

# The originality and development of modern children's literature

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**Abstract:** The article examines the development of modern children's literature. The tendencies of this process can be specified within the framework of the analysis of the plot, imagery, and the problematic and thematic spectrum of texts. The literary base is the works of Narine Abgaryan, Nikolai Nosov, and Eduard Uspensky. The aim of the work is to study the specifics of modern children's literature. The methodology of the study is focused on a comparative analysis of texts at the level of genre, type of hero, and poetic language.

**Keywords:** development trends, children's literature, genre, type of hero, author, language, colloquial speech.

Children's literature occupies a special place in everyone's life. Some approach it with reverence, studying its history and reading works with interest; others consider it undeserving of serious attention, viewing it merely as amusement for a "small" audience. Formally, it can be seen as a form of entertainment. However, one must also consider how important and beneficial books can be for children and adolescents. How productively can they influence children—stimulate imagination, teach something, guide, advise, support, and orient them for practically their entire future life?

The history of children's literature dates back quite far. The so-called professional or specialized approach to writing texts for children can already be combined with folklore variations aimed at young audiences—fairy tales, bylinas, songs, short fables, and so on. Later, children's literature became an independent creative product, playing a leading role in the development and education of children and adolescents. Future adults thus become bearers of a rich cultural heritage (Bryantseva & Kuznetsov, 2023, p. 291).

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It is worth emphasizing that children's literature shapes culturally aware individuals. It establishes a framework of life orientations, communicates essential value positions, and regulates the perception of "good" and "bad" as part of social development. This is characteristic of literature in general, confirming the organic interdependence of the forms.

Children's writers aim to create an atmosphere of favorable, trusting dialogue with young readers. Famous authors such as Pavel Bazhov, Agniya Barto, Kir Bulychev, Arkady Gaidar, Viktor Dragunsky, Lev Kassil, Samuil Marshak, Sergey Mikhalkov, Valentina Oseeva, Grigory Oster, Vladimir Suteev, and Korney Chukovsky achieved this skillfully, professionally, and without falsity. Their works are models for contemporary word artists. Current traditions are upheld by N. Abgaryan, A. Orlova, A. Usachev, L. Romanovskaya, A. Nikolskaya, and others.

In academia, there are different definitions of "children's literature," which is understandable. The most widely cited is by Z.A. Gritsenko: "Children's literature is a set of works created specifically for children, taking into account the psychophysiological characteristics of their development" (Gritsenko, 2004, p. 7). E.E. Zubareva and V.K. Sigov noted that "children's literature, as part of general literature, is the art of words. In other words, children's literature is that which is created by masters of language specifically for children" (Zubareva & Sigov, 2004, p. 8). I.N. Arzamastseva and D.L. Nikolaeva defined children's literature as "a world of artistic works about what a child is, what constitutes their microcosm and macrocosm—that is, everything surrounding them" (Arzamastseva & Nikolaeva, 2005, p. 7). We consider children's literature a tool for constructive education, forming personal qualities, and producing texts oriented toward the interests and needs of adolescents. Discussions on genres, topics, and problems within this segment remain highly relevant and necessary. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine current trends in children's literature. The methodology involves systematizing existing data and analyzing contemporary Russian prose for children. The works of N. Abgaryan, N. Nosov, and E. Uspensky exemplify these trends. The practical significance lies in clarifying the concept of children's literature and identifying authors who produce high-quality texts for modern young readers. Studying children's literature is therefore essential—it allows for an adequate assessment of trends in one of the most complex literary-artistic domains.

The concept of "children's literature" is closely linked to "children's reading" (Gritsenko, 2004). The latter refers to a complete work or excerpt accessible to children in terms of meaning and structure. It is crucial to consider the age group and reader-specific orientation. Children's reading is, therefore, the objective decoding of texts thematically understandable to children and adolescents. Not all general literature is suitable for children's reading, and even suitable texts may require adaptation (Zubareva & Sigov, 2004, p. 30). Crafting a coherent, engaging, and comprehensible text for children is a unique skill, combining content and form. Exceptions exist—writers may adapt texts for different age groups, sometimes done by others. For instance, K. Chukovsky adapted Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn* for children, S.Y. Marshak translated poetic masterpieces, B. Zakhoder adapted A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, and other authors created distinct aesthetic worlds for young audiences.

Even adaptations retain immediacy, intrigue, and fluid event integration. Genre, while secondary, is less important for children's literature than narrative dynamics, character contrasts, and language vividness. Contemporary Russian children's prose follows this approach. Although stereotypical patterns exist in plots, character systems, and problem vectors, these elements engage young readers based on age characteristics.

At the turn of the 20th–21st centuries, works “created by children themselves” appeared (Arzamastseva & Nikolaeva, 2005, p. 7). While notable, it is premature to consider such works a distinct part of children's literature. Quality, including aesthetics, literacy, initiative, interest, relevance, plot quality, linguistic structure, and educational value, determines whether a text qualifies as children's or adolescent literature.

Children's literature considers children's psychological, emotional, and intellectual development, knowledge, and life experience (Lunin, 2002, p. 87). Literature cannot equally interest all age groups. Categories include:

- Preschoolers
- Younger schoolchildren (grades I–III)
- Middle school students (grades IV–VIII)
- Older school students (grades IX–XI)

Each group prefers different topics, genres, and text lengths. Contemporary children's literature responds to societal changes, addressing needs, relevant issues, and a wide thematic range. By the late 20th century, topics like disasters, crime, and tragedy emerged. Works combined exciting plots with entertainment, though didactic and philosophical elements retained significance (Abgaryan, Gamayun, Ozorina, & Tsympkin, 2024).

In recent decades, the focus shifted toward timeless human values: happy families, harmonious relationships, adventure, happiness, and the search for life truths. Prose and lyricism address these themes. A notable trend is the decline of lyricism; many authors transition from poetry to prose, e.g., T. Sobakin, M. Bogoroditskaya, L. Yakovlev. Poetry remains effective for younger readers, while middle-aged children prefer prose. A. Usachev exemplifies contemporary prose for children, publishing in journals and standalone collections, including poetic adaptations (*All About the Smart Dog Sonya, Tales in Verse, Fairy Tales, Complete Cat-Fighting, Everything About Dedmorozovka*). His works combine humor and subtle moral instruction, cultivating kindness, politeness, responsibility, attentiveness, and humanity.

E. Uspensky's works, such as *Uncle Fyodor, the Dog and the Cat* (Uspensky, 2023), exemplify the “new fairy tale,” merging real and fantastical worlds. Characters range from ordinary to magical, with animals reflecting human qualities (Gavrilina, 2023, p. 207):

“Who taught you to talk?” asked Uncle Fyodor. “Just like that,” said the cat. “Here a word, there two. I lived with a professor who studied animal languages. That's how I learned. Now I can't do without language” (Uspensky, 2023, p. 3).

The narrative merges real and fantastical spaces—ordinary city life versus magical Prostokvashino—allowing allegorical exploration of universal issues: child–parent relationships, friendship, loyalty, and general goodness and love.

Modern children's literature also reflects shifts in character types. While set in contemporary adult worlds, children remain the main protagonists, albeit with evolving roles. In Usachev's *Malusya and the Speech Therapist*, a girl who cannot pronounce "R" enters a magical world, learning lessons about communication, friendship, and self-confidence (Nikolaeva, 2018, p. 152). Characters resemble adult literary figures, combining reflection with child-appropriate understanding.

Language adaptation is another trend: literary language mixes with conversational speech. Features like sentence fragmentation, abbreviation, and repetition appear. For instance, N. Nosov's *Karasik* uses conversational structures (Nosov, 2022, p. 2). N. Abgaryan's *Mura's Happiness* blends literary and colloquial language (Abgaryan, 2015, p. 93). Contemporary children's literature increasingly mirrors adult speech, reflecting societal and cognitive changes in young readers (Durgus, 2025; Getmanskaya, 2024).

In conclusion, children's literature plays a critical role in shaping personality, character, and social understanding (Chumachenko, 2024, p. 135). It functions as a medium of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic education while responding to societal developments. Young readers navigate between classical and modern literature, finding in texts guidance and meaning (Prokopenko, 2022, p. 898). Authors like Abgaryan, Usachev, Uspensky, and Nosov maintain the continuity and ethical, moral, and aesthetic essence of children's literature, a trend likely to persist.

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