

Children's Literature: A Mirror of Society

Children's literature refers to a branch of publishing that offers books specifically designed (both in form and content) for a young audience, ranging from childhood to adolescence. Since the end of the 20th century and into the 21st, this genre has experienced significant growth and is now characterized by a wide variety of genres and themes. Children's literature serves a dual purpose: it supports the intellectual and emotional development of children and adolescents while offering them reading worlds that nourish their imagination.

This research paper invites students to explore the diversity and richness of children's literature through various dimensions: its themes, its forms, its evolution, as well as its educational and social role. Each student will define a personal angle of study based on their interests and corpus in order to develop a critical reflection supported by concrete examples.

The goal is to show that children's literature, while sometimes seen as light or simplistic, can, on the contrary, address complex issues such as death, grief, divorce, conflict, identity, or environmental challenges with real depth and great sensitivity. The project may also include comparisons between French-speaking and English-speaking works, analyze the relationship between text and image, or explore how certain themes are represented across different time periods, cultures, and literary genres.

Here are a few suggested questions, which may be freely adapted or combined:

- How does children's literature address sensitive topics (death, separation, fears, etc.)?
- How do representations of the family in children's literature reflect social changes across time periods or cultural contexts?
- How does it reflect or deconstruct gender stereotypes (girls/boys, social roles, etc.)?
- How do books for children and teens address themes related to diversity or inclusion (ethnic backgrounds, religions, sexual orientation, disability)?
- Emotions in picture books: how can they help children understand themselves?
- How do visual representations influence the reading and reception of a story?
- Comparison of the same theme treated in a French picture book and an English-language picture book.