



World Conference on "Integrated and Life-long Education of Modernity"

The Role of Children's Literature in Teaching Young Learners

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Abstract. This article focuses on the importance of children's literature in the education of the young generation and what we should pay attention to when teaching this subject. If we take into account that this is one step in which young learners will achieve their goals in the future, we must pay more attention to this subject. In addition, it will be useful to introduce the young generation to the writers who made a great contribution to children's literature and their works.

Key words: children literature, genres, fairy tales, folk tales, fables, traditional stories, poetry, novels, songs, Puritan traditions.

Myths, fables, and fairytales, which were initially based on oral tradition, have allowed adults to connect with children in a continuous process up to the present day. Tales have been recounted throughout history to educate, entertain, and raise folks' understanding of moral ideals and practices, serving as a vital element of cultural legacy as well as a means of reinforcing tolerance and mutual knowledge among diverse groups. Reading or listening to stories may be regarded as vital communal activities, capable of impacting young generations, empowering them, and preparing them for the future. Because culture is important for learning, tales play an important role in molding an individual's function in society, becoming a useful resource from a didactic, psychological/therapeutic, and pedagogical standpoint. Storybooks may educate children with new knowledge about the world, develop vocabulary, and improve particular language skills (in the classroom or at home), while also encouraging contact between the storyteller (teacher, parent, or other professional staff) and the listeners. It is well understood that stories, by recreating fictional situations that correspond to children's real problems, enable them to feel comfortable and safe in difficult situations, ensuring emotional security and providing healthier ways to deal with internal struggles, life adversities, and stressors. Storytelling compensates for what young people may lack by offering them good behavioral patterns and constructive models through characters with whom they may relate. Storybooks (or digital tales) are easier for all youngsters to comprehend than abstract concepts or theories, and they may become specific instruments for mapping reality and imparting health content, particularly to the most vulnerable populations¹.

According to the World Health Organization, health literacy should be integrated into school curricula in the context of a health-promoting classroom environment to provide future

generations with practical knowledge about healthy lifestyles. In fact, school is a perfect location for performing health-related interventions and favorably influencing kids' well-being as well as academic progress². The ultimate objective is to engage young generations in practical activities concerning healthy habits (such as balanced diet and physical activity) and dangerous behavior prevention (such as cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug use) through personal health knowledge re-elaboration. In a previous systematic review, we presented evidence for including narrative-based tactics among the potentially highly motivating approaches for encouraging children to adopt healthy eating habits.

In our earlier systematic review, we offered evidence for including narrative-based tactics among the potentially highly motivating approaches to help students adopt good eating habits from infancy. In general, we investigated the reasons for employing children's literature and storytelling in the classroom to boost students' global development and well-being.

Children's literature is widely defined as any creative literary work created and tailored specifically for children's consumption. Only in the 18th century, as the notion of childhood evolved, did a unique genre of children's literature develop. Modern children's literature includes brief fairytales and fables, picture books, comics, cartoons, novels, and nursery rhymes that most youngsters can appreciate. In our search, we picked research addressing the pedagogic dimension of children's literature, whereas studies addressed the didactic and therapeutic dimensions, respectively.

The crisis we are facing is not just economic and financial but also political, cultural, and ethical, causing worry and terror as a result of the sense of a precarious life in the context of increased individualism and insensitivity to the challenges of others. Furthermore, modern culture values everything in monetary terms, giving precedence to scientific and technological knowledge while diminishing the importance of human sciences, which have maintained the traditional humus of citizenship education.

Despite the fact that the educational system is facing several issues across the world, school remains the perfect venue for displaying solutions targeted at enhancing students' overall development. Aside from its special dedication, it is critical to develop healthy, respected, and fulfilled citizens: future people capable of caring for themselves, others, and the environment.

In an era marked by deep socioeconomic changes and the collapse of the traditional social tissue (i.e., new forms of poverty, increased inequalities, family mobility, etc.), the cultural heritage of folktales-easily accessible to both parents and teachers-could be a useful tool for promoting individual personal growth, social cohesion, and sustainable development. Tales were and continue to be recounted in all societies and situations to convey experiences, customs, norms, and values while also giving pleasure and new knowledge to the listeners. Children's stories, according to the "culturalistic" viewpoint, belong to a special cultural niche that may assist young people in their transition into life, helping them to comprehend who they are as human beings and how they can contribute to the development of the world³.

Children's literature continues to be a significant opportunity for presenting moral principles in an enjoyable and engaging manner, and it is rapidly expanding in tandem with the goals of entertaining, educating, and providing new knowledge (in line with the new concept of "edutainment"), being able to integrate the fun and adventure demanded by children (simulating the activity of free play) with the adults' goal of providing them with a set of moral examples.

Fairytales make up a large part of children's literature, with the ultimate goal of transmitting basic universal values and raising children's awareness of many aspects of life. That is why,

even before the printing press, parents used fairytales to instill culturally appropriate moral norms in their children at a young age, providing them with information, attitudes, and skills that could serve as a kind of "vaccine" against various threats to individual or collective health.

The most famous example that meets these criteria is Carlo Lorenzini's (Collodi) "Pinocchio," which was intended to teach youngsters about the repercussions of bad behavior. Similarly, in Germany, the Grimm Brothers' wonderful tales conveyed noble principles and positive examples, assisting youngsters in understanding what is good and what is wrong. Tales are very appealing to children because they depict real aspects of family and community life, reinforce parental relationships, and emphasize ethical values related to social life. Children indirectly acquire pedagogical messages through the implicit meanings embodied in the stories, which can influence their global personality and stimulate a social sense of duty.

Children's tales are a realm of limitless possibilities, where young people may broaden their views, develop fresh perspectives, identify plausible alternatives or solutions to issues, and cultivate qualities such as self-confidence and resilience.

The role and importance of children's books have shifted in modern society, but children's literature (including movies and digital resources) continues to influence our daily lives and contribute to the development of young people in a variety of ways, ranging from value transmission to didactic purposes. The emergence of digital technology constitutes both a threat and an opportunity for the survival of traditional fairytales or fables. Digital storytelling (the art of telling stories combined with a range of multimedia tools) is a useful tool for creating more engaging and interesting learning experiences.

Actually, printed publications are often expensive, but Internet-based materials provide a low-cost alternative (sometimes available for free online) that can increase children's interest in reading in a variety of ways. Combining story and technical possibilities can be more powerful in terms of information availability, work sharing, and differentiated and motivated learning models. There is, however, a fundamental difference (at least in terms of establishing good relationships with educators) between watching a fairy tale on monitors (a static and passive approach, or even computer-based interactive mode) and listening to a live re-telling of it.

Many years before Aesop's tales (which were successfully translated into Latin verses by Phaedrus), the instructional purpose of narrative works was discovered on clay tablets in Sumerian and Babylonian writings. Myths that were originally passed down orally became well-known throughout the Mediterranean region owing to the Greek manuscripts of Alexandrian scribes, who employed them in their regular educational operations. Philosophers (for example, Plato) used myths and fables in their academic courses with students and followers, teaching grammar and style standards through the stories and inspiring young academics to construct their own. Aesop's fables were regarded as valuable instructional tools in medieval schools for teaching Latin and rhetoric.

Even today, as an integral part of the primary school curriculum, children's literature can be a significant experience in the lives of children, with fables and fairytales used as motivating teaching tools in both humanistic and scientific disciplines. Educators are aware that all creative and artistic activities, including literature, can play a critical role in not only improving students' knowledge but also in the acquisition of daily life skills, which are useful in dealing with any problematic situations.

Because childhood is a critical period for language development, it is critical to make it a pleasurable experience: reading or listening to stories may be a delightful method of language training capable of overcoming all potential learning hurdles. The repeated narrative passages in fairy tales or fables allow the child to deal with some complex themes or patterns that require additional repetitions to be interiorized. That is why stories may be used to teach foreign languages and improve language abilities (writing, reading, speaking, and listening). The use of narrative in foreign language teaching has been shown to reduce anxiety, allowing students to take risks in language classes due to their familiarity with stories and the relaxing learning environment created by storytelling. As a result, telling or reading stories is an effective strategy for learning grammar structures, syntax, new vocabulary, improving oral and written competences, and thus improving one's ability to communicate effectively and successfully.

Storytelling can stimulate and provide potential insights into other aspects of children's cognitive development, such as problem-solving and reasoning abilities. Educators should pique children's interest in reading while also encouraging them to use their imagination to immerse themselves in the story; once children become attached to their favorite characters, they can recreate them while playing, following the time chain and cause-and-effect relationship of narrated events, allowing the educational message of the stories to be better interiorized. Educators should also be mindful of their own responsibilities when picking children's books for pedagogic reasons (rather than just following popular titles or "best sellers"), and they should read the stories in a caring and friendly setting. Students of all ages can borrow storybooks from libraries or friends, whereas digital storytelling can be easily and quickly found on the Internet, even for free.

Children learn to cope with inhibitions, vulnerability, and shyness by reading fairytales and fables, which contain many adventures, heroes, personified animals, enchanted forests, and magical objects. Children's stories, according to psychoanalytic interpretation, take readers to a profound level of awareness by dealing with fundamental human concerns presented in the language of symbols. Beyond its educational purposes, children's literature can positively influence mental wellbeing by nurturing the next generation's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

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