Introduction
Contextualising Ruskin Bond’s Rusty series as a Children’s Literature

The Wind and the Rain
Like the wind, I run;
Like the rain, I sing;
Like the leaves, I dance;
Like the earth, I’m still;
And in this, Lord, I do thy will.

Ruskin Bond

(Rain in the Mountains: Notes from the Himalayas 144)
Introduction

This thesis attempts to study Ruskin Bond’s *Rusty, The Boy from the Hills, Rusty Runs Away, Rusty and The Leopard, Rusty Goes to London* and *Rusty Comes Home* in the context of children’s literature. In accordance with the protagonist’s chronological age, these books were rewritten from Bond’s earlier works and published in the years 2003 and 2004 respectively. In this study, these five books are collectively named as ‘Rusty fiction.’

Rusty series traces the life of Rusty from childhood to adulthood. We find many similarities between Rusty’s life and Ruskin Bond’s life as described in his autobiographical works. In addition, it traces the development of the author’s life as an artist from the age of seven to fifty five. Hence, it can be read as bildungsroman as well. By combining autobiography and bildungsroman, Bond expresses certain values to be imbibed by child readers. This thesis attempts to study Rusty series as children’s literature and to derive the implicit values embedded in them. To begin with, this introductory chapter discusses in detail the background to children’s literature and its focus.

Children’s Literature

‘Children’s Literature,’ in the modern society, has grown into a separate mature discipline; it has a separate and distinct identity. Though stories for children began earlier, it has “sprouted” into a separate field only in the eighteenth century (Kurup 10). Children’s books are generally written keeping in mind child readers by adult authors. Unlike adults, children pay less attention to stories told or written to
inculcate moral and social values in a direct manner. So, the writers use an indirect approach to tell the stories, so as to create interest and thereby attract children’s attention.

One can trace the origin of children’s literature from Caxton, who in 1484 first printed *Aesop Fables* in English, which is widely used by teachers and parents. These fables were written in easily understandable language and the illustrations attracted the attention of children. In 18th century these fables were first introduced in schools. The art of storytelling for children has evolved over generations from imaginary events spread by word of mouth to realistic fiction. According to encyclopaedias on children’s literature, there are various types of children’s literature. To name a few, fairy tales, folk tales, myth and legends, oral narratives, poetry for children, drama, the modern picture books, animal stories, science fiction, the family story and school stories.

Before contextualising the Rusty series, it is necessary to understand the background to children’s literature. This chapter discusses the various kinds of children’s literature under the following sections. The first section discusses why children’s literature is a main focus today and its various types. The subsequent sections are about the current status of children’s literature, and the definitions given by various authors. This study also traces the origin, history and development of children’s literature worldwide. With this background, this thesis focusses on Indian children’s literature. After knowing these details, the focus shifts towards Ruskin Bond and examines his position as an Indian children’s author. This chapter ends with a thesis statement.
Focus of Children’s Literature

The purpose of children’s literature is to convey knowledge in a simple form and enable children to understand the values through these stories. Primarily, the stories are interesting and children try to understand the “symbols, patterns, depths and possibilities of the civilisation” (Lesnik – Oberstein 17).

In the present scenario, children’s literature has attained maturity as a separate discipline. It plays an important role in the life of children and young adults. The production of children’s books in large numbers has necessitated research studies in children’s literature at national and international levels. If children’s literature does succeed in briefly arousing the attention of scholars and critics of mainstream literature, this is largely due to well-known authors for adults who have crossed over into writing books for children (Kummerling-Meibauer 11-12).

Since parents are interested in buying books based on moral values, these authors express the values implicitly in their work. These books are written mainly on the basis of their life experiences. The publishers make it attractive by adding colourful illustrations. According to Madavan Nayar, children’s literature belongs to two categories, one is adult writers writing a book for young children to provide useful information. Second category is to provide enjoyment to the children at the same time (Nayar 379).

To begin with, in India the best known works are R.K. Narayan’s *Swamy and Friends* and *Malgudi Days*. The stories revolve around Swamy who lives in the
small town Malgudi in South India. Narayan wrote many memoirs under the title Malgudi. He has retold The Ramayana and The Mahabharata in a simple language as well. Danny the Champion of the World, Boy and Going Solo, Boy Tales of Childhood and Charlie and Chocolate Factory are famous works of Roald Dahl. His Matilda is a famous magical story about a school girl. Before examining in detail the primary texts, it is essential to understand the various types of children’s literature.

Types of Children’s Literature

In a broad sense, children’s literatures are found in the following types.

In the beginning, children’s literature had the singular aim of pleasing the young reader and the first printed tales in English were Aesop’s Fables (Kinnell 142-151). Children need to have a choice of tales, which offer immense joy and entertainment to them (Srinivasan xi). Surekha Panandiker in her “Promoting the Reading Habits” informs that India is a rich treasury of literature and materials are preserved mostly through oral tradition. Art and literature have developed for child’s enjoyment because the entire family revolves around children in India. A child is introduced to the books by his/her parents (216-226). In this sense, Rusty series caters to the diverse interests of the children. Understanding the types of children’s literature is the first step towards exploring this area:
1) **Fairy tales and Folk tales**: In olden days, people used fantasy characters like elves, pygmies, and gnomes to create stories in fairy kingdom. In the nineteenth century, in order to inculcate moral values, the fairy tales were written in a simple form to influence and attract children. This was done so that children can read by themselves. Fairy tales helped children to understand their surroundings, enriched their life, prepared them for fearless participation in imaginary struggles for justice, goodness and freedom. Fairy tales are the wholesome food for children and no one can deny this “…nourishing irreplaceable food” (Havilland 202).

From ancient days, folklore is the main source of storytellers. The oral tradition shares tales with children. Later these evolved into fairy tales. These tales are generally brief narratives written in a simple language in which magical creatures regularly assist heroes to regain their fortune. There would always be a protagonist who will have a change of fortune from rags to riches and the plot has a happy ending, mostly with a wedding (Bottigheimer 152). The younger and older children are attracted by classic stories of myth and fantasy. Fairy tales form the foundation for the development of children’s literature. ‘Cinderella,’ ‘Hansel and Gretel’ and ‘Snow White’ are popular among such stories. They are the earliest written fantasy stories in German children’s literature which were later translated into English. Fairy tales are popular in many places of the world.

In France, the origin of fairy tales can be traced to tales told by nannies/nurses, who took care of the children (154). This marked the beginning of oral tradition of fairy tales in France. In Germany, fairy tales originated completely from French tradition. Wilhelm Grimm and Jacob Grimm, in 1812, collected over
two hundred tales from friends, acquaintances, country informants, children’s almanacs and old books to compile and publish these tales as a child-rearing manual. However, “...Albert Ludwig Grimm had turned against Enlightenment children’s literature and had issued a call for a revival of the tales like ‘Cinderella,’ ‘Hansel and the Gretel’ and ‘Snow White’” (Bottigheimer 155). Later they were modified, violence was completely removed and re-emerged with a forgiveness concept. These are meant to excite children’s imagination and give them glimpses of fantasy and magic. Fairy tales are an excellent resource for young minds because they combine the best of values in simple language and colourful illustrations.

In the eighteenth century, in Britain, Robert Samber translated Perrault’s fairy tales, from French to English and these tales remained as an integral component of the moral lessons composed for children. In most of these tales, virtue was rewarded and vice was punished. After French Revolution in 1789, ‘Cinderella’ plots suggesting rags-to-riches were criticised by Sarah Trimmer for evoking the worst human emotions and violent reactions leading to bloody execution (157). After all the controversies, moralisation continued to mark nineteenth century fairy tales and Charles Dickens credited fairy tales for inculcating forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brutal forces (cited in Townsend 1974:93). Children’s literature in English, in twentieth century, is the continuation of the materials largely established from the nineteenth century tales (Bottigheimer 160). However, in United States America, “…fairy books remained conspicuously absent from children’s reading, because American intellectuals, and especially the teachers
among them, rejected their magic as contradictory to the enlightened rationalism that underlay and guided American political thought” (160).

In India, fairy tales in English were first heard from the famous Grimm brothers and Hans Anderson. Malathi Dandekar compiled anthologies for fairy tales borrowed from all over the world and Sumathi Paigaonkar translated all of Hans Andersen’s work into English (Leelawati Bhagwat 400). According to Prema Srinivasan, “…folk fantasy is categorized as the fairy story, the literary fantasy, where an imaginary world is deliberately created to evoke wonder, is the counterpart to this ancient genre” (Srinivasan 18). Again, she opines that fantasy tales are the mixture of “…magic and the supernatural is a distinct characteristic of fantasy, whether it be primitive folklore or modern legend depicting 20th century life-styles” (69). In Assam, most of the written folk tales are from Hitopadesa. In ‘Jonaki’ era the oral preserved tales are printed (Phukan 271), for example, Burhi aair Xadhu (Grandmother’s Tales) in 1911 and Kokadeuta Aru Naatilora (Grandfather and Grandson) in 1912. In Gujarathi, folk tales were collected by Jhaverchand Meghani and presented as Kurbanini Kathao, Kishore Kathao in his writings.

The characters in these stories are human beings, animals, kings, trees and inanimate objects and these tales have been translated in all regional languages. Manorama Jafa in her essay, “The Indian Sub-Continent” informs that India is “…rich in tales and folklore and this vast reservoir of traditional literature has been an important source of stories for children” (807).

2. Myth and Legend: As literary forms, myths are usually based on superhumans or gods and legends; describe the life of saints, martyrs and seers, who
sacrifice their lives for the wellbeing of others through their extraordinary power (Gray 186). In the beginning, these stories were part of oral tradition, later on, they were preserved in the written form. Heroes and heroines in these stories were considered demigods or gods in human form and “Moreover, myth is rich in symbols, and human existence is governed largely by metaphor” (Saxby 167). These stories help in inculcating moral values and “ease anxiety” in the minds of children (169).

The hero archetypes “…undertakes some long journey during which he or she must perform impossible tasks, battle with monsters, solve unanswerable riddles and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save their kingdom” (Guerin 190). The Indian epics are a source for many tales of children’s literature. In The Ramayana, Rama rescues Sita from the king of Lanka, Ravana, with the help of mystical beings, Jadayu (eagle-like huge bird), Sugrivan (king of monkey race) and Jambavan (king of bears). Their supernatural power overcomes demonic powers of Marichan (Ravana’s uncle), Surpanaka (Ravana’s sister), Kumbakarnan (Ravana’s elder brother), Indrajith (Ravana’s eldest son). In The Mahabharata, Vishnu incarnated as Krishna supports righteous people, the Pandavas, in the war. Children can easily understand the stories of Shakuntala, Karna, Goddess Durga and Lord Shiva as they all form part of the Indian mythology.

In all religions, the mythological stories are narrated to children by their family members because most epics are in verse form. So, it is difficult for the young children to understand them, the elders of the family want their children to understand the right from wrong through good and bad characters of these stories.
Ruskin Bond has narrated the entire *Ramayana* epic entitled *Hanuman to the Rescue* to create interest for young children.

Among popular legends, *Krishnadevarayar* and *Thenaliraman*, *Akbar and Birbal* are of great interest to children. In the context of Indian freedom struggle, the stories of *Jhansi Rani Laxmibai*, *Rana Pratap Singh* and *Chathrapathi Sivaji* attract children. Gautama Buddha’s life stories are called the *Jataka tales*. These tales inculcate justice and wisdom among readers. These epics and stories are being retold to younger generations and this tradition will continue to inculcate moral values among children.

3. **Rhymes and Oral Tales**: Nursery Rhymes are popular because of their “...brevity and strongly-marked rhythm; in fact these may be said to be necessary qualifications for a verse to enter the nursery rhyme canon, since they ensure memorability” (Opie 178). These rhymes first started as lullabies with meaningless syllables, sung for generations in a family, to help the child fall asleep. ‘One two buckle my shoes’ and, ‘Humpty, Dumpty sat on the wall’ recited by children from the age of two help them to learn more words in kindergarten (Opie 178). For instance, the rhyme, ‘Ring-a – ring-a- roses’ is used to make children come together and form a circle to play. As adults, we know that it is based on the great plague which affected people of London, but the darker side to it is not known to small children. This reveals the difference in the impact of rhymes on a child and an adult. Rhymes can teach alphabets, numbers, simple words, names of family members and so on. The repetition of pattern and mimicking helps children to understand various themes and concepts like parts of body, colour, moods and more.
4. **a. Poetry:** Lullabies can be considered as the initiation of a child to the poetic form. Later, a child is attracted by themes of nature, magic, school and adventure and develops interest in poetry. Through their works, the poets nourish the imagination of children. William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* are the first poems written for children in the seventeenth century (Styles 194). In India, after lullabies and cradle songs, the small poems which narrate stories of sun, moon, rain and cloud and family relationships are very popular.

In Tamil “Dosai Amma Dosai, Amma sutta Dosai, Arisei maavum uluthamaavam serthu sutta Dosai, Appavukuku nangu...” talks about the famous South Indian food, Dosai and proportions of the dough that should be used to make a perfect one. Moreover, it names the members of the family and how the numbers of Dosai will be shared among them. Through this, the child can learn how to make the food item, the relationship between members of a family and mathematical calculations in a simple way.

Similarly, through folklore and oral tradition, children learn the “…culture and heritage, values and beliefs” (Dutta 66). Bharathi’s *Pappa-Pattu* talks about the animals, birds and nature playing an important role in the world of children (69). Bond has written more than fifty poems, most of them pertaining to nature and are easy to understand for young children.

4. **b. Drama:** Earlier, in America and Britain, Christmas tales were dramatised by the group of children to entertain the family during festive season. *Peter Pan* and main events of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* are examples of
English plays enacted by children. These play an important role in children’s development (Hollindale 210).

There are many evidences available to say that drama for children has existed in India before 19th century. In India, drama has flourished in all languages. In ancient time, drama was popular as puppet shows and folk theatres. For example, Prahaladan’s story has been enacted to reveal the child’s extreme devotion for Lord Vishnu. Two great epics of India, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* have been enacted as drama in late 19th century and later presented in digital era as tele serials. Every aspect of life through the character of Rama in *The Ramayana* and Krishna in *The Mahabharata* is understood and reaches the audience very easily. Some popular plays in the Indian language are stated below. In Assamese language some directors have adopted a few adult plays to suit children. Nimati Kanya’s “Son Pokhila” and Sonar Saleng’s musical drama “Prabati Prasad Barua” are famous plays in this language (Phukan 283).

In Bengal, drama is very popular. Gyanadanandian Devi, Rabindranath Tagore’s sister-in-law has written plays for small children, one among them being *Tak-duma-dum* in 1910. Tagore’s plays for young adults are *Shakuntala* (1895) and *Khirer Patal* (1896). Poile Sengupta is a famous dramatist, who writes for both adult and children. *The Exquisite Balance*, *The Way to My Friends House* are major children’s plays by her (Debroy 290-91).

5. Picture Books: Children’s literature can be categorised into i) books for infants (ages 0-3) and ii) books for pre-school going children (ages 3-5) (Tucker 23-66). This approach has been accepted internationally. The pre-school children listen
with delight when adults communicate with the aid of illustrated books containing pictures of objects, domestic animals, relatives and neighbours.

The colourful pictures create an indelible impression in the minds of children and they never forget the story. For example, the young child’s mind easily grasps “Thirsty Crow” story and they always remember and repeat them based on the illustration. This helps in acquiring vocabulary and improves their memory power. Manorama Jafa, in her article, opines that picture books are the first “communication for young children.” Pictures in the books are the best form to convey to a child “the essence of the story” in an interesting way (46). They are available as picture books and animated cartoon forms. The children watch with excitement and are attracted by these characters. *Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, Princess and the Pea, Princess and the Frog* and *Hansel and Gretel* are moral stories for small children with attractive pictures. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Sindbad the Sailor, Around the Worlds in Eighty Days* and *Robin Hood* are still popular among young readers.

In India, the epic characters, *Chota Bheem* and *Krishna* captivate the attention of children. Deepa Aggarwal is an eminent writer for small children; her stories are a part of school curriculum. Her “Toy Horse” is a famous story with Remi, the girl protagonist exchanging her toy horse with a visitor’s Barbie doll. Her book, *Ashok’s New Friends* has received the National Award for Children’s Literature in 1992. The modern picture books are one of the most “fertile areas of growth in children’s literature” (Doonan 231). For young children the simple tales kindle interest. Deepa Aggarwal’s stories “Cheeko and the School Bag” and “Eki
and Doki” are included in kindergarten curriculum to inculcate good habits of punctuality.

6. **Comics:** Comics are considered a gateway to grasp the main theme in a sequential manner. Children between ages seven and eleven like comic stories and are able to clearly understand the whole plot without any confusion (Tucker 133-143). In Britain, the history of comics is one hundred and fifty years old (Gifford 242). *Tom and Jerry, Tin Tin, Alchemist Foul, Amar Chitra Katha* and *Tinkle* are popular among young readers. Through humour these stories help children to relax and learn values and morals of life. Ruskin Bond always uses humour as a main tool in his stories as well. He uses humorous characters like Uncle Ken to convey the message intended in a humorous way giving sugar coated pills as desired by teenagers.

7. **Moral and Religious Writing:** In its early stage, children’s literature had a close association with religious activities. Since the printed books were costly, children were entertained through catechism classes to learn about religion. “The most durable genre for children, apart from catechisms, was the Bible story collection which had first appeared in the high middle ages when Peter Comestor composed the *Historia Scholastica* (c. 1170) in Latin for students at the University of Paris” (Bottigheimer 268).

In the mid-seventeenth century Bible stories for children emerged in prose form. In the Indian context, moral storytelling conveys “...the values of honesty, love, justice, wisdom, friendship and brotherhood have a timelessness and are valid at all places and times” (Berry 170). Moral stories like, “The Crocodile and the
“Monkey,” “Ugly Duckling,” “The Ant and the Pigeon,” “The Hunter and the Pigeons” and “The Lion and the Mouse” imbibe moral values like, betrayal, confidence, friendship, unity and forgiveness. The moral stories are mostly conveyed through the character of animals. Through his writing, Ruskin Bond too propagates values for children in an indirect way.

8. Animal stories: Animal stories inspire children. Children love their pet animals and are always curious to know about their whereabouts. Domestic animals of these stories play a role of companionship and comfort to the young readers. The creation of animals as a hero to inform the events creates interest in young children. Animals never speak in real life and they do not have magical powers. This kind of creation is popular among children because they are out of the ordinary. The history of *Little Goody Two-Shoes (1765)* is a book for older boys and young teenagers who like to read stories of animals in jungles and are thrilled by the experiences of wild animals (Barker 282). Rudyard Kipling was a poet, novelist and famous short story writer. He wrote many animal stories. He wrote for children and many of his works like, *Jungle Book* (1894), *Stalky and Co.* (1897) and *Kim* (1901) are put in the classical animal story tradition. *The Rupa Book of Great Animal Stories* edited by Ruskin Bond has a collection of amusing animal stories for children. Animals are the characters in the stories and they convey the moral. This kind of creation is popular among young children. Among contemporary animal story writers, Ranjit Lal’s writings project the bond between nature and humans. *Aesop Fables* and *Panchatantra* are best examples of animal stories in children’s literature.
9. **Fantasy stories**: ‘Fantasy’ literature always deals with imaginary world of fairies, giants and other non-realistic phenomena (Gray 116). Fantasy stories suggest either, high drama – battles between the powers of light and dark – or stuffed animals capering about a nursery world and provoke children’s curiosity even hours after reading them. Domestic settings are part of traditional fairy tales, where magic operates in everyday life to set right the injustice. In these tales, usually the events are set in a remote kingdom in an ambiguous frame of time (Sullivan 303-13).

There are two broad categories of domestic fantasy: first, where parents provide and/or accept the magic; in another, the child discovers a magical being or a thing which has the power to change their lives, but parent fails to take notice of that. J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* fall in the category of domestic fantasy, in which children are responsible for discovering the magic being or an object dug out from the past. Bond has written multiple ghost stories. Some of the short stories are “Trouble with Jinns” and “A Ghost in the Garden,” and the collections *A Season of Ghost Stories* and *Ghost Trouble* are popular among children. Bond projects the ghost in his stories to entertain children. In *Too Much Trouble* Bond’s “Ghost Trouble” recreates Casper’s experience. Just as fantasy stories deal with the supernatural, science fiction brings a different world in front of us. Margaret Bhaty and Shashi Deshpande are well known writers of science fiction.

10. **Science Fiction**: Science Fiction is “...about the imaginary marvels or disasters created by scientific and technological discoveries and inventions of the
future.” H.G. Wells’ *Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) are the pioneers in this type (Gray 258). In science fiction, the robots are created as superheroes and they substitute the mystical heroes with magic wands or weapons. With the expansive knowledge acquired through science fiction, adolescent children are able to understand issues which affect the ecology of earth, the lives of plants, animals and human beings.

Science fiction “.touches on new developments” in science and technology and creates interest in children. *A Passage to Antarctica* (1986) by Dilip M. Salwi gives information about the continent as well as the wonders of this ice region. He also wrote *The Robots Are Coming* (1989) and *Alien Encounters* (1991). They talk of scientists in space. Margaret Bhattys *Evil Empire* is an entirely new concept for the children to know the development of technology and science (Berry 180). She has created two worlds, utopian and dystopian, to convey patriotism and nationalism. Fantasy and science fiction, from explicitly real to the imaginary, realistic stories create the same impression by addressing the child’s sense of wonder and imagination.

11. **Realistic Stories:** Realistic stories are “...more ‘like reality’, in other words a more accurate depiction of things as they ‘really’ are” (Gray 240). By reading these stories, the child during his/her developing years recognises the issues of today’s world. The tales of the lives of rural people create awareness about issues like deforestation, pollution of rivers and illegal mining which affects the ecology. The young adult can understand the hard lives of the rural poor, tribal women and their children. Most popular realistic tales are the expression of ordinary man’s life.
Children are attracted more to fantasy and science fiction, as they grow up, the realism of life sets in and practicality leads to better understanding of realistic fiction.

The tales of children’s literature do not mirror the real world but reflect the experiences of the authors (Saxena 121). Bond’s writing mainly falls in this category. He has written his own childhood memories; life incidents and real characters in his life are expressed in his writing. Bond’s *The Room on the Roof*, *A Long Walk for Bina*, and his stories “Time Stops at Shamli,” “Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright” and “Listen to the Wind” are best examples of realistic tales.

12. **Adventure and Mystery Stories**: Adventure stories can be traced from *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island*. The young adults are more interested in adventure stories. While reading such stories these children identify themselves with the characters, incidents, scenes and places in the fiction and participate in the adventures of the heroes (Butts 327-29). Enid Blyton is a famous children’s writer from Britain. Her stories fall under the category of realism. In her *Secret Seven, Famous Five* and *Mystery series*, a set of children are the protagonists and their team act as detectives and solve problems of others. These stories are popular among children.

Lewis Carroll became famous through *Alice in Wonderland*, a full length adventurous story. He was not a professional writer like his contemporaries. The story was unique, the journey of Alice, a little girl, who followed the rabbit into the burrow under the tree. She reached the magical wonderland consisting of various
animals, insects, queen and her administrators. The animals are personified as humans and used metaphorically to teach values.

R.L. Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* are masterpieces. Suspense, thrill, crime and adventure are the themes in his stories. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Adventures of Sherlock Homes* is a thriller which falls under the genre of crime fiction. His character Sherlock Homes is famous throughout the world. Moreover, his work is translated into fifty languages. The mystery genre helps the growing children to understand the value of independence.

Satyajit Ray’s Feluda stories and present day authors like R. K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond chose, “…the discovery of new political, social, economic, religious, ethical and psychological themes” as their main premise (Singh 5). Srinivasan in her *Children’s Fiction in English in India: Trends and Motifs* states that Satyajit Ray’s *The Imperial Ring* (1965) and Dutta’s *The Kaziranga Trail* (1979) are a different kind of adventure mystery “satisfyingly Indian in tone and texture” (16). Devaki Nandan Khattri’s *Chandrakanta* (1887) is an adventure fiction about jungles, forest and brave achievements of the princess Chandrakanta.

Adults as well as parents depend on the writers’ venture in educating and inculcating good values in their children. Children, now-a-days, receive more attention, more rights and more privileges; they are recognized as a distinct class; so publishers and educators address all groups of children, and meet their changing needs and demands. New genres and forms of children’s literature such as science fiction, fantasy, serial books, science fiction, social realism, and cultures of different places, magic realism, comics, graphic novels, anthologies, mass-mediated radio and
television programmes, audiotapes, videotapes and soon have been created. Subject-matters like sex, teenage pregnancy, rape, violence, debates about gender discrimination and racism, crime, profanity and other sensitive issues, which were once prohibited in the texts of children’s literature are also included as present day reading materials in the texts of children’s literature. (Zipes xxx-xxxi)

Nowadays all kinds of child related crimes and problems are presented in literature are discussed above. Just as there are different types in children’s literature, there are different definitions of children’s literature depending on the focus of scholars.

**Definitions of Children’s Literature**

Children’s literature has attained a special supremacy across the world in this century. Writers, critics and scholars have given special attention and they have written and expressed their critical views. For the purpose of this study, six books by experts in this field are considered in the following pages. They are: (i) Navin Menon and Bhavana Nair’s *Children’s Literature in India* (ii) Prema Srinivasan’s *Children’s Fiction in English in India: Trends and Motifs* (iii) Lesnik-Oberstein’s *Children’s Literature: New Approaches* (iv) Nicholas Tucker’s *The Child and The Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (v) Peter Hunt’s *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature, Children’s Literature: The Development of Criticism and Understanding Children’s Literature* (vi) Jack Zipes’ *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*. 
By reading these works, it is evident that children’s literature has attained maturity as a self sufficient genre and has a distinct and separate identity for children and young adults. In brief:

i) Menon and Nair’s anthology *Children’s Literature in India* has a wide range of topical essays to understand the setting of contemporary children’s literature. It is an anthology with views of various authors on Indian children’s literature. It clearly gives a complete picture about important types of children’s literature and gives details of the origin and history of children’s literature.

ii) Srinivasan’s book traces the history of children’s fiction in India, its trends and motifs and important children’s works by different authors in India. She portrays traditions, techniques and contemporary narrative patterns. She has grouped the narrative importance in children’s fiction from the reader’s perspective. Moreover, she instructs on how to increase the habit of reading among children.

iii) In *Children’s Literature: New Approaches*, Karin Lesnik - Oberstein has edited the outlines of the new approaches for the study of children’s literature from the perspective of a follower of structuralism, deconstruction, a feminist, a Marxist and a psychologist/psychiatrist. Different scholarly views and valuable suggestion on children’s literature along with examples are discussed.
iv) Tucker’s perspective of children’s literature is different, as he has categorised children’s literature according to the age groups of children. He has placed children’s books according to their psychological growth along with the understanding of age groups. From birth of a child to the age of three she has recommended picture books, from the age of three to seven stories with illustrations, from the age of seven to eleven popular fiction and fantasy stories and juvenile comics, from the age of eleven to fourteen stories of quest. Fairytales, myths and legends are the only kinds suggested for all age groups (Tucker 1-97).

v) In his introduction to *Understanding Children’s Literature* (1999), Hunt says that children’s books are different from adult’s books. They are written for a different audience with different skills, individual needs, and call for different ways of reading; he further states that children’s literature contains books which are beneficial to children and most particularly significant in terms of emotional and moral values. This is because childhood is a critical part of our lives and children are vulnerable, susceptible and must be protected from manipulation (Hunt *Understanding* 1999: 1-4, 15-16). Space, history and culture of children’s literature have also been elaborated by Tony Watkins and decoding the images of picture books has been talked about by Perry Noodelman (30-38).
vi) Zipes’s *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children’s literature* has filled the gaps in the studies and teaching of children’s literature. It offers a wide range of knowledge and lists authors in an alphabetical order. It provides history, details of the authors and their works in a nutshell. It is the first comprehensive reference in English to provide detailed information about all aspects of children’s literature from the medieval period to the twenty first century on an international scale. This encyclopaedia on children’s literature definitely helps in critical appreciation of relevant topics in this field by students, scholars and readers seeking information for their research.

Children’s literature has an active role not only in education, but also in the growth process of children. Constant evaluation and updating of these works is necessary in order to educate the children about the importance of culture. Quoting Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, Hunt suggests that a book for children has to be categorised to know which books are best for children (Hunt *Understanding* 1999: 15). The books which are good for children are those which have an easy language to enjoy, understand, gain knowledge and values (Kurup 10-11).

The stories are read on the basis of ecological balance to clarify whether they narrate the landscape in terms of natural elements, trees, plants, animals, birds, insects, wind, rain, lightning, thunderstorm and seasons in a year. The critic examines whether the settings used in these stories depict cultural geography, thereby creating an awareness and emotional impact on children towards nature. Further, every reader notices whether the plots and characters reveal cultural history
and nostalgia. The ultimate aim of the critic is to find whether morals, a sense of
religion and proper cultural values have been infused in the story (Hunt
*Understanding* 3-4).

**Characteristics of Children’s Literature**

According to critics, a literary work for children must include simple and
straightforward language, style and technique. Children’s literature must focus on a
child’s point of view and their experiences. While doing so, the role of the author is
to include proper plot, setting, characters and action which suit the need of the story.
In addition, these stories must have certain other features like identity, values,
education, importance of family and friends. In other words, it is “The
communication which informs the transactions between writers and readers is a
specialized aspect of socio-linguistic communication in general” (Stephens 59).

Children start coming out of their cocoon and get exposed to the outer
world through books as well as real life experiences. Hence, repetitive,
imperceptible inscription of values is indispensable in children’s education to build a
healthy and harmonious society in future. Let us discuss themes and forms of in
children’s literature.

In general, the central idea of children’s literature centers around the
protagonist’s growth from childhood to adulthood, his or her relationship with
nature, family and friends, education, adventure, acquiring worldly knowledge and
quest for identity in the society.
According to Gray “‘Form may also be used interchangeable with GENRE or literary type: TRAGEDY or the SHORT STORY are ‘forms’’ of fiction (123). A short story can be read in a single sitting. It expresses the entire theme of the story. If it is well created young readers never hesitate to read these. It is a “pattern of a plot, which has a beginning and develops through middle to some sort of denouement at the end. The plot may be written in the mode of fantasy, realism, or naturalism” (Abrams 163). R. K. Narayan’s “Marti’s Corner” is the most suggested short story for young children. It explains the Delhi roads and the sudden local mutiny. The mutiny destroys the life of many people. Shashi Deshpande’s stories, “The Miracle,” “The Window,” “Rain” in Collected Stories remind us of Enid Blyton’s Famous Five and Secret Seven. Bond has written novels, novellas and short stories. Of these the novellas and short stories are taken up for this study because children have a short attention span which is why these attract them more.

**Evolution of Children’s Literature Worldwide**

Any kind of literature has a history and origin of its own. Likewise, children’s literature has its own history. Sheila Ray, in her essay, “The World of Children’s Literature: An Introduction” has outlined the historical development of children’s literature worldwide. In general, children’s books have a long history all over the world. Folk tales and fairy tales were passed on for several generations by word of mouth (Ray 653-662).

Children’s books in Communist Europe were subjected to political pressure until late 1980s. Ukraine, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia maintained their own literatures. In the present day, children in the English-speaking world (USA,
Canada, Australia and New Zealand) share a common literary tradition and they 
happily exchange books with each other. The children of European nations such as 
Finland, Switzerland, Germany, France, Sweden and England also share a common 
literary culture (Ray 774-80).

**Origin and Development of Children’s Literature in India**

Prema Srinivasan in *Children’s Fiction in English in India* has narrated the 
growth of children’s literature in India (48-49). Navin Menon in “Historical 
Survey”, in *Children’s Literature in India* describes the developmental history of 
children’s literature in India (23-45).

In the history of origin and development of children’s literature in India, one 
finds that India has a tradition of folk tales, myths and epics like *Ramayana* and 
*Mahabharata*. Vishnu Sharma’s *Panchatantra* and *Five Tantric Wisdoms* translated 
in many languages in India and into other languages of Asia, Africa, Middle East 
and Europe are well known. Historians are of the opinion that those stories belong to 
the period 200 BC to AD 400. The Buddhist *Jataka Tales* (600 BC) are also famous 
worldwide. India has multiple states, the people of each state speak a different 
language and there are dialects in various regional languages too. There are eighteen 
principal languages recognised by Indian government including English and 1652 
dialects. Almost all Indians have knowledge of the classical literatures, *Ramayana* 
and *Mahabharata*. The other Indian classics include *Brhat Katha* meaning great 
story (1st century), *Kathasarit Sagar* meaning ocean of stories (11th century), *Vetal 
Panchavimsatika* meaning twenty five tales of a vampire (11th century) and 
*Hitopedsesh* meaning good advice dated around 12th century (Menon 23).
The emergence of Indian children’s literature in English started in the 19th century after exposure to English education and introduction of the printing press in English. Manorama Jafa, states, “The sub-continent is extraordinarily rich in tales and folklore and this vast reservoir of traditional literature has been an important source of stories for children.” (807) Indian history has a record of five thousand years old oral tradition, and Panchatantra is the best example of this tradition. Children’s books in English language began in Calcutta with the “establishment of the School Book Society by missionaries in 1871” (808). The directory Creators of Children’s Literature in India (2003) lists a few hundred magazines for children. The magazine Chandamama established in 1947 is published in more than ten leading Indian languages. It consists of a variety of genres and topics in children’s literature. The common problems faced in the development and production of children’s literature in India is its multiethnic, multicultural and multi-linguistic population of more than 1250 million people (808).

K. Shankar Pillai founded the Children’s Book Trust (CBT) in 1957. The Trust produces reasonably high quality children’s books. India Book House, established in 1951, publishes children’s books, picture story books and comics. Since 1969, the National Book Trust (NBT) has been publishing books for children and young adults in English and other Indian languages. Frank Brothers, Hemkunt, Sterling, Thomson, Vikas and Ratna Sagar are some of the publishing houses which have started publishing children’s books. There are about fifty firms who produced children’s books in the two decades from 1970-‘90 according to information given in 1997 by Federation of Indian Publishers. After independence, there has been tremendous growth of publishers. The Twenty-sixth Congress of the International
Board on Books for Young People (BBY) was held in 1998 in New Delhi. Harper Collins, Penguin, Rupa, Scholastic, Tulika and Tara have entered this area and published children’s books in all leading Indian languages including English. This shows the interest of publishers in the field of children’s literature (Srinivasan 40).

A large proportion of children’s literature in Indian languages is from folktales, epics, myths and ancient legends. These re-tellings reveal the cultural heritage, biographies of popular national and religious leaders. The archetypes in classical literature have now turned into super-heroes in recent stories of heroism, romance and humour.

During colonial rule (1858-1947), there were original works in its old form for children in the Indian languages. They were textbooks, supplementary readers, translations of Indian classics and European books, and adaptations of popular adult works. Magazines provided the space for new authors, “to contribute toward the development of genres and the evolution of an Indian identity through literature” (Khorana 282).

Brave and independent women are depicted as protagonists in Once Upon a Forest by Kaveri Bhatt. A seven year old child saving her family’s sugarcane plantation from being destroyed by a herd of elephants is the protagonist in Mami’s Adventure by Mitra Phukan. The theme of Kaziranga Trail (1979) by Arun Kumar Dutta is wild life conservation. The theme of The Emerald Lingam (1981) by Niharika Joshi and The Golden Buddha (1982) by Madhavi S Mahadevan is the protection of ancient art and holy relics. The medieval Rajput and palace of Rajbhudanam is the background in The Chandpur Jewels (1981) by Nilima Sinha.
Indian Kashmir is the landscape of *Adventure on the Golden Lake* (1986) by the same author (Srinivasan 16).

R. K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* (1935) is recognised as one of the children’s classics in English language from India. The customs and family structures in the erstwhile Mysore Rajdhani and the norms of Hindu household in a small town in India are the settings and atmosphere of Narayan’s *Swami and Friends*. Narayan has expressed his own experience through the protagonist in *Swami and Friends*.

The customs and traditions of domiciled European community have a unique position among the family structure of Indian Hindu and Sikh and trading people in the small town of Dehra Dun. The dominant elements of Bond’s stories are the Doon valley, villages around the hills and people living around them, and rivers in the foot-hills of Shivalik Himalayan hills. Rusty, is the protagonist in his fiction, Rusty series. The stories of R. K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond deal with the transition of their protagonist from apprenticeship in childhood into adulthood.

Salman Rushdie, Sigrun Srivatsa, Dilip Salwi, Swapna Dutta, Manorama Jafa, Pratiba Nath, Poile Sengupta, Indira Ananthakrishnan, Krishna Narayan Saxena, Nilima Sinha, Deepa Aggarwal and Paro Anand are some of the authors of contemporary children’s literature. Ruskin Bond, Subbhadra Sengupta, Bubul Sharma, Arup Kumar Dutta, Zai Whitaker, Poi Gupta are the present – day authors writing about “realism and Indianess” to reflect the regional languages of India (Banerjee 76-80).
The modern science fiction stories in children’s literature are about mystery and adventure set in future or on a distant planet where computers, robots or aliens interact and combat with humans. *The Robots Are Coming* (1989), *Aliens Have Landed* (1991) and *Alien Encounters* (1991) by Dilip Salwi are science fiction meant for young adults.

After independence there was a significant development of children’s literature in India. The textbooks for school which fall under children’s literature include stories and non-fiction. Colleges and universities have introduced research programmes in the same field as well. With this background of history of evolution of children’s literature in English language in India, let us discuss the choice of author, Ruskin Bond for this study.

**Choice of Author - Ruskin Bond**

In India, Ruskin Bond is a famous author for children. He has written more than five hundred short stories, novels, novellas and poems. Bond tries to convey traditional stories in a simple language for children. He has edited several works, like, *The Penguin Book of Classical Indian Love Stories*, *Green Book* and *The Penguin Book of Indian Railway stories*. Bond has retold the great epics of India for children. They are *Hanuman to the Rescue*, *The Adventures of Rama and Sita* and *Tales and Legends from India*.

Bond’s children’s stories reflect the elements of autobiography and the author’s childhood relationships with his family and friends. He has written many autobiographical works; they are *Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir*, *The Lamp*
Is Lit: Leaves from a Journal, Rain in the Mountains: Notes from the Himalayas, Landour Days: A Writer’s Journal. These books comprise life experiences of the author, Ruskin Bond. Brinda Bose in her review states: “For nearly half a century, Ruskin Bond has stood surprisingly solid on what is surely rocky turf in our land, that ubiquitous area of indigenous children’s literature in English” (46). Bond’s writing covers subjects like realism, fantasy and adventures. Bond also covers themes on nature like forest experiences, wild animals, and his relationship with family and friends. Bond has “...said for the honest straight-forward story of man and nature, honesty and straightforwardly told.” (Bose 46)

All the children stories in the collections Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra, The Night Train to Deoli and Time Stops at Shamli argue that humans should live in harmony with nature and it will help them to find solutions to the real problems facing them. Bond’s stories provide a presentation of the jungle and wild life, and underlie the need to maintain a balance of ecology.

Bond’s children’s stories reflect the elements of truth being voice of the author’s own childhood relationship with his parents, grandparents and friends in his adolescence. Bond’s first novel The Room on the Roof is a flashback of his friends and his irrational love towards an elderly married woman, mother of his friend.

Even though Bond did not marry, his extended family with Prem and his sons Rakesh, Mukesh and daughter Savitri (Scenes from a writer’s Life: A Memoir xvi) is portrayed. Bond’s experiences as father, grandfather and great grandfather of his extended family has helped him to write stories in a lively manner. Bond’s characters in his stories are the children of his family and his neighbourhood. He
loves people around him; especially he understands a child’s mind and his/her aspirations. In the introduction to Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra he announces that nature inspired him to write for children (ix-x). In the collection of stories, The Night Train to Deoli and Time Stops at Shamli all the young protagonists of Bond argue that humans should live in harmony with nature, as it will help them to find solutions to the problems in real life. Through these stories he reveals both the gentle and destructive faces of nature. These stories highlight the need to maintain ecological balance.

Bond himself has said in a personal interview with Amita Aggarwal that there is “...depression and tension are there in my life. Sometime, I sit gloomy, then I search my own writings and I become optimistic” (Aggarwal 171). From this we can assume that he always writes for his peace and from that he overcomes from that depression and pessimism. If the children start blaming the surrounding they cannot up come in their life. Bond illustrates his life as a example to young readers.

Apart from realistic stories focussed in this thesis, Ruskin Bond has written many ghost stories. The common belief in India is transformed in his stories to give excitement and thrill to the young readers. In addition, Bond’s stories, “Ghost in the Garden” in Rusty, the Boy from Hills, “The Trouble with Jinns” and “The Haunted Bicycle” in Rusty Comes Home are of great interest to the children as these appeal to their fantasy. In his introduction to The Rupa Book of Nightmare Tales, Bond states that the “...unknown, the uncanny, the supernatural, the black arts and threatened incidents by the powers of darkness are themes of nightmare” (x). These types of stories are interesting themes for the teenagers. He states in the
introduction to his book that “supernatural manifestations” are the wonderful and fascinating object for his scary stories in the collection, *The Ruskin Bond Omnibus: Scary Stories* edited by Bond. Churails (the ghost of wayward women, whose feet always face backwards), munjia (the spirits of Brahmin youths who dies before marriage), bhoots (who took up residence in peepal trees, prets (Indian poltergeists) are supernatural manifestations in India. They have sometimes entered the house of living people and created havoc in their lives.

Railway stories are significant in “travel stories genre.” The environs and varied life of Indian railway stations provide the local colour and scene setting to the stories. *Around the World in Eighty Days* is a popular story. This is a story of the time when railway lines started being laid for long distance trains from west to east in British India. *The Penguin Book of Indian Railway Stories* edited by Bond contains a collection of railway stories. By reading these stories children can broaden their outlook and gain knowledge about possible difficult situations. These stories cater to the adventurous spirit and curiosity of children.

**Choice of Text – Rusty Series**

Ruskin Bond’s books give knowledge to the child readers to understand life, nature and people around them. Five books of Rusty series combine to become a continuous narrative and themes are recurrent in all the short stories. As a narrative, the series traces the life and growth of the child protagonist - Rusty. Recently, Ruskin Bond himself has brought together more than ninety of his short stories and novellas in a sequence called Rusty series of books. This is to create certain
continuity in presenting Rusty’s experiences and adventures, in chronological fashion. These stories are compiled in the following five books.

I.  *Rusty, the Boy from the Hills* – this book covers the period of Rusty from seven years to twelve years, which traces the development from early childhood to early teens. In this period, Rusty undergoes various adventures, in familial set ups, many different natural environments, including his travel experiences.

II.  *Rusty Runs Away* – the second book in this series traces the important physiological and psychological changes in Rusty from twelve to seventeen years, the adolescent period.

III.  *Rusty and the Leopard* – the third volume of this series covers seventeen to nineteen years of Rusty’s life. This is the modified version of two famous novels of Ruskin Bond – *The Room on the Roof* and *The Vagrants in the Valley*. In his teens, Rusty undergoes various adolescent experiences and as a young adult he is without money or prospect. With plenty of optimism and confidence of youth, he progresses in life.

IV.  *Rusty Goes to London* – the fourth volume of this book sketches the period of Rusty’s life from nineteen to twenty four years. Rusty, in his early twenties, has various experiences in London but wants to make India his permanent home and make his identity as a writer in his life.
V.  *Rusty Comes Home* – the final volume of the Rusty series presents Rusty’s friends and companions from age twenty four and above. Rusty discovers his interest in people around him and living in close proximity to nature.

**Hypothesis**

The study attempts to examine the life and growth of the protagonist, Rusty from ages seven to fifty. The books narrate different phases of his life quest to become a writer. They exhibit Rusty’s optimistic nature, which help him to grow as a writer for children and young adults. The values present in Rusty fiction are communicated through the framework of Autobiography and Bildungsroman.

Based on the reading of these books and conceptualised ideas, the structure of the thesis is as follows:

I. Introduction: Contextualising Children’s Literature

II. Overview of Ruskin Bond

III. Rusty Series as Autobiography

IV. Rusty Series as Bildungsroman

V. Conclusion: Values Found in Rusty Fiction

Introduction: Contextualising Children’s Literature presents Ruskin Bond as a children’s author and his popularity in contemporary Indian English Literature for children. It discusses the purpose of this thesis, and the choice of author and stories. This chapter discusses the origin, growth, types, definition, characteristics of
children literature and evolution of the same worldwide, which provides a context to analyse Bond’s writings.

Chapter II - Overview of Ruskin Bond as a writer provides a critical outline of the life and works of Ruskin Bond. It gives brief biographical details of the author and assesses his literary style and technique. Subsequent portions attempt a survey of the major themes in the Rusty series. The three major themes are: Rusty’s relationship with nature, Rusty’s relationship with human beings and Rusty’s relationship with himself.

Chapter III - Rusty Series as Autobiography deals with the biographical details of Rusty the protagonist and the author. Ruskin Bond’s four autobiographical books are compared with the Rusty Fiction. This chapter identifies that Rusty is none other than Ruskin Bond himself. The stages of development of Ruskin Bond’s growth are explained, with examples from his life which gives clarity to the comparison. There are parallels and differences in the five books comprising Rusty Fiction and Bond’s Autobiography. There are also changes and alterations in Rusty Fiction by Ruskin Bond. This comparison states the fact that the real incidents give an idea of the values embedded in Rusty Fiction.

Chapter IV - “Rusty Series as a Bildungsroman” traces the development of Rusty from childhood to adulthood, through a quest for identity that leads him to maturity. This explains the characteristics of the bildungsroman narrative. This section shows Rusty’s development and traces the birth, growth and significant landmarks in his life. It is argued that the five books in Rusty series which narrates
the life of a single protagonist belong to the bildungsroman genre. The selected parameters of bildungsroman is from Buckley’s *The Season of Youth*.

Chapter V - Conclusion: Values Found in Rusty Fiction projects the relevant values that are present in the Rusty series and directs children to the right path. Ruskin Bond narrates the incidents from his life in his fiction. Reality is the main tool he uses in his writing to stimulate the thought of the young readers; he has not used any magic or fantasy in his writings. The reader can realise the hidden values put forth by the author in the Rusty Series.
Notes

1 ‘Jonaki’ era refers to the time after the periodical Jonaki was established in 1889. It has an unparalleled importance because many stalwarts of Assamese literature blossomed during this period and took it upon them to preserve these folk tales by retelling them in print.

2 In Tamil Language, poetess Avvaiyar’s Aththichoodi inculcates moral values among children by enlisting a set of do’s and don’ts. They are alphabetically arranged to make it simple and understandable.