditional models of publishing** when each book, each piece of literature, went through the hands of, and needed to be approved by, the

author, the proof-reader, reviewers, language editors, technical editors, designers, and many others. Nowadays, anybody can write and publish a poem or a story online – though often with a questionable quality. And then anybody can read it as well. These facts have a direct impact on the development of literacy skills and literary awareness of very young readers. “Just because a story is in digital book form does not mean it is going to be supportive of our children’s literacy, especially in an environment where stories may not be even proofread” (Danihoo, 2012, n.p.). In such situations, teachers are those people who need to act. Danihoo (ibid.) continues: “Teachers expressed shock and dismay that a digital book could be published without passing through the traditional editorial filters. Once this concept was understood, educators quickly realised the ramifications of removing these filters and saw the need for those who select books for children to serve as the gatekeepers”.

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