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## Reflections of violence on children's books

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### Abstract

In children's literature products ethic value judgments, didactic, informative, instructive, and counseling also the cautionary factors outweigh more. Furthermore, without generalizing, when we look at some of the children's literature products, components containing violent and aggressive behaviors are not escaped from notice. Children's literature products involving such components raise a question mark in minds; how these work as an educational appliance for young children. For this reason, exhibiting the components in children's literacy products which might head the child at violent acts with aggressive behavior, attracting the attention of people interested in subject and providing recommendations on how children's literature products should be is the purpose of this study.

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### 1. Introduction

Child, who feels himself more secure in his family and environment, will learn the tolerance which is the basis of social awareness, humility and democracy with them. What impress the child more than anything will be standards of value of individuals around. According to Şen (2008), these standards of value based on adapting the individual with society, are learned by family and local environment as well as with the written and visual materials, copying, modeling, or reading (language). In this context, the texts written in reading materials such as children's books with a point of view 'according to the child' contains the implicit meanings.

### 2. Method

In this study, in which documentary screening method used as one of the data collection techniques, children's books were reviewed along with literacy and an assessment to be made by examining the products of children's literature through sample texts. Documentary screening is defined as data collection by examining existing records and documents. This technique called as "documentary observation" by Duverger (1973) is defined as "document method" by Rummel (1968), and many others. Best (1959, p.118) describes this technique as a data source, systematic review of existing records or documents. (Act: Karasar, 2005).

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### 3. Findings

The numbers of those who research academically on children in our country are increasing with each day. This can be considered as an indicator for increasing value given to the child and his education. The works that coloring the world of a child's imagination, enriching his imagination, but also helping him use the language understandable and effectively, and guiding the child to the better and right are examined within the scope of children's literature products. These works are effective tools that can be used in children's education and should be prepared taking into consideration the fact that children have a different mental structures than adults.

They must be able to introduce the life and humans to children with a realistic standpoint. They should prepare the child to life, respond to questions that child can not find the answer in life, and should help to complete the missing information. In this process of information, transmissions should be submitted within the development of events (Lüle, 2007).

Writing for children primarily requires 'consciousness of children'. According to Alver (2005), writing for the child means to know that consciousness does not belong only to adults; understanding, comprehension and explanation are not monopolized by adults. Child is a conscious being; perceives, understands and evaluates. So it is essential to work according to this knowledge, and if possible, should be worked on the development of this consciousness.

Not only family and the local environment guiding in meeting the needs of the child, also children's literature products prepared for the children play an active role. While children's literature products are serving to the needs of the individual, they also aim the individual to have national, ethic, social, and universal values.

So, how children's literature which is prepared considering 'according to the child' principle and called literary study including art and aesthetics and one of the most important sources that feed the spirit of children's should be? Or, does children's literature mean either a literature that is made for children, a literature talks about the child or the readers are only children?

In order to reach the response to these questions open for discussion for many years, first we must start off the certain things we know. The first of these is the presence of the line that can count as a true work of art with publications for children and only separated by a clear outline of the books written for children. For sure it can not be ignored. Although language, expression and content of works for adults are different, children's and adults perspectives on life, issues, and philosophies of life are separated from each other. Given the development level of countries, the number scarcity of works written for children are not escaped from notice. Another noteworthy point is, even though a portion of products in children's literature is read with pleasure by adults or by children, those books not written for children are referred as children's literature products.

For example one of the French classical writers Fénelon, has written his work *Télémaque* to educate the future ruler. Again, La Fontaine wanted to show his art in French language rather than educating children with his fables (Enginün, 1987, p. 34). *Robinson Crusoe* written by Daniel Defo for adults (1709) and Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876) are examples of products of children's literacy.

Children's literacy that is performed in order to contribute children's growth and development, imagination, emotions, thoughts and sensibilities, tastes, and having fun while educated, is a literature composed in a period of 300 years. This occurrence continues by developing rapidly in terms of the written tradition, literary value, aesthetics and form in recent years (Yalcin and Aytaş, 2005, p. 16).

In children's literature products ethic value judgments, didactic, informative, instructive, and counseling also the cautionary factors outweigh more. As Dursunoğlu (2007, p. 31) stated, the child who often acts self-centered, starts thinking ourselves-centered by growing up and communicating with people. Child's ourselves-centered thinking increases by emotional and mental development progress and accelerates by socializing. With emotional and mental development of child, he feels closer to others and understands them better. With socializing, he improves himself better and begins to seek further enjoyment and pleasures. Considering the foundations of language development laid and strengthened in young ages, children's literature's supporting child's language development, expanding the vocabulary and contributing aesthetic pleasure and thought system of can not be ignored.

Children's literature in the West has started with literary products such as lullabies and fairy tales. This shows that, children's literature is an appliance which is transferring the value judgments of a society, traditions and customs from one generation to the other. If we look at the development of children's literature in Turkey, we can see that the formation process began in 1860s has been constantly in interaction with the West. For example, the first children's literature products which have translations and adaptations clearly indicate that, this domain take advantage of the translation during its own formation. The classics which had an important function in the West in 19th century, has remained as ascendant works of children's literature in our country since 1860s.

If we look at Neydim's determination (2003, p. 1-2); "When there is need of children's literature, adult literature, some of the products in adult literature are adapted to the child to fill the gap in this domain. Chief among these is Robinson Kruseau. When Robinson Kruseau landed on the island he had Bible, weapon and food in his hands.

They are symbols of the Christianity and colonial culture. That means if you believe I will give you food, if you do not you are going to be punished. In addition, Aesop tales, Andersen's Fairy Tales, Grimm Fairy Tales from the West still be taken as examples. Aesop is known as one who hates children. Andersen had written his tales to nobles to get his way around them. Grimm brothers had the fairy tales compiled, but re-written them passing the filter of Christian morality. Another example can be given from Pollyanna. No one has an idea that Pollyanna may contain violence. We never think that presentation of such a naive child may create mental disorders on reader. But Atalay Yörükoğlu says "How a heroine who has neither sorrow, nor resentment or anger can be adopted? At most, as an inaccessible creature it creates a sense of indignity on reader". However, the book contains religious motifs and Pollyanna is nothing but an angel laid on the purity of a child. This is reflected in the literary aesthetic values".

Many tales assessed as qualified have a major contribution on child's mental development, self-recognition, increased sense of self-confidence; recognizing the life's economic and social aspects and also acquiring the habit of reading. In addition to these, a child is unable to grasp the world as a whole yet. So, that is a world of agglomeration with details for the child (Dilidüzgün, 1996, p. 35, 36).

According to Gönen, as child is unable to think abstract he might be afraid of tales. Fairy Tales and solid components such as in Little Red Riding Hood and Hansel and Gretel maintain components of violence to frighten the children. Child might be heavily affected of these. But when he starts growing up and abstract thinking, he understands these are not real (Act. Geçgel & Çakmak, 2005, p. 48).

Charles Dickens', "My first love was Red Riding Hood. I knew that, if I could marry Red Riding Hood I'd be the happiest person in the world. "words reveal how the tales we listened to in our childhood affect us dramatically. While offering children the virtues of love, beauty and goodness via fairy tales in a crystal bowl, unfortunately perhaps intentionally, perhaps without realizing we are offering the violence too. For example, step-mothers and poor children in fairy tales often offer samples of their violence (Kuzu, 2002, p. 22).

Usually the heroes or heroines who lost their mothers to death, as a result, are forced to continue their lives together with their step-mothers. Our heroes are always good-natured, friendly, innocent and helpless. By contrast, the step-mothers are very evil, cruel, and jealous, sometimes witch and are in killing or punishing effort. However, today, as a result of death or divorce, number of those who marries second time marriage is substantial. How can a child growing with fairy tales in which stepmother violence is dominated and come across such a situation, approach the person unprejudiced who is going to be a step-mother to that child?

Kapulu (1998) states in a survey that, the fable from Kalila and Dimna called "Wren and Elephant"-a famous work of Indian scholar Beydeba believed to have lived before Christ- takes place in Secondary Education 6th grade Turkish language textbook; because of both in terms of the action and behaviors of heroes and the messages carried by the textbook, it does not indicate a healthy example of identification for the age group selected for the book.

In the book the text is as follows (Act. Sever, 2002, p. 36).

### ***THE ELEPHANT AND THE WREN***

One day a wren nested somewhere. It laid eggs and bred. This nest was on the path of an elephant. Everyday the elephant was passing by this path to drink water. One day, while the elephant was going to drink water it stepped on the wren's nest and trampled it. It broke all the eggs, trampled over them and killed all the hatchlings. When the wren came back to nest and saw all the disaster, it understood that this was done by the elephant. The wren didn't

stop; crying and wailing it found the elephant and said: "Great elephant, the one who reign in this place ... thanks to you I was living in the bottom of this shrub. Why did you trample over my nest? Why did you kill my babies? Have you done it because you see me small or what?"

"Yes, you understood very well. No prizes for guessing this? Know your place! Who are you anyways? Get out of here!"

The wren sadly left there. It poured out its grief to the other little birds like itself. Told what was happened. "Well, but we are only little birds. What we can do to the giant elephant?" said the other birds.

This time the wren went to the crow and the magpie and said: "Please come with me, I want you to scratch the elephant's eyes out, the rest is easy".

The crow and the magpie went and scratched the elephant's eyes out. Then the wren went to the brook. The brook was full of frogs. "You told us, we learned about it but we are only tiny little creatures. What can we do to a giant elephant" said the frogs.

"The thing you will do is very small, but very valuable for me! ... There is an abyss close to the location of the elephant. He is blind, he can not see anymore. This river goes on there. If you go out there and croak, the elephant will think there is water. As he can not see he will roll down the abyss and die" said the wren.

Indeed, the thirsty elephant directed to the place where the frogs' voice came, and it rolled down to the abyss and died. The wren fluttered its wings on the elephant and said: "You giant elephant relying on your enormosity! You thought I am too small. There is a famous quote 'do not insult the weak ones', you are huge, I am tiny ... But you don't have a brain. I have a brain and my mind is working. Look, what is the result?"

VISHNU SHARMA (*Kalila ve Dimna*)

In this text, "violence" is shown as the most effective way to solve problems between people. With the sense of revenge, the plan was first making the elephant blind and killing him who trampled over the wren's nest and killed the babies. As a result of a plan operated cunningly, the elephant died falling off the cliff. In the message at the end of fable, violence is naturalized by establishing a link between the use of violence to be smarter with reaching of the goal; a relationship is established between the use of mind to commit violence and the killing action (Sever, 2002, p. 30).

## Result and Suggestions

In the studies on Children's literature domain, 'according to the child' perspective is an important determinant. Offering to our children and young people better quality books, must be one of the foremost tasks of adults. By ensuring children see the facts and adjusting the dosage during the process of the themes in children's literature types; the collaboration of author, artist, educator, psychologist and designer should be exhibited.

Writers and animators working in this field, directing the children to accept their own truths through the texts, will tumble children's independent thinking and expressing their ideas. For this reason, as stated before, the condition should be exhibited clearly and the balance should be provided regarding the processing of themes.

The reading materials have an active role in child's growth and development, as well as forming his morality and personality structure. For this reason, heroes and heroines using the violence as a tool in achieving the goal in texts can lead to emotional breakdown of the child and wrong perception in the moral concept. Therefore, free spirit in writing should not be independent from the health of the child's feelings and thoughts; in terms of values transmitted, it should help bringing up balanced, healthy individuals with conscious of responsibility. The love of books and reading habit to be gained during childhood will support individuals adapt to their communities in a more respectful manner and gain a solid place.

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