

CHANGES IN THE XXTH CENTURY ENGLISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TOPICS AND STYLES

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the major changes in topics and stylistic features in XXth century English children's literature. The XXth century witnessed a significant shift from moral and didactic storytelling to more imaginative, psychological, and socially reflective narratives. Authors began to focus on children's emotions, autonomy, and complex life situations, incorporating diverse voices and themes such as war, gender roles, race, and identity. This evolution not only enriched children's literature but also aligned it more closely with broader literary movements and societal changes of the time.

Keywords: *Children's literature, 20th century, literary style, thematic development, imagination, identity, social context*

ANNOTATSIYA

Mazkur maqola XX asr ingliz bolalar adabiyotidagi mavzular va uslubiy xususiyatlardagi o'zgarishlarni tahlil qiladi. Ushbu davrda adabiyot axloqiy-didaktik yo'nalishdan ko'ra, bolalarning tasavvuri, hissiyotlari va ijtimoiy muammolariga e'tibor qaratgan holda o'zgarib bordi. Urush, jinsiy rollar, irqiy tenglik va shaxsiy identitet kabi mavzular keng yoritila boshladi. Bunday o'zgarishlar bolalar adabiyotining boyishini va zamonaviy jamiyat bilan uyg'unlashishini ta'minladi.

Kalit so'zlar: *Bolalar adabiyoti, XX asr, uslubiy o'zgarishlar, mavzu rivoji, tasavvur, identitet, ijtimoiy kontekst*

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматриваются изменения в темах и стилях английской детской литературы XX века. В этот период детская литература претерпела значительный переход от поучительных и моральных историй к более воображаемым, психологическим и социально ориентированным сюжетам. Авторы начали акцентировать внимание на чувствах детей, их самостоятельности и сложных жизненных ситуациях. Включение тем войны, гендера, расы и идентичности отразило не только литературное, но и культурное развитие общества.

Ключевые слова: *Детская литература, XX век, литературный стиль, развитие тем, воображение, идентичность, социальный контекст*

INTRODUCTION

The XXth century marked a turning point in the development of English children's literature, both in terms of thematic content and literary style. While earlier works often emphasized moral instruction and obedience, modern children's literature began to explore the inner world of the child focusing on imagination, independence, curiosity, and emotional complexity. This shift reflected broader changes in society, including evolving views on childhood, education, psychology, and social roles.

Authors such as A. A. Milne, Roald Dahl, C. S. Lewis, and J. K. Rowling introduced characters and stories that broke traditional molds, giving children more agency and voice in the narratives. The emergence of fantasy, science fiction, and socially conscious storytelling allowed young readers to engage with both real and imagined worlds in more meaningful ways[1].

Additionally, the growing diversity in themes such as family dynamics, war and conflict, racial identity, disability, and gender roles mirrored the challenges and transformations experienced throughout the century. These changes helped shape a more inclusive and emotionally resonant literary environment for young readers.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In examining XXth century English children's literature, the analysis combines a literary-historical approach with thematic and stylistic exploration. Key texts are not merely viewed as stories for young readers but as cultural artifacts reflecting changing societal values and psychological understandings of childhood.

A creative and practical angle in this research involves closely reading selected works to uncover how narrative voice, character development, and setting contribute to deeper meanings. For example, exploring how Roald Dahl uses dark humor and child-centered justice to empower young protagonists reveals subtle criticisms of adult authority[2].

Another practical method includes comparing earlier and later works—such as contrasting the moral rigidity of early XXth century tales with the moral ambiguity and imagination in books like *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *Harry Potter*. These comparisons highlight stylistic evolution, such as the shift from linear storytelling to more complex, layered plots that mirror children's growing cognitive and emotional sophistication.

Interdisciplinary perspectives also play a vital role. By integrating insights from psychology, education theory, and cultural studies, the research situates children's literature within broader conversations about identity formation, trauma, fantasy, and the construction of childhood itself.

Furthermore, this methodology encourages examining illustrations, book design, and reader reception to gain a full picture of the literary work's impact. Children's literature is not only written for children but also shaped by adult perspectives, institutions, and markets, making a multi-angled analysis both necessary and enriching.

This practical and creative approach allows the study to move beyond surface-level readings and reveal the powerful ways literature has shaped and reflected the evolving experience of childhood in the XXth century[3].

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

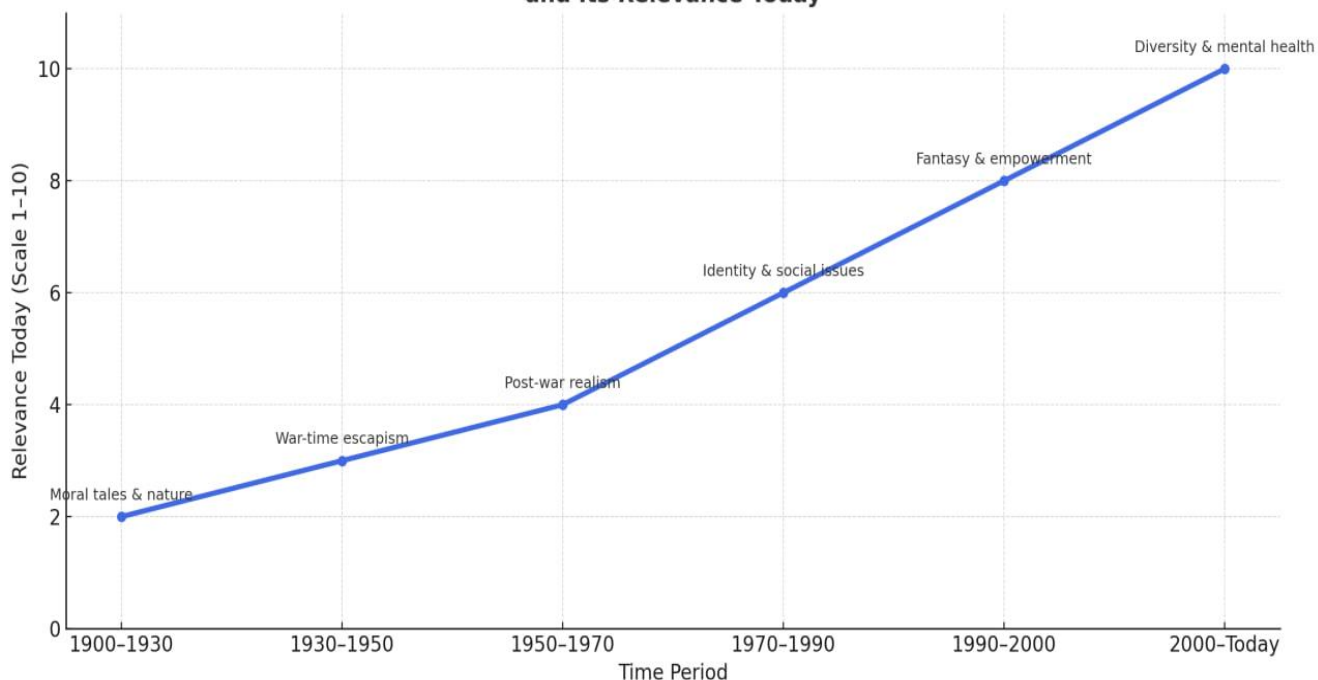
Here is a **table in English** that provides a creative and practical overview of the **changes in topics and styles in XXth century English children’s literature**, including real examples of books and authors to illustrate each period:

Changes in XXth century English Children’s Literature: Topics and Styles – Creative and Practical Examples

Time Period	Main Themes	Stylistic Features	Creative & Practical Examples (Books & Authors)
1900–1930	Fantasy worlds, good vs. evil, morality tales	Traditional narrative forms, descriptive storytelling	Beatrix Potter – <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> (1902): moral lesson through animal characters A.A. Milne – <i>Winnie-the-Pooh</i> (1926): simplicity and friendship
1930–1950	Escapism during war, resilience, adventure	Clear structure, comforting tones	C.S. Lewis – <i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i> (started 1950): Christian allegory, magical realism Enid Blyton – <i>The Famous Five</i> series: child-led adventures
1950–1970	Post-war realism, everyday challenges	More dialogue, less idealism	Roald Dahl – <i>James and the Giant Peach</i> (1961), <i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> (1964): dark humor, critique of adults

Time Period	Main Themes	Stylistic Features	Creative & Practical Examples (Books & Authors)
1970–1990	Identity, diversity, social issues	Experimental structure, inner monologue	Jill Murphy – <i>The Worst Witch</i> (1974): misfit protagonist in fantasy Raymond Briggs – <i>The Snowman</i> (1978): wordless picture storytelling
1990–2000	Complex characters, empowerment, fantasy	Blending of life, fantasy and realism, rich world-building	J.K. Rowling – <i>Harry Potter</i> series (1997–): school life, hero’s journey Jacqueline Wilson – <i>The Illustrated Mum</i> (1999): mental health and family struggles

Thematic Evolution of 20th Century English Children’s Literature and Its Relevance Today



This graph shows how the themes in English children’s literature have evolved across the XXth century and how relevant they are today. As we can see:

- Early XXth century moral tales and nature-based stories have limited modern relevance.
- War-time escapism and post-war realism still hold some cultural value.
- From the 1970s onward, themes of identity, diversity, and empowerment have grown significantly in importance.
- Literature from the late 1990s to today especially works addressing mental health and social diversity remains highly relevant and influential[4].

CONCLUSION

The evolution of English children’s literature throughout the 20th century reflects profound social, cultural, and psychological shifts in society. From the early emphasis on moral education and imaginative fantasy, literature moved towards realistic portrayals of childhood, social diversity, and emotional complexity. This progression mirrors changing attitudes toward childhood itself no longer seen as a

period of mere innocence, but as a complex and meaningful stage of life deserving of nuanced representation.

Today, the legacy of XXth century children's literature is seen in its ability to both entertain and educate. Modern writers continue to draw inspiration from past styles and themes, while addressing contemporary issues such as mental health, inclusion, and empowerment. As a result, children's literature remains not only a vital educational tool but also a powerful force for empathy, resilience, and critical thinking in a rapidly changing world.

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