Chapter 1

Defining Children’s Literature, History and its Ambiguities

Children’s literature is confronted with the difficulty of working definitions. Therefore, the starting point of this stage must be the drawing of some margins and the lining and connecting of individual terms with concepts. At the outset let us define, child, childhood, children’s literature in the broader perspective. B. Mayall writes, “Both textually and semiotically, ‘child’ is very much a floating signifier – one whose mundane usage is so seemingly ubiquitous that it invites little if any critical introspection and elides the inherent complexity and diversity of childhoods, whether in conceptual formulation or as lived experiences” (qtd in Beier 4).

Defining Children’s Literature

The 'literature' of 'children’s literature' is a distinct thought, which is miscellaneous from any other form of 'literature' written for other groups of readers. Children’s literature is an educational discipline. It is not easy to define what Children’s Literature is, because there is a lot of mixed up thinking and discussions concerning Children’s Literature. According to Roger Sale “Everyone knows what children’s literature is until asked to define it. . . . We are better of saying we all have a pretty good idea of what children’s literature includes and letting the matter rest there” (155). Loosely defined, in the term ‘Children’s Literature’ the word ‘children’ is generally used to designate for teenagers under the age of adolescence, while the additional word that is ‘literature’ indicates a piece of writing having finesse of form. So this literature belongs to children and meant for their use. The term is commonly used for the sort of literature which is of attention to children and draws them towards it. Additionally this writing some at times comes with illustration, particularly written for young people. Children’s
Literature is defined as, writes Karin Lesnik-Oberstain, “a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends supposed relationship with a particular reading audience: children” (15).

In some way or other Children’s Literature is an ambiguous term, and most of the critics are of the view that the genre is not homogeneous and it has not been defined precisely and accurately. The main argument here is that of the position of child in children’s literature. The ambiguity lies in, according to Anne-Kathrin Höfel

Who exactly can be designated by this term? What are the characteristics of the members of this group? How and where can we draw a line between “child”, “young adult” and “adult”? What if there is no clear-cut difference? All these problems have immediate repercussions on the next key term, “children’s literature”. Which area is covered by “children’s literature” if the construct “child” itself might not be too stable an entity? In which respect then, if at all, does “children’s literature” differ from that for “young adults” and “adults”, and why? (17).

The ambiguity is defined by Saunak Samajdar in the chapter, ‘Homely Children and Unhomely Literature’

The mode of literary praxes, including the writing, reading, misreading, circulation, reception, promotion, censor, mediation, canon-formation and criticism, that focuses upon the texts, inter-texts and peri texts that pass through hypothetical, targeted, and/or actual" child-readers is broadly identified as the domain of "children's literature (1).
Peter Hunt Comments, “Children's literature is an amorphous, ambiguous creature; its relationship to its audience is difficult; its relationship to the rest of the literature, problematic” (“Introduction” 1). Scholars in the field of Children’s Literature cannot even concur on when or where Children’s Literature was coined. Torben Weinreich says, it (Children’s Literature) is “an area of research and an endless debate that is as old as research into children’s literature itself. It is both the simplest and the most complex question we can ask: What is children’s literature? The answers to this question are many and various. There are not quite as many answers as there are researchers, but it is a close call.” (qtd. in Nodelman 136). There is a great deal of discussion as to whether there was a Children’s Literature in the medieval period. Undoubtedly it is clear that once the printing press was invented in the 15th century, some texts and books were published exclusively for children even if the books were mostly geared to educate the children and transfer them into literate citizens of a particular culture. Perry Nodelman writes

Obviously, I don’t agree. I believe that the term children’s literature creates confusion because children’s literature as a genre is confusing—richly and complicatedly so. The confusions make the genre seem impossible only with the assumption that the differing definitions must be mutually exclusive and that one must be right in ways that makes the others wrong, which makes them all mutually defeating. But what if all the differing definitions suggest some part of the more complex truth? What if the contradictions of the definitions are suggestive of contradictions—or, possibly, paradoxes—inherent in the genre itself? What if children’s literature
as a genre represents the complex field of shifting position takings of the field that engenders it? (137).

The commentators on literature written for children have provided a host of definitions over the years. Children’s Literature involves a great deal of primary definition. What is text for? What do we mean by Children’s Literature? Who and what is the background of the audience, and how do they read? There are several critics who have defined Children’s Literature and to begin with Diane M. Barone asks certain questions concerning Children’s Literature, “It seems like defining children’s literature should be easy: It is literature written for children. That definition is certainly a beginning; however, what do you do with books that are appealing to adults and children like Harry Potter (Rowling, 2007)? Would you consider this an adult book taken over by children or a children’s book loved by adults? What appears to be a simple definition is a bit more complicated” (6). Katharine Jones writes in her essay, ‘Getting Rid of Children’s Literature’

As critics, we need to change how we look at children’s literature. When children’s books hit the headlines because of their popularity—such as Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton books or, more recently, J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series—the same questions always come up: are they really for children, are they good for children, how do we evaluate such books, why do adults read them, what is children’s literature? These questions are constantly being asked in children’s literature criticism, but they surface and become the focus of wider interest at such times (287).

We can say children’s literature belong to adults too because of adult’s involvement. Katharine Jones gives a clear clarification by saying
It is the reluctance of many adults to openly accept this literature as theirs—books such as Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), as well as books such as Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) and Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series—that causes many of the difficulties and contradictions in the genre. We do belong to the audience of child literature—we belong as former child readers of such literature, we belong because we were once children, we belong as adult authors, publishers, purchasers, and critics of such literature and we belong as current adult readers of such literature (306).

It is predominant in the masses that Children’s Literature is constrained to only books written for children. Actually it is children themselves who resolve what their literature is to be. It is by and large perceived that children make their own choices about what they like. There are books that are measured classics for children today. But these books were not proposed for children at all. Marah Gubar says in an essay, “On Not Defining Children’s Literature” that “As numerous critics have noted, we cannot simply say that children’s literature consists of literature written for children, since many famous examples—*Huckleberry Finn, Peter Pan, The Little Prince*—aimed to attract mixed audiences” (209). Children grab these books and possess them for their own. There are many examples of such books and they include lasting favourites of children like *Robinson Crusoe* (1720) and *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift apparently did not have children in their minds as the forthcoming readers when they wrote these fascinating classics. The other classics like Washington Irving’s *Rip Van Winkle* (1830), Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1856), *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Huckleberry Finn* (1883) and Robert Louis
Stevenson’s *The Treasure Island* (1883) unfolded endless joy for children, thrilled the young readers imagination and charmed with their picaresque adventures. Peter Hunt provides explanation related to books written not intentionally for children “some scholars… believe that works from earlier periods routinely associated with children, even if their purpose is didactic or they were not written specifically for children can also be classified as children’s Literature” (qtd in Adams 1). Clarifying this point Cornelia Meigs elucidates that, “most of the books regarded as classics of Children’s Literature were written without children in mind and were taken over by them with cheerful disregard of what they could not understand. None of these were aiming at children” (Gupta 5). The similar argument is put forth by Jake Zipes, in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Children’s Literature*

He (mark twain) did not consider that he was writing for a child audience. Instead, as the shifting narrative perspective demonstrates, he alternated between nostalgic adult reflections on childhood and a point of view identified with Tom Sawyer, romantic boy adventure (314).

*Robinson Crusoe* (1720) written in the eighteenth century was proposed for adults. Later Jean Jacques Rousseau in *Emile* (1762) was deeply impressed by *Robinson Crusoe*. He measured it a dominant discourse on education "the most felicitous treatise on natural education" and "the one book that teaches all that books can teach." (Bellhouse 120) He is of the view, it is the only book a young child should read. *Robinson Crusoe* has numerous adaptations in many different languages of the world, a sub-genre that is now called Robinsonades. Mary L. Bellhouse writes in ‘On Understanding Rousseau’s Praise of *Robinson Crusoe*’, “Rousseau not only recognizes Crusoe's potential appeal to young readers, he is attentive to the social power of
literature and the ability of fictional heroes to inspire identification and imitation in youthful readers” (134).

For such discourse Beverley Lyon Clark claims, “Children’s Literature is always written for both children and adults; to be published it needs to please at least some adults” (96). Emelyn E. Gardner and Eloise Ramsey write in the preface of their book, A Handbook of *Children’s Literature: Methods and Material*, that tastes differ from child to adults, they say

*Robinson Crusoe* afford children the most delightful vicarious experience. To them the story is a simple account of the adventure of a resourceful hero who triumphs over obstacles which lie within the range of appreciation. Mature student of English Literature find the same story interesting in the light of its being an outstanding example.... To children *Gulliver’s Travels* is merely a delightful fairy tale; to mature readers it is a brilliant political satire (vii).

They further added and manifested the taste of selecting a book by both adult and children.

One of the chief difficulties in separating so-called children’s books from adult books arise from the fact that many children have mature taste, whereas many adults remain quite childlike in their reading (vii).

John Rowe Townsend goes further ahead and asks some important questions in the *Children’s Literature: The Development of Criticism*:

What in particular is children’s Literature? That is quite a hard question. There is sense in which we don’t need to define it because we know what it is. Children’s Literature is *Robinson Crusoe* and
Alice and Little Women and Tom Sawyer and Treasure Island, Wind in the Willows and Winnie-the-Pooh and The Habbit and Charlotte’s Web that’s simple: but it won’t do. Surely Robinson Crusoe was not written for children, and do not the Alice books appeal at least as much grownups? ; If Tom Sawyer is Children’s Literature, What about Huckleberry Finn?! If The Jungle Books are Children’s Literature, what about Kim or Stalky?! And if The Wind in the Willows is Children’s Literature, What about The Golden Age? and so on (“Standards”60).

Peter Hunt one of the renowned critics of literature for children defines Children’s Literature:

Children’s books are different from adults’ books: They are written for a different audience, with different skills, different needs, and different ways of reading: Equally, children experience texts in ways which are often unknowable, but which many of us strongly suspect to be very rich and complex (“Introduction” 3).

Michel Foucault discussed that a “whole history remains to be written of spaces which would at the same time be a history of powers” (qtd in 373 Barker). This perception is applicable here because in children’s literature the power of the adult over the child is a continuous and endless subtext. In Foucault’s argument, disciplinary power is fundamental to space both in literature and in reality because space is always organised in relation to power and control. In this regard Peter Hunt writes in ‘Instruction and Delight’

Children’s Literature is at root about power –about a power struggle.

Adults write, children read, and this means that, like it or not, adults
are exercising power, and children are either being manipulated, or resisting manipulation: there is a tension between the reader implied by the writer, and the real readers (14).

There are large numbers of discussions about Children’s Literature. There are critics who suggest that children’s literature doesn’t exist at all, and question the existence of the genre. Children are a confined audience, they do not write their own books, nor they edit or publish. Mostly they don’t select books for their own. It is the parents, teachers, publishers, librarians and academicians who choose books for them. Jacqueline Rose’s book *The Case of Peter Pan or The impossibility of Children’s Literature* (1984) expands and provides new dimensions in Children’s Literature and particularly debates the field widely in cultural studies. She is of the view that the child is ignored as a social being and has no voice, opinion within the society. It is the adults who either control, curb or create that children’s voice. An argument is put forth by her is

This term is ambiguous. Is it literature written by children or literature written for children? Children’s literature has conventionally been defined as the latter, but the apostrophe in the term continues to suggest possession—that this is a literature belonging to children (304).

Children have limited or hardly any access in creating the literature of their own. Indeed it is the power void and space left by children’ weakness that permits the adults authority. Jacqueline Rose an eminent critic in the field of children’s literature, argues about the impossibility of the children’s literature, “children’s literature is impossible not in the sense it cannot be written (that would be nonsense)… this is the impossible relation between adult and child… sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver) (qtd in
Melrose 8). She is of the view that, children’s literature has never been maintained and owned by children regardless of possessive apostrophe in the phrase ‘Children’s Literature’. She argues “Children’s fiction rests on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple... if children’s fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its group” (Rose 1-2). Rose says adult is author, maker and giver. The impossibility of the category is because the audience is constructed and created by adult writers and publishers. It is the adults who instructs through such literature, and uses it as a medium to impart values and traditions. She further argues that,

> Adults evoke this child for their own purpose (desires, in fact), as a site of plentitude to conceal the fractures that trouble us at all: concerns over a lack of coherent subjectivity, over the instabilities of language and, ultimately, existence itself (Rose 16).

Saunak Samajdar is of the same view he writes,

> The children's texts are written rarely by children themselves, so the overarching point of view, despite its ardent and conscious attempts to conceal its experience by the ruse of innocence, is the adult-authorial point of view, a fact that no amount of infantile charade can eliminate completely. For example, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is permeated by Lewis Carroll's perspective regarding Alice Liddell; even when the authorial intention is to mimic the child's perspective, the actual operation is much more complex-first the author has to exercise his adult point of view about the point of view of the child, and then channel the narrative or depictive act
through the filtered filter constructed thereof. The children's text is therefore the hymenographic proximity/abolition betwixt the child's perspective and the adult's impression regarding the child's perspective (2).

On the other hand Sanjukta Dasgupta, writes in, ‘Fantasy, Fiction, Fact: Magic and Realism in Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay’s The Ghost of Gosain Bagan’

Therefore, due to adult authorship, often children’s literature becomes instructional manuals, internalizing an awareness programme that can be overt or covert depending upon the narratorial skills of the creative writer. The hegemonic control of the adult author on the child’s empirical and epistemic exposure and responses however is a matter of debate that cannot be resolved easily. The instruction cum entertainment mode of creative writing for children is instilled with a noble urge to motivate and inspire young minds to scale new heights of achievement and become socially and morally integrated individuals (n.p).

Children’s Literature studies have certain basic apprehension regarding the concept of childhood. Children’s Literature can be placed in the context of real and theoretical childhood, and in the context of literary construct and portrayal of children. It was not until the eighties that children’s literature achieved this sort of theoretical and critical self-consciousness. Influenced by F. R. Leavis, the new criticism, and a reader-cantered approach, Townsend writes, “Children’s books must be judged as part of literature in general, and therefore by much the same standards as ‘adult’ books. It must be good book in its own right” (qtd. in Lesnik-Oberstein 132). Critic like Peter Hunt, J. R. Townsend is more focused on this issue. The other critics of Children’s
Literature Margaret Meek and Elaine Moss have taken a child centred approach in the area. Children’s literature is an attention-grabbing and captivating world of books. Children’s Literature is a part of general literature. It may be said to be a branch on the tree of literature. Evidently, Children’s Literature is not the concern of children alone as they cannot forward and produce it themselves. It is the parents, teachers on one hand and authors, illustrators and publishers on the other that are latent judges and selectors of books of children. It does not subsist in a world of its own but is entangled in a larger world of literature. Dr. Henry Steel Commenger explains

What after all do we mean by the term? Is it the literature written especially for the young-the fairy and wonder tales, the nursery hymns and songs, the dull book of etiquette and admonition and moral persuasion, the stories of school or playing field or of far-flung adventure? It is all of this, to be sure, but it is far more. It is the whole vast body of literature that children have adopted commonly to share with their elders, but sometimes to monopolize. It is quite literally, their literature. For it is, in the end, not the parents, the teachers, the preachers, not even the authors, but the children themselves who determine what their literature is to be (qtd. in Gupta 4-5).

Literature is the ingenious shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language. The practice of literature is two-dimensional, for it involves equally the book and the reader. Some critics consider Levis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland as a perfect book ever written for children. As an adults we think, However, if the child has no background of fantasy, he/she cannot recognize the complication of the plot nor would he or she able to interact with the book and so experience literature. We need then to think the purpose of the words and pictures. How
do the symbols produce an aesthetic experience? How do they help the reader recognize pattern, relationships, feelings that produce an inner experience of art? The real secret of a child’s book consists not only in its being less dry and less difficult, but more rich in interest—more true to nature more rich in every quality that replies to childhood’s keener and fresher perception. Several adult books like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Baron Munchausen* have become nursery property now. *Arabian Nights*, Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), deserve to be among children’s classics. John Rowe Townsend in ‘Standards of Criticism for Children’s Literature’ assigns responsibility to the publisher in deciding what children’s book is:

In the long run Children’s Literature could only be regarded as consisting of those books which by consensus of adults and children were assigned to the children’s shelves—a wholly pragmatic definition. In the short run it appears that, for better or worse, the publisher decides. If he puts a book on the children’s list, it will be reviewed as a children’s book and will be read by children (or young people), if it is read at all. If he puts it on the adults list, it will not—or at least not immediately (61).

Largely speaking Children’s Literature or any literature is designed for a particular section of readers and is after all a branch of mainstream literature. Children’s Literature is not anything different or novel in terms of other adult literature. Both are literatures and so possess qualities like, the augmentation of mental faculties of its readers. In other words, children’s literature is like adult literature but simpler. Rebecca Lukens suggests an explanation for this kind of position, ‘‘Children are not little adults. They are different from adults in experience, but not in species, or to put it differently,
in degree but not in kind. We can say then of literature for young readers that it differs from literature for adults in degree but not in kind” (9).

For further discussion it is important to mention here the difference between adult and children’s literature. Central to this discussion is the question whether literature for children is essentially different from the adult literature. And could children’s literature be classed as a literature in its own right? Naturally there exists numerous differences; both type of literature diverge in their thematic subject and style and dealing. Apart from it the age of the target group, textual features play a role in attempts at a definition of children’s literature. Deepatha Achar quotes Butts, “because of children’s immaturity, some linguistic, emotional, and intellectual limitations are inherent in the genre… implying that children’s books are downgraded versions of adult books” (187). As far as children are concerned it is worthwhile to provide and make available books that would enrich their experiences, understanding and acceptance. The writer must not lose sight of his young reader. He should be simple and straightforward in describing characters. James E. Higgins writers

The writer of children’s literature does not avoid writing down to children by ignoring their special needs and limitations. And there is no antithesis for down to children, for when a writer is over the emotional and intellectual capacities of his child-readers, then, no matter what he thinks, he is no longer writing for children (37).

In some way or other Children’s literature is different from the mainstream writing for the adults primarily because the readers are a different group of audience with specific needs. So Children and young adults have to be addressed in a different way. The writer of the children’s books have to consider psychology of child and adolescent and his or her behaviour. This kind of literature demands entering into the child’s mind,
examining the psyche occupied with the interesting panoramas of adventure and development. On the contrary it is fact that sentiments of adults are much wider whereas those of the children are less wide in terms of their physical age, mental development, and experience of the world. Margaret Clark writes in *Writing for Children*

> Try to avoid ‘writing down’ to your audience; concentrate on trying to see things from their viewpoints; treat your young readers seriously rather them addressing them as if they were a group of different from or inferior to yourself (25).

These aspects decide whether a child can appreciate these books. A child finds it very hard to be attracted towards a work of literature not planned exclusively for him because he has little knowledge and experience of the world. So writers of Children’s Literature are appreciative and take up such themes and aspects which do not go beyond the comprehension of the child. In *Beyond Words: Mystical Fancy in Children’s Literature* James E. Higgins writes, “Books which reach the inner child are those in which an author—from the depths of his own uniqueness-communicates with the essence of childhood (3).

Meindert De Jong writes

> It seems reasonable, with a beautiful logic, that when writing for children you ought to write for them out of your own inner childhood, and not out of an adult remembrance. When you write for children from adult memory, you satisfy only the other adults who have also forgotten their inner childhood, and have also forgotten their inner childhood, and have substituted for it and adult conception of what the child needs and wants in book (qtd. in Higgins 7).

Some writers does not aim at audience or readers in advance as Jan Mark writes,
I write about children because I like to have my characters in decent perspective, but I don’t mind who reads the books. If I know that the book or story is intended for a child reader-ship and, in the case of the Antelopes, for children of the specific age, then it is only fair to construct the thing from a child’s eye level…. Since I do not know my audience in advance, I cannot aim at it (qtd. in Clark 33).

Similar argument is constructed in the following lines.

Anything who claims to know what children want is implying a homogeneity which does not exist. This is the language of mass advertising, which has no place in writing of fiction for children or anyone else (qtd. in Clark 33).

While understanding and developing the difference between adult literature and children’s literature and relation to both, the researchers enhance the understanding of the genre clearly and make the genre unique. Mike Cadden writes in *Telling Children’s Stories Narrative Theory and Children's Literature*

The question is obviously important, perhaps more for the way it leads to decisions about critical approaches to children’s literature than for any answer that might be offered. The greatest distinction is that between degree and kind. Those who believe that children’s literature is different by various degrees from literature for adults draw more on the work of critics in other fields to point to the marked tendencies of children’s literature to do more or less in using different structures or emphasizing different subtexts. Those who see children’s literature as different in kind in relationship to literature
for adults spend their time arguing about that which makes the genre unique (xvii-xviii).

Children’s stories written by adults are used primarily as aids for instruction, and have instructional value. The writer becomes aware of the simple usage of vocabulary as he is not writing a story for adults. Myles Mc Dowel brings out the vital and critical differences between fiction for children and adults in a more thoughtful style in the following words:

Children’s books are generally shorter; they tend to favor an active rather than a passive treatment; with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear cut moral schematism which much adult fiction ignores, children’s books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; the language is child oriented; plots are of a distinctive order; probability is often disregarded and one could go on endlessly talking of magic and fantasy, and simplicity and adventure (51).

Douglas Streets’ view is that children’s literature possess all the qualities that an adult novel has and is of the view that children’s novel should be categorised as a full length fictional creation suitable to one or more specific categories,

A book may qualify as a children’s book if it is judged to be clearly and unabashedly conceived specifically for a child audience. *Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, the wonderful *Wizard of Oz*, or *Pippi Longstocking* for example, contain fun and fantasy clearly woven into the narrative to ensnare the imaginations and accolades of the young. The second group of children’s novels is composed of
works written primarily for the pleasure of the authors themselves. Such books are characterized by a highly personal commitment to narrative structure, setting and personality development. The writer more often than not is totally immersed in the fictional reality of the creation, frequently weaving the tale from the inside out…The third category of children’s novel includes those seminal works that were originally the official property of adults but have over the years been adapted for and energetically adapted by young readers (xiv).

Despite these strong arguments and opinions it is agreed that there is such a thing as literature for children. Despite numerous efforts at arranging the exact meaning of the term and its elements, critics and scholars still have not reached on an agreement regarding a satisfying definition.

The term children’s literature introduces a way of thinking through many complications while supporting and expanding the genre and its critical discourse. It does not discourage the researchers and critics and does not suppress particular areas of debate and dialogue because they are seen to be impossible or ignore difficulties with the genre by assuming that addressing children is unproblematic. And most of all the term children’s literature does not negate what children want, require, and is worthy of literature—it does not remove such literature from children. It expounds some noteworthy questions in the criticism and theory of child literature, and tries to find and include them on less unclear and confusing terms.

Thus the term children’s Literature comprises in it the suggestion that children are a homogeneous group of readers who enjoy reading a special form of literature called Children’s Literature. In the light of the above discussion I found most useful definition for the purpose of this dissertation and the researcher has taken a working definition for
this research that is of Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer who have used it in their well-researched book, *Language and Control in Children’s Literature* “children’s literature is any narrative written and published for children…include the ‘teen’ novels aimed at the ‘young adult’ or late adolescent reader” (2). It also covers, “texts intentionally written for children by adults, texts addressed to adults but read by children and texts read by both children and adults” (Lathey 31).

The next key term is ‘children’ as it builds difficulty as to who exactly can be labelled by this term, and to what extent can we stretch the line between ‘child’, ‘young adult’ and ‘adult’. What are the characteristics of child in context of genealogy of human being and or of literature as such. For this term I take up here the definition of child according to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, “a young human being who is not yet an adult” (Hornby 256).

**Child and Childhood**

“The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently began to awaken” (1) writes Lloyd deMause. The ideas about children’s books are inseparably bound up with cultural construction of childhood. Seth Lerer writes “The history of children’s literature is inseparable from the history of childhood, for the child was made through texts and tales he or she studied, heard, and told back” (1).

Concepts of childhood all over history have been the centre of much scholarly examination since Philippe Arie’s milestone study, *Centuries of Childhood*, first published in 1960. Philip Arries, a French cultural observed in this famous study, that, “the child was not ready for life, and that he had to be subject to a special treatment, a sort of quarantine, before he was allowed to join the adult” (qtd. in Petr 86). Childhood is a necessary phenomenon in societies. Childhood is a social construct and every culture has its own conception and ways of defining children and childhood. Historians
and anthropologists such as Philippe Aries, Margaret Mead, and Martha Wolfenstein have argued in classical studies that childhood differed throughout history and culture. Children which we find today are not reflective of the historical concepts of childhood. There are erratic cultural conceptualisation, contexts, and subsequent social practices associated with children, and thus to understand childhood, Jenks writes in *Childhood*,

The manner in which children are ‘defined’ and ‘positioned’ today is not reflective of other periods of human history. Varied conceptualizations of childhood existed in different locations, contexts, and across socio-cultural-historical periods.

Child is seen through the ages as a lesser version or inferior to an adult. It was later children were viewed significantly different from adults. Knowing more about its historical development will heighten our understanding of the past and the present. Philip argues, “premodern Western society lacked a concept of childhood, tending to view children as small adults with no special emotional or legal allowances” (Sterns 4).

Philip Aries elucidates that there was no consciousness in previous centuries related to childhood, in “Discovery of Childhood” he writes, “In Medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with the affection for children. It corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood… in medieval society this awareness was lacking.” (36). Philip Aries work was extremely influential in generating new ideas about children in history and gained popularity and interest in historians and a budding number of writers began to focus on this phenomenon. In the seventeenth century, notions about childhood changed. Earlier childhood was not considered a distinct category worthy of adults, and children where often viewed as
diminutive version of adult. For most of the historians the eighteenth and nineteenth century child was recognised as significant individual, and thus child as a separate entity came to being. As Roy Lowey writes, “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in particular, a school of literature appeared which stressed the innocence of the child” (67). Shulamith Sahahar’s *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (1990) provides detailed description of concept of childhood in Middle Ages. She nullifies Philip Aries’ concept of childhood did not exist in middle ages. The constructive image of medieval childhood is also strengthened by Nicholas Orme in his book *Medieval Childhood*, and is aggressively critical of Aries.

In the Nineteenth Century the subject of childhood had become a powerful force in the Europe. The crux of this ideology lay a solid pledge to the perspective that children should be nurtured. As Locke said written in *A Critical History of Children’s Literature*, “children must not be forced but must be guided and invited into learning, with their curiosity of mind supplying sufficient motive force to carry them to full education” (Meigs 96). An increasing awareness was that childhood had rights and prerogatives of its own. The progress of this ideology did not have a single trajectory with a target clearly in view. Significance of childhood displayed itself in a mixture of ways. The main important ideas related to children were: importance of early education, concern for the salvation of the child’s soul, growing interest in the way children learn, children were messengers of God and childhood was therefore the best time of life to imprint positive thoughts. Rousseau too had fascination and concern for children, “Like Lock, he did immense service by making a study of children’s minds as different from those of their elders, and further he offered his ideas in a blaze of convincing enthusiasm which carried them much farther than could his predeccers” (Meigs 97). The main writers and philosophers who put forth these ideas about childhood in their works are
Erasmus, Locke, Rousseau and Wordsworth to name a few. In the Romantic period major writers used the child to express their profound philosophy through the image of child. Romanticism asserts children and nature have a close proximity. Anne Lundin writes,

Burgeoning interests in the acculturation of children using a metaphor of growth, a favourite trope of John Dewey’s educational reforms, fir with this new designed space for children, so close to Nature itself, The child in the book, the child in Nature, and the child in the library conflated in to a profession in charge of a body of literature (5).

Writers of romantic period not only put forth thoughts related to childhood but they used children in their creativity, using children as catalysts for their goals. Peter Coveney says, “The romantic sensibility had often concerned itself with childhood as an agent in the quest for psychological insight and awareness.....subjective preoccupations have been balanced, if something precariously, with the objective interests characteristics of the great literature. For them childhood become part of the objective wisdom which, through the power of their creative intelligence they sought to convey” (46).

These philosophers were of the view that the child will most certainly turn out to be a fruitless creature unless at once and if without proper direction he is subjected to a process of concentrated instruction. Erasmus attacked critically the time and money people spent on training materials. He thought that nature has inbuilt in children the desire to know and a power of memory. Erasmus’ thoughts are the impact of humanism, that it was primarily adults who fill fraudulent young minds with evil. John Earle expanded the views of Erasmus about the child, and says “a child is a man in small
letter, yet the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple...he knows no evil. Good habits, learned early, would conduce to piety” (qtd. in Illick 317).

In the subsequent centuries philosophers writers and educationists raised issues concerning children. Figures like John Locke, Jean Jack Rousseau and the Romantic poets wrote child centred educational theories and thoughts related to childhood and children which was lacking in earlier centuries.

Here is an important step towards a child-oriented society, a recognition of the individuality of each child. There is much else which has a similar tendency. Children, said Locke, should ‘be treated as rational Creatures’, their curiosity should be encouraged, there questions carefully answered” (Cunningham 60-61).

John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is a seminal work on children and childhood. He believes a child is a *tabula rasa* or blank slate, and derives his concepts from external objects, and says child is to be “considered only as white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases” (qtd. in Cunningham 60). His observations about the children’s books have made an impression on generations. His thoughts have enlighten modern attitude towards childhood and children’s education. Locke is of the view no book is good for children unless the adult keep it ready for him/her. He endorsed for children, “Aesop’s fables, for variety of reasons, not the least of which was the small child’s fascination with animals. Fables were brief and succinct, making them suitable for readers with short attention spans.”(Immel 30-31). Locke gave the idea that children should receive knowledge from biographies of great men, which impel them to traverse, conquer and obtain advantages around the world. Instructional literature was produced throughout this age, Andrew O’ Malley writes,
John Locke’s notion of the child’s mind as *tabula rasa*, proposed in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), was, even more so than Rousseau’s concept of the child as uncorrupted product of nature, at the core of pedagogical discourse in the late eighteenth century. This model served as more than a philosophical and psychological observation on the state of the infant brain and the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition; it helped underpin the ideology of equal opportunity (4-5).

Childhood has a distinctive place in the system of life, and modern man hardly knew anything about the psychology and the needs of children. With this understanding we can say, children have unique needs compared to adults, and literature should fulfil these needs and deliver entertainment, play, and pleasure. Rousseau proceeds with Locke’s view, and wrote in the preface to *Emile* (1762) that “the wisest writers devote themselves to what a man ought to know, without asking what a child is capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man” (qtd. in Oelkers 74). Locke had rejected Descartes doctrine of innate ideas brought onto the world with the soul. The pedagogical implications of a sensational model of the mind were enormous. For Locke parental instruction is essential for the development of a child’s reason. J. Marshall Beier Writes, in “Children, childhoods, and Security Studies: An Introduction”

Children, as ontological category, are variously constructed as innocent, dependent, vulnerable, impetuous, and dangerous; they are to be cherished, nurtured, protected, regulated, and feared. There is, in some senses, a very high degree of consensus about childhood and, in others, little or none at all. Dominant ideas about childhood may
be broadly inscribed, bespeaking an aggregate of all persons below some age threshold, for example, or they may be imputed to some more exclusive subset of young people, variously defined along intersecting lines of, among others, race, gender, and class. The definitional struggles map with political ones: whether one is constructed within or without childhood bears critically on issues of agency, rights, protection, and more, in ways that may be enabling or disabling of concrete projects and possibilities. Childhood, like security, is an essentially contested concept (4).

The childhood in pre-modern times was not an easy time. The novel concept of childhood that compelled adults to keep children in educational atmosphere bore a straight association to the new doctrine of progress. Childhood were now no longer seen only as a heavenly model of angels but gradually more like a piece of blank paper on which adults must write their ethical codes. Andrew O’ Malley says,

Conception of the infant mind as the site on which the aspirations of republican middle-class ideology could be realized explains in large part the dissenters’ enormous focus on education. Dissenters from all walks of life participated in the development of a middle-class pedagogy—not only such professional pedagogues as Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, but also such leading dissenting scientists as Joseph Priestley and Erasmus Darwin, and such dissenting industrialists as Josiah Wedgwood (5).

Childhood concept has changed throughout the ages. Bengt Sandin writes in, "The Century of the Child". On the Changed Meaning of Childhood in the Twentieth Century": 
Childhood was to take on new meanings. Today childhood is a long period in a person's life. It is filled with schooling and organized leisure activities. Many children spend their early years in some form of pre-school care. There has been a dramatic change in the view of how to bring up the sort of children who would have been regarded as delinquent in the first decades of this century (3).

The sequence of discoveries of childhood spread over the years shows that these concepts of childhood are not to be muddled with the true understanding of childhood in any historical conditions. All constructions and reconstructs of childhood in previous generations, are certainly influenced by cultural presumptions. Childhood in this way is a reviewing of creation by adults who project their own approaches, feelings and values on images of children and childhood.

**Beginning of Children’s literature**

Before there could be children’s books, there had to be children—children, that is, who were accepted as beings with their own particular needs and interests, not merely as miniature of men and women (Townsend. *Written 3*).

The development of children’s literature is the subject of discussion as to whether it began with books directly written for children or, instead, literature written for adults but usurped by children. Identifying the beginning of Children’s Literature is a complicated task. As Maria Nikolajeva points out, “Does the history of children's literature have its own Ancient Age, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Modernism? Second, is the history of children's literature national or international?” (x). Children’s Literature starts long before in the Middle Ages with oral tradition, when there were no books only stories. Niklas Bengston writes, “One of the most important
resources available to writers for children has always been the fables and fairy tales of non-written tradition” (29). In the medieval period stories were told around fires in cottages or sung in the great halls of the castles. Both young and old alike listened, with no distinction being made between stories from children and stories for adults. These stories were divided into two types, the cottage stories, told in cottages and the Castle Stories, stories told in castles. The castle stories were the stories of heroic tales of Beowolf or King Arthur or the Ballad of Fair Isabella, whose step mother had her cooked and served in a pie. By contrast, the tales told around the peat fires in the cottages were about simple folk: farmers, wood cutters, and millers or beast tales about wolves, foxes and hens. These tales were told over and over for generations until they were finally collected by such persons such as Grimm Brothers and thus passed into recorded literature.

The first books available for children were lesson books handwritten in Latin by monks. All these books were religious or instructional and were used by teachers in monastery schools. During this period Venerable Bede translated and wrote some forty five books for his students at the monastery of Jarrow in England. A book developed by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury during the 12th century, Elucidarium discussed topics like manners, children’s duties, the properties of animals and plants, and religious precepts. The Gesta of Romanorum (Deeds of the Roman) compiled in Latin about 1290 contained stories for the clergy for instruction for enlivening sermons. These early lesson books are important to the history of Children’s Literature in that they represent some concession to developing specific books for the instruction of children.

Literature in the Classroom: Engaging Lifelong Readers, “With Caxton’s invention of the printing press, children’s literature began to thrive as a separate entity, at first mostly in the form of manner books and stories of Robin Hood” (9). His publishing books set up the foundation that continue for a long period. Among the first books that he published were A Book of Curtesye (1477), The History of Remart the Foxe (1481) and Aesop’s Fables (1485), Malocy’s Le Marte d’Arther (1485). These books were published for adult readers but at the same time shared by children also. The first children’s book to be influenced by the invention of the printing press were children’s books, lesson books or text books. Children in the sixteenth century used to read from “horn books”. A horn book was not in fact a book at all but alphabets, vowels and Lord’s Prayer was written on a wooden scull or blade. The quantity and types of books available for children extended and children proceeded from the horn books to ABCs, primers and chapbooks. All the available books for children were religious in nature.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century: Children’s Books

Concern about the salvation of children’s souls became the central goal of parents and teachers in 17th century which was dominated by the stern spiritual beliefs of Puritanism. Children were considered to be miniature adults by the Puritans, and they were thus equally subject to sin and eternal damnation.

The Puritans were certainly aware of children, but were aware of them in a special sense: as young souls to be saved, or more probably, dammed. They therefore directed a good deal of literature at young people with the aim of rescuing them from hellfire (Townsend. Written 5-6).

Children were expected to memorize John Cotton’s catechism, Drawn from the Breasts of Both testaments for their Soul’s Nourishment, Spiritual Milk for Boston

You may now hear, my Lambs, what other good children have done, and remember how they wept and prayed by themselves, how earnestly they carried out for an interest on the Lord Jesus Christ: you may read how dutiful they were to their parents... how holy they lived; how dearly they were loved; how joyfully they died (qtd. in Townsend Written 6).

Before the formation of children’s literature intended explicitly for entertainment, children were attracted to amusing tales and verses published in chapbooks, the only format available to them. Seth Lerer writes, “The word chapbook refers to a short, cheaply made pamphlet sold originally by the chapmen, or itinerant merchants, of English and European cities” (134). In sixteenth century appeared small folded paper pamphlets sold by chapman named as chapbooks. M.O. Grenby writes, “Although strictly speaking texts sold by travelling pedlars called ‘chapmen’, the term is often used loosely to describe various forms of short and cheap pamphlets common from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Usually containing popular and plebeian material” (206). Chapbooks became standard in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and achieved popularity. “Chapbooks have distinct importance in the evolution of literature for children. They had some influence on the format and content of children’s books” (qtd. in Bradley 57). Tales about Dick Wittington, Sir Guy of Warwick, Robin Hood
and other heroes were introduced through chapbooks, and brought enthusiasm and pleasure in the lives of children. These chapbooks were mostly criticised by the Puritans as they were intended to create enjoyment rather than instruct. Harry B. Weiss’s study of chapbooks is detailed and helpful. He writes,

[d]evils, and angels, scoundrels and heroes, love and hate, murders, deathbed statements, witchcraft, riddles, tragedy, romance, song, jests, fairy tales, religion, shipwrecks, confessions, fables, hymns, speeches, executions, and all that goes to make up life, real and unreal, are reflected in the ephemeral chapbooks that once circulated so freely and are now so scarce (qtd. in Mally 19).

The popularity of chapbooks with children have influenced John Newbery’s decision to publish a book solely for children. Jack Zipes writes, “After the 18th century, the chapbook trade became almost wholly juvenile.” (Brothers 282). Chapbooks for children continued to appear and contributed to the core body of literature for children and as a protecting force of the literary imagination of children. The decline of chapbooks was due to the rise of periodicals, serials and comics.

Nursery Rhymes or Mother Goose

Mother Goose is a wide categorization of nursery stories and rhymes, characteristically proposed for toddlers or the youngest of readers. No one knows the exact origin of the Mother Goose rhymes. Many artists have illustrated Mother Goose over the years. Mother Goose rhymes comprises of rhymes, finger plays, and alphabet verses. Shakespeare may have known evidently these nursery rhymes, as these rhymes are mentioned in King Lear and his other plays. The old enduring nursery-rhyme book was published by Mary Cooper in the year 1744, under the title of Tommy Thumb’s Pretty Book; a single copy of Vol. II is precious possession of British Museum. It is
regarded as a milestone in the history of children's literature. It includes such much-loved verses as “Sing a Song of Sixpence”, “There was an old Woman”, “Hickere, Dickere, Dock”, and “London Bridge is Broken Down;”

**Fairy Tales and Adventure**

Enjoyment and fun for children came in the form of fairy tales. First printed in France in 1697, by Charles Persault *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé*; (Stories or Tales of Times Past, with morals), this collection comprises of eight tales. Famous among them are “The Sleeping beauty”, “Cinderella or The Glass Slipper”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, “Puss-in-Boots or The Master Cat” and “Blue Beard”. Translated in English in 1729, by Antoine Galland, these fairy tales are France’s gift to the children of the world. The *Arabian Nights* is another collection of old fairy tales that came from different cultures of different countries like India, Persia, and North Africa. Its origin is unclear. These stories were written for adults, such as “Alladin” “Ali Baba”, and “Sinbad the Sailor” and were appropriated by children. Galland published these tales in France in 1558, but they became available in England in 1706. *Arabian Nights* remained popular throughout the eighteenth century and it appeals to children in the current era as well. Its popularity is in the exotic setting and culture portrayed in the tales. Scholars in the field of children’s literature like M.O. Grenby and Alan Richardson discuss the synthesis of imagination and reason in moral tales and the enduring manifestation of fairies, sprites, and enjoyment throughout these tales.

Danial Defoe did not write *Robinson Crusoe* for children, but they appropriated the story and the hero of this story is now the most cherished character among children and their literature. *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was later printed in shortened and pocket-size volume that turned out to be a classic of Children’s Literature. Carpenter and Prichard writes, “The adventure
story has its tradition firmly rooted in Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* published in 1719. What are known as the ‘Robinsonnades’ became, for a time, ‘the dominant form in fiction for children and young people’” (qtd. in Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer 5). This book was so popular that it produced many imitations, in fact, a word, “Robinsonades” was coined for them. The famous Robinsonades examples are; *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812), *Masterman Ready* (1841), *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858). These stories are foundation of modern adventure stories in children’s fiction. Seth Lerer comments on the Robinsonades,

Rousseau’s vision was immensely influential on the novel’s early reception. It contributed to the abridgments and imitations that gave rise to the so-called Robinsonade tradition: the story of adventure, island exile, and return that occupied young readers from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century (131).

Seth Lerer further explains

For Rousseau, Defoe’s novel teaches self-sufficiency. Its hero represents man in a state of nature, outside the boundaries of civil society, unaffected by what others do or think. He teaches children to imagine themselves in potentially real situations. For Rousseau, importantly, Robinson does not foster a fantastic or imaginative place for the child. Instead, he offers a model for particular experience, and in experience lies education (130).

Children no doubt did not understand the scornful and mocking satire of high society in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* but they did find enjoyment and amusement in the hero’s adventures and talking animals. Diane M. Barone writes,
Children read books for enjoyment rather than just to learn a lesson, although lessons were embedded in many fairy tales. In addition to traditional tales, authors wrote books for adults about adventures to strange lands (e.g., Robinson Crusoe, by Defoe, 1719). These books, as occurred in the past, were taken over by children, who although they enjoyed the plot, likely failed to understand the satire (10).

Seventeenth and eighteenth century witness a drastic change in perception of childhood. Philosophers such as John Lock’s postulated childhood as specifically distinctive from adulthood. In Eighteenth century specifically, due to influence of the educational thoughts, Europeans started to recognise childhood as impressionistic, possibly could be taught ethics, principal and conduct. M. O. Grenby quotes William Godwin in his book *Children’s Literature*, “fables were the happiest vehicle which could be devised for the instruction of children in the first period of their education” (14). To maintain this new thinking, authors began to write books for children with the intention of teaching them, and the ultimate objective being the teaching of morals. Stories for children at this juncture were didactic in nature. According to the critic David Whitley: this is because in the mid-eighteenth century authors influenced by Locke began to see that fables were the perfect medium for encouraging children to work out the lessons for themselves, decoding the allegory or the illustrations to discover simple lessons. Fables were regarded as ‘a testing ground for ideas about what children needed from a story and the most appropriate ways for this to reach them’” (qtd. in Grenby 16).

The notion of literature for children generally dates from 1744, the year the English publisher John Newbery printed *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*. Diane M. Barone writes,
“Like Caxton with the printing press, John Newbery changed the world of children’s books when he published *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), which was written and illustrated for children.” (10). Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer writes, “The history of children’s literature, in terms of publishing, is relatively short, with the bringing out of *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* by John Newberry (1713–67) in 1744 as the generally agreed starting point” (2). After publishing Pocket Book, Newbery opened a children’s bookshop which he was to run for twenty two years. Newbery was a follower of famous English Philosopher John Locke and was inspired by *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). He upheld that as soon as the child knew the alphabet he should be lead to read for pleasure; and advocated the use of pictures in books. It was the influence of John Lock that Newbery purposely and openly set to provide amusement for children, something no other publisher had the insight to do. Diane M. Barone writes about Newbery, “Newbery is credited with being the first to recognize that children deserved literature written specifically for them, and not just literature usurped from adults.” (10). In 1765 Newbery published *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes*

Collectively the Newbery books are important in the development of Children’s Literature, but individually the only title with much significance is *Goody Two Shoes*,. This has often been attributed to Oliver Goldsmith, but it could equally well have been written by Newbery or by one or more of the writers in his stable (Townsend. Written 17).

**Didactic Tales**

The development of children’s literature in England occurred simultaneously with the rise of the English novel. During the last half of the eighteenth century, women writers arrived in the area of juvenile Literature to inspire the ethical and moral growth.
The first Children’s novel, *The Governess or Little Female Academy* (1749) by Mrs. Sarah Fielding was published in the same year as *Tom Jones* written by her brother. *The Governess* introduces the popular genre of the school story. *Easy Lessons for Children* published in 1760 by Mrs Barbauld contained moral stories supposedly written for children. Other didactic writers of this age continued and followed the Rousseau’s theory of education by supporting the child in his natural search for knowledge. The best known followers of Rousseau, Tomas Day wrote *The History of Sandford and Merton*, a didactic tale that appeared in the sections (1783, 1786, and 1789). Such moral tales were one of the dominant forms of children’s Literature during 18th century.

**Poetry**

Eighteenth century poetry for children also highlighted and gave more stress upon religion and instruction. Isaac Watts wrote seven hundred hymns for children, He wrote *Divine and Moral Songs Attempted in Easy Language for use for Children* (1715), and children used to memorize these hymns. James Janeway’s *A Token for Children* (1671) is ethical and instructional book for children. These books delivered models for correct manners of conduct, and these writers unraveled and made easy the entanglement of moral, theological and social issues, summarising them into easy comprehension instruction. Isaac Watts writes, “There is greater a Delight in the very Learning of Truths and Duties this way. There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rhymes and Meter that will children to make this part of their Business and Diversion” (qtd. in Townsend. *Written* 104).

The message of these hymns were teaching of generosity and affection, and the collection made up a real child book. William Blake wrote poetry that children enjoyed, but the poems comprising *Songs of Innocence* (1789) were not explicitly written for children. Blake’s poetry was occupied with imagination and enjoyment and made the
reader conscious of beauty without preaching. Children still respond to his happy poem that begins:

Piping down the Valleys wild

Piping Songs of pleasant glee (Blake 1-2).

Thomas Bewick appeared during this age as an illustrator of books for boys and girls. His *The New Lottery Book of Birds and Beasts* (1771) was one of the first examples of a master illustrator using his name for a book for children. Literature for children or the books for children at the end of the century were mostly focused on how to live a good life. Information about the natural world was didactic and in conversational style. Consciousness of books for children increased and publishers and authors became attentive of a new market for books. Parents and teachers started to acknowledge the significance of literature for children. The task to teach children moral values that benefit society was the primary aim of these books.

**19th Century**

Children’s Literature in Western Europe and the United States began to change in the 19th century. The didactism of the preceding ages transformed to make approach for more humorous, child aligned books. Fairy and folk tales at the outset of the nineteenth century faced criticism on being unsuitable and out of place reading for children. Both Puritans and thinkers of the time were against these reading materials for children. Puritans considered them as a form of necromancy, while Locke and Rousseau cautioned about scary effect of fairy tales on children, and favoured stories of daily life.

The outlook towards fairy tales changed when two German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm published the first volume of *Kinder and Hausmarchen* in 1812.
They (fairy tales) created the world of brutality and turmoil, in order to uncover living realities of 1800s through the stories. Rebecca Ciacalese mentions in detail in her research paper “The Grimm Brothers: An Interpretation of Capitalistic Demands and Desires”. They brought the stories from the downtrodden class particularly servants and peasants. These serious scholars tried to preserve the form as well as the content of the old tales that were translated and published in England by Edgar Taylor in 1823-1826 as *German Popular Stories*. Jake Zipes writes in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, “The Grimms made scholarly contribution to the area of folklore, history, ethnology, religion, jurisprudence, lexicography, and literary criticism” (23). They have been translated in to more than 160 languages of the world.

The Brothers have influenced generations of children’s writers. Hans Christian Andersen to Maurice Sendak were strongly influenced by these stories. In the current era Grimms’ tales have ruled the reading material of children. In, “Guardians of the Fairy Tale: The Brother Grimm” Thomas O’ Neill writes, “The stories read like dreams come true: Handsome lads and beautiful damsels, armed with magic, triumph over giants and witches and wild beasts. They outwit mean, selfish adults. Inevitably the boy and girl fall in love and live happily ever after” (O’ Neill). There are translated versions of fairy tales, and in 1846 Mary Howitt translated Hans Christians Anderson’s fairy tales under the title *Wonderful Stories of Children*, and here Children’s Literature as genre became complete due to these fairy tales. John Ruskin was also influenced by the Grimm’s tales and he wrote the modern fairy tale *King of the Golden River* (1851). There were other important writers who contributed to writing folk and fairy tales. Charles Dicken’s *The Magic Fishbone* appeared first as a serial in 1868. *The Wonder Book for Boys and Girls* was published by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1852, followed by *Tanglewood Tales* in (1853). E. W. Lan’s Version of *Arabian Nights*. It was previously
available as chap books. Washington Irving retold the old tales of *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and in 1832 published his *Legends of the Alhambra*. Many other collections of fairy tales appeared and in the last half of the 19th century folktales and fairy tales became acceptable as literature for children.

**Family Stories**

Mrs Martha Sherwood is a prolific Evangelical writer who produced more than three hundred moralising books. Her well-known book was *Little Henry and Bearer*. She is also remembered mostly for *The Fair Child Family* which was popular among young readers. It comprise of series of stories from 1818-to 1847, it considered as the first family stories. Charlotte Yonge also wrote family stories. She tells the story of motherless May family of eleven children in *The Daisy Chain* (1856). Yonge was an excellent story teller and wrote over 120 books. The year 1868 also witnessed the publication of *The Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott,

*Little Women* marks not only an increased truth- to- life in domestic stories, with children seen as people rather than examples of good and bad. It also makes a relaxation of the stiff and authoritarian stereotype of family life persisting from the still recent times….


*Little Women* has been translated in to several languages of the world due to its popularity. Important works which describe families, and attracted children are; Susan Coolidges’ *What Katy Did* (1872), *What Katy Did at School* (1873), *What Katy Did Next* (1886), Mary Mapes Dodge’s *Hans Brinker: or the Silver Skates* (1865), Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* (1884), Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886). These stories are loved in the current generations too.

**Tales of Adventure**
The growth of family stories and series books for girls encouraged tales of adventures. Then immersed on the seen the boys’ adventure stories, are better known as the Robinsinades, *The Swiss Family Robison*, was written by Johann David Wyss, a Swiss Pastor, and translated into English in 1814. The book delighted children’s imagination. It is a story of parents and their sons, and is a great classic among children’s literature in English. It was followed by Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) an outstanding adventure story written during the last half of the nineteenth century. It has a thrilling plot and well portrayed characters. Here for the first time adults were drawn to a children’s book of adventure rather than children reading adult’s books:

The most obvious qualities of *Treasure Island* are its sheer speed, colour and excitement. This is what happens when a first-rate writer, just coming to the peak of his powers, applies himself with boyish enthusiasm to a work that sweeps him away and has swept nearly all readers away ever since (Townsend. Written 45).

The themes of excitement suspense in the novel attracts young readers, and appeals to a child’s imagination and adventurous side of life. Mark Twain wrote classics *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 1876 and 1884 respectively, He combined realism, humour and adventure in his realistic portrayal of growing up in a small town towards the end of 19th century. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* gained literary applause and commendation, and *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* became a favourite.

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* demonstrate how we can realistically maintain the ‘delusion’ of our childish boys in the midst of brutal incongruity. These novels
recapture the pure unadulterated joy and freedom of boyhood and this provide a mode of escape to a world of fantasy. They attempt to persuade, not only by appealing to our nostalgia for a lost childhood and a lost Eden, but by our extending our awareness of what these worlds mean (Kumar 45).

**The Rise of Fantasy**

It is not easy to locate the exact date and identify and define fantasy. We can say children’s fantasy literature started from 1840’s with the publication of Edward Lear’s *Book of Nonsense* in 1846, a pivotal work in children’s literature. Certainly in the subsequent years, some of the greatest works of children were published, and almost all of these works were fantasies. The first inspiring modern fantasy may be seen in a tale *The Water Babies* written by Charles Kingsley an English Clergyman and Scientist in 1863, which is a strong mixture of the fanciful over laden with heavy doses of morality. In 1865 an Oxford Professor of mathematics, Charles Dogso published *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) under the Pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, Its publication opened the “First Golden Age” of Children’s Literature in Great Britain and Europe that continued until the early 1900s. This book is a foundational book in the development of fantasy literature for children. Townsend says in his book *Written for Children: An Outline of English-language Children’s Literature* that, “the decade in which fantasy took wing was the decade of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Water Babies*; the eighteen-sixties” (71). Other well-known fantasies were published near the end of the century. George MacDonal’s *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883) are well known fantasies. These stories are not the forbidding moral tracts evanglic writers feverishly published, but rather celebrate Children’s capacity for imagination and belief.
Children’s Literature in 20th Century

If the nineteenth century witness a strong formation of literature for children, the twentieth century may be considered as the acceptance of literary and artistic excellence in children’s books. The development of children’s book sections in publishing houses expanded, the spreading out of public and school libraries service for children came in shape. Beautifully illustrated books for children emerged due to technological improvements. Individuals and organisations started to make efforts for the development of children’s literature. In 1945 the Children’s Book Council was founded to endorse Book Week and to distribute information about children books. Frederick Melcher devoted his life to improve and promote the books for children. At individual level he promoted an event that encouraged the development of children’s literature. He proposed the presentation of an annual award for the most distinguished book for children. In 1922, the Newberry was the first award in the world to be given for “the Most Distinguished Contribution to literature for children”. There were other awards like “The Caldecott Medal”, “The Hans Christian Anderson Award” for raising the standards of writing and illustrating in children’s books. The Junior Literary Guild was established in 1929. In the late 1950’s paperback book clubs made it conceivable for more children to own books and increase their interest for reading.

Growth of Informational Books

Children always are in search of new information, and increased understanding of child development in nineteenth century brought the recognition that the child was naturally inquisitive and keenly wanted information. The primary purpose of information books is to convey the information about the world around children. There are verities of advantages in providing information books at an early age of children. Children enjoyed facts, and they eagerly accept information given to them in straight
forward manner. In the history of information of children’s books, E. Boyd Smith produced some of the first information picture books, *The Farm Book* (1910), *Chicken World* (1913), *The Seashore Book* (1912) and *The Railroad Book* (1913). The illustrations of these stories were large, double page spreads filled with fascinating detail.

Informational books has been created in abundance to give children facts almost on every cogitable subject. Series of books in the areas of science and social studies were created and were thought important for the development of children, *The First Books, All about Books*, and *The True Books* series are examples in series stories. Books of experiments by Schneiders and Freemans encouraged children’s science activities. Developments in the field of atomic energy and exploration of space are reflected in these information books for children. Biographies appeared to supply children’s awareness of national heroes. *George Washington* (1930), *Abraham Lincoln* (1939), *Leaf the Lucky* (1941), *Pocahontas* (1949) and many more biographies presented idealised images for children. *The Childhood of famous Americans* series initiated the trend of publishing biographies for boys and girls in series form.

Fantasy for children in the first half of the twentieth century flowed mainly from the writings of English writers. Kipling braced the child’s imagination in his *Just so Stories* (1920) with his humorous tactics of the origin of animal characteristics.

Kipling’s *Just so Stories* are often compared with Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* as the greatest English achievements in writing for young children. Carroll shares with Kipling the faculty of appealing to children and adults alike. *Just So Stories* have been invented for the satisfaction not of a primitive people but of moderns, who are primitive only in
the metaphorical sense that their intellectual development does, to some extent recapitulate the source of human evolution (Kumar 40).

Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) with pictures by Ernest Shepard became children’s classic; it has been reprinted in multiple editions. *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum has been called the first American fantasy published in 1900; the highly inventive story of the cowardly Lion, the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and Dorothy in the Land of Oz has been enjoyed by thousands of children. Michael Patrick Hearn notes “(it) reflected and has altered the American character. The book had sold five million copies by the time it went into the public domain in 1956” (qtd. In Burger 201). *Winnie the Pooh* (1926), *To and Again* 1927 and *Rabbit Hill* (1944), have paved the way for the most well-loved animal fantasy to be written by an American, E. B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* (1952). This book, with its various theme of friendship, loyalty and celebration of life, is now delighting new generation of children.

**Child through the Ages in Literature**

During the course of time childhood became one of the important theme for writers, as seen in the literature at the end of the eighteenth century. Peter Coveney is one of the first modern scholars to study child in literature. He has written *The Image of Childhood* (1957) a valuable book for the students and researchers of children’s literature. He notes in *The Image of Child*

The child did not exist as an important theme in literature before the end of the eighteenth century. In fact there would seem to be very little historical evidence for existence of children at all, before this date. The absence of children in literature and in historical documents before the beginning of the nineteenth century presumably reflects society’s attitude towards children that is they were largely ignored.
All this changed with the advent of the Romantic poets, particularly Blake and Wordsworth, who used the child as a symbol to express ideas that were central to their work (Coveney 42).

Plenty of literature for children is found today that has never existed earlier in the history of the humankind. Different kinds of books, enormously greater than before, and widespread distribution techniques makes thousands of books available to children. Peter Hunt Writes, “All literature, all texts, created before the eighteenth century was not written for children. Children apparently were a part of the audience in primarily oral and aural society” (“Instruction” 15). Previous to the nineteenth century there were a few books written for the specific readership of children. Children read books written for adults, taking from them what they could comprehend. In the introduction of her book, *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children’s Literature* by Maria Nikolajeva writes

Children's literature emerged on a larger scale because at some time in the seventeenth century society began to recognize that childhood was a special period in people's lives and that children had their own special needs (ix).

Maria Nikolajeva considers seventeenth century fertile for the production of children’s literature. Writers became conscious of childhood as distinctive phase of life. The credit for creating initial books for children as Pedagogic and educational perspectives goes to seventeenth century.

Children’s Literature became popular widen throughout the world in the nineteenth century. Writers who often wrote for both children and adults became more experimental and pioneering and received recognition. There was a drastic transformation in the approach towards children’s education in twentieth century.
Children were considered as potential patrons of children’s books. Children received more focus, rights and privileges than in prior centuries. Literature for children was measured as medium to play a part in ‘civilizing’ children. Children became the discourse of adults in arts and literature. Ideas of the child influenced adult literature. The ‘child’ stimulated poetry, prose, and political discussion during the Romantic period. Annemarie Ambuhl says “Nevertheless, certain concepts originating in Romanticism are still maintained in contemporary scholarship in a rather unreflecting way. Among these, the child as a metaphor for the poet plays a crucial role.” (378).

Stories for children flourished, and publishers and educators addressed the issue of children in literature in broader perspective. Poets like William Blake lamented on the death of children or were troubled about their future in poetry. In prose children gained space in large numbers in the novels of the second half of the nineteenth century. Children were symbols or icons, standing for innocence, emotion, and simplicity. Romanticism succeeded in providing childhood a liberty of imagination which earlier periods would have crushed. Stephanie Metz writes in, ‘Romanticism and the Child: Inventing Innocence’

British Romantics often figured children in adult literature and poetry because of ideas about the child’s closeness to nature. The child, some Romantic poets believed, had access to a unique worldview, precisely because a child has not yet rationalized and assimilated the workings of society the way an adult has. The literary and political influence of Romanticism retains its potency even today as it still colors our perceptions of children (n.p).

Anne Lundin comments,
With the Romantics’ “discovery” of the child, we are confronted with something new: the phenomenon of major literary figures expressing their most profound thoughts through the image of the child, a veritable Golden Age when “the major wrote for minors.” Within a few decades, the child emerged from cultural diminution to become the cultural icon of imaginative literature and philosophical speculations (5).

Romanticism preserved in other cultural movements of the time that influenced the dominance of childhood and its literature. Wordsworth’s *Ode on Intimation of Early Childhood* is an important influence in the Romantic attitude of the child. The utilitarian education which became trend was criticised by Wordsworth in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*

> Oh evil day! If I were sullen
> While herself is adoring
> This sweet May-morning
> And the Children are culling
> On every side (Wordsworth 42-46).

The two writers most connected with the innovative vision of romanticised childhood are William Blake and William Wordsworth, whose writings have paved the way to recognise the image of child and children’s literature as well. Deborah Cogan Thaker and Jean Webb writes, “It is often claimed that the image of the romantic child has been a key point of reference for the birth of children’s literature since the beginning of the nineteenth century” (qtd. in Gill 27). Both these writers shared a passion for the child as a symbol of innocence and naturalness. Anne Lundin writes, in *Constructing the Canon of Children’s Literature*
Wordworth’s celebration of a folkloric childhood in *The Prelude* privileged fairy tales and imaginative literature, a curriculum not lost on children’s librarians who championed a comparable literature for children of modern America: a canon composed of books of romanticised America, of books that privileged the child in Nature, of books that stood timeless as the fabled and storied lore of classics and traditional tales (6-7).

Wordworth like John Locke consider that the mind was at birth a *tabula rasa*, Wordworth commended that it should be wide open to thoughts and sensations, above all those from nature. They possess productive ability at the beginning stage where faculties like vision, fantasy, dreams and reveries could be developed. For Wordworth basics of moral virtue and beauty are rooted in man in the initial years of life by nature and these things shape the adult life later. “The child is the father of man / And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety (My Heart Leaps Up 9-11). Wordworth was disappointed over the carnage of the child’s ‘visionary gleam’. This theme followed repeatedly all through the Romantic writing as a longing to return to the awareness of the child. It is the adult world which takes away the child’s innocence. For these writers childhood is comprised of visionary eye and at this level the mind is most accomplished to acquire an imaginative impressions of nature. Wordworth speaks of this in *Intimations of Immortality* from *Recollections of Early Childhood*.

> Thou, over whom thy immortality
> Broods like the Day, a Master o’er a Slave,
> A presence which is not to be put by;
> Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
> Of heaven-born freedom on thy being’s height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke (118-124).

Wordsworth shows that children are certainly gifted with blessings from God. Children came in consideration as they possess keener sensitivity to beauty and truth compared to adults. Literature written for children have a close relation with debates and discussion between the philosophers, theorists and writers in nineteenth century. Deborah Cogan Thaker and Jean Webb writes, “It is impossible to consider Romanticism without addressing the centrality of childhood and the development of a literature specifically for a child audience, but equally impossible to discuss children’s literature without investigating the complexity of these debates (15). Peter Coveney says in *The Image of the Child*: the concept of the child’s nature which informed the work of Blake, Wordsworth and Dickens was of original innocence. Stemming most forcefully from Rousseau, and in contradiction to long Christian tradition of original sin, it was this which gave weight and edge to the general commentary of these authors as they expressed it through the symbol of the innocent child....The symbol which had such strength and richness in the poetry of Blake and some parts of novels of Dickens, became in time the static and moribund child-figure of the popular Victorian imagination; a residue only of a literary theme almost entirely evacuated of the significance it had earlier borne....It was against this conventionally innocent child that a revolution was affected at the turn of the 19th century (45-46).

William Blake portrays children in different tempers and situations. He also features the different dispositions of children to different locations. Sometimes he
identifies and compares his life with children, as rescuer, redeemer and victim. One the one hand he glorifies the happiness of children and at the same time portrays grim sufferings of children too. Blake in his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* portrayed the image of the child as bright saintly sprited, opposite to the authoritarian forces of urbanisation, mechanization, and Puritanism, which blocked the growth of the child. The child symbolized the world of the imagination in an increasingly industrialized, utilitarian world. For Blake the innocence of the child is contrasted with the experience of the industrialized world. Blake shows his indignation towards ill treatment against children in the pitiless and hazardous chimney-sweeping business. Child freedom was totally taken away by the adults. In *Chimney Sweeper* Blake expresses the idea of the child:

> When my mother died I was very young
> And my father sold me while yet my tongue
> So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep (Line 1-4).

In this regard Peter Coveny says,

> The child could serve as a symbol of the artist’s dissatisfaction with the society that was in the process of such harsh development about him. In a world given increasingly to utilitarian values and the Machine, the child could become the symbol of Imagination and sensibility, a symbol of Nature set against the forces abroad in society actively de-naturing humanity. Through the child could be expressed the artist's awareness of human Innocence against the cumulative pressures of social experience (44).
For writers like Blake and Wordsworth and their contemporaries, there is always the image of the poetic child or the poet as a child like creature. Because of this trait of closeness to nature and paradise, these writers are able to address the basis of creative imagination without deviation. For them the concept of childhood become the core of their poetic creation and theory. Coveney writes, “The importance is that for them the child became a symbol of the greatest significance for the subjective investigation of the Self, and an expression of their romantic protest against the Experience of society” (45). The child in romantic period exemplifies innocence, contiguity and proximity with nature. Child is an idealized creation in romantic poetry, and through child writers seek to retrieve and vindicate the disappearing light and joy in the commercial world. As Wordsworth says, “But He beholds the light, whence it flows, / He sees it in his joy” (Ode 69-71).

In Western Europe towards the end of the 18th century and coexisting with the innovatory social philosophies and political movements, there arose a change in image of the child. The child came to be regarded not as an inadequate adult to be subjected and pacified as quickly as possible to the adult mode but as a being composed of rich inner possessions and resources, often despoiled by adult tutelage. All these resources have been displayed by writers in literature and arts of the century. Anne Lundin writes,

John Dewey appropriated certain views of the child that were gaining force in the late nineteenth century into his pragmatic philosophy and school reforms. Believing that education could redeem a large society, he positioned child, as critical to that remaking, at the very centre of the school (12).
Children as they give the impression in art, literature, drama or films imply an ample mixture of fantasy and reality. Children embody memories and dreams of adults, their own lost childhood, as well as feelings. These feelings and fantasies often undergo elaborate transformations. Children adopt a variety of appearances as they appear in literature and art. The story of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain expresses certain characteristic American attitudes about children. And the protagonists of Dickens’ Novels are ingenious and independent and recurrently prove that adults’ apprehensions and anxieties about them are unfounded.

Child gained center space in 19th century and became the main protagonist of serious adult fictions, as in the novels of Dickens, George Eliot, Mark Twain, Henry James and Dostoevsky in America and Russia respectively. Popular fictions for children for example Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland, Burnett’s Fauntleroy and Speyri’s Heidi gained importance. Both the child’s view of the adult world, and adult’s views of childhood becomes more important. The portrayal of the child in Dickens’s writing is very different. Children are depicted noble, helpless, endangered and weak and need the protection of kind adults; and without this they become helpless, suffering victims of terrific, wicked and cruel characters. The most example of such kind of child character we find in David Copperfield (1850), where children are threatened by the vicious voice of the school headmaster, Mr. Creakle. Anguish and misery of child is a recurrent theme in Dickens. Not only the children suffered like Pip of Great Expectations (1861), Abel Magwitch in Bleak House (1853), Oliver, the workhouse boy in Oliver Twist but all are exploited in some way or other. Oliver Twist endorses the progress of innocence through a world in itself totally corrupt. Dickens uses child as a tool for his first person narration for David Copperfield, Bleak House and Great Expectations through the eyes of children like David, Esther, Summerson and Pip.
Through the child as protagonist, Dickens displays that the Victorian children had expectations of self-improvement because they believed in advancement in life. Whenever these children perceive something that is better for them they instantly crave to gain improvement. As Coveny writes, “the child is now symbol of growth and development, and now a symbol of retreat into personal regression and self-pity…. For Dickens an interest in the child nourished the growth of a moral interest which he dramatized through he medium of his great fiction” (45).

Charlotte Bronte in her lone novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) has shown a child, a female, an orphan through the character of Jane. She has portrayed a typical Victorian female character. The child seems to be in protest through the journey in the novel. The child is isolated without family and friends. Her first speech is a protest against the injustice she suffers. She is struggling to speak to put her thoughts in words.

Child was given roles by writers who believe children are closer to divine, who can figure and form the character of the adult. Such is the example of George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) where the child reforms the life of an adult. Eppie the child character rescues the old man and shapes his character. George Eliot carried on the Wordsworthian judgement of the child as a transcendental model and instructor. It was central to the romantic vision that there is relation between child and nature. The inventive use of the child by Eliot in *Silas Marner* is marvellous. The child takes the suffering man Silas from myopia to vision. George Eliot asserts recurrently in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) on the spiritual enlightening quality of a child’s actuality. Robert H. Dunham writes in “Silas Marner and the Wordsworthian Child”

George Eliot’s fear that the Wordsworthian motto might give her story away indicates that she assumes in her readers a ready understanding of how a child's presence can heal the particular kind
of spiritual blindness described in the novel. Such an assumption reflects more than her own temperament and persuasion, for the poets of the early nineteenth century had consistently used the child's vision as an example and as an emblem of the dynamic and lustrous reality waiting only to be discovered by adults whose perceptions are blurred by convention and by custom (653).

There is another version of children created by the writers such as Golding who creates the world of children without the meddling of adults. Golding tried to challenge the notion of psychology of the child which Ballantyne has adopted in *Coral Islands* (1858). In *Lord of the Flies* (1954) Golding attempts to know through the child’s world, the flaws and imperfections of the society and the defects of human nature. The novel has been admired and read by both children and young adults throughout the globe. Stefan Hawlin says, “*Lord of the Flies* has for a long time been a book set for children and young adults” (Harald Bloom 1).

Rudyard Kipling is famous as a storyteller for children and once the child reads him he finds “the lasting joy, and one making itself felt a deeper level than mere excitement or entertainment, is the immediate identification of himself.” (qtd. in Montefiore 97). His portrayal of children gives us a glimpse of the baser and more primitive sides of man. Kipling’s *Just so Stories* (1902) are often related with Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* as the primary and dominant English achievements in writing for young children. Child is shown care free and irresponsible in his writing. His writing evokes reminiscences and recollections in the readers of their own school days. Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky and Co.* (1899) is one of many novels that permit the reader to relive, in fantasy, his carefree school days. In *Kim’s* personality in *Kim* (1901) we see the most attractive relationship
and the portrayal of childish and childlike characteristics. Kim becomes a lovable re-
creation of an idealized childhood.

The exaltation of the juvenile and children is noticeable feature of several great
American works, including *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) Young Huck
is a principal and important young person in American literature, obscuring even other
child characters like Henry in Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* and Holden
Caulfield in J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*. Mark Twain had a profound
understanding of child psychology. He identifies himself with the boy Tom in *The
Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and recollects the memories of his own boyhood in
the Mississippi valley. He reconstructed his own boyhood with all its joys, sport and
adventure. Mark Twain, in fact, has portrayed child as natural and his narrative is the
outburst of a child’s heart. Similarly in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the world
of Huckleberry Finn is a youthful world full of innocence, love, sympathy and
compassion.

The beauty of child characters is that they succeed in being a child
and a grown up person at once. Through the child’s mischief we see
the novelist examining the world as it were from a remote control.

Through the seeing eye of the child used by the writer, the reader
can’t miss even absurd things (Kumar 47).

Mark Twain shows a child has close association with nature, and run after his
own set of conventions and morals. He has no idea of what limitation means. While a
child in Mark Twain is rough; yet he has a heart which beats with innocence, love and
sympathy. ‘Experience’ according to Huck means boundaries, pride and insincerity
where the world of innocence gets unnoticed. Albert E. Stone Jr. Speaks writes in a
book review
To a degree unexcelled by the novelists of his generation, he devoted a career to writing about childhood. Five of his novels, several long novelettes . . . depict the world of adolescents, children, or infants. Indeed, Twain's fascination with immaturity was so deep-seated and persistent an aspect of his imagination that many of his fictional adults are conceived essentially as grown-up children (Ross 366).

Hemingway has depicted child in *The Old Man and the Sea* in relation to the adult. The proximity is such, the adult Santiago succeeded only with the child Manolin. The boy provides warmth and nourishment throughout his journey to catch the shark. Children like this book because of its rhythmic conversation between old man and the boy. It is the relation between the disciple and the master more than it is purely human relation. In the words of Jackson J. Benson, “Everything is due to create persuasively a world where man and boy successfully interact without interference” (qtd. in Singh 18).

American and British writers glorified and exalted childhood in their writings. A child in his significant journey to adulthood affected by difficulties, challenged and threatened by dangers, to which he is frequently exposed, is an ‘objective correlative’ for the American nation in the processes of coming of age.

These writers were progressively more engaged with the quality of the child’s experience and the consequences of this experience for his future development. The writings are evidence of the writer’s growing interest in the significance of childhood impressions and their role in the formation of character.

The image of the child in American poetry has continued on par with that in fiction. The poet who most extensively dealt with the concept of child is Walt Whitman. His use of the child image in *Leaves of Grass* provides vital understanding. Whitman’s
image of the child is introduced in *The Song of the Banner at Day Break* as a character to explain the source of vision.

Children’s Literature has many components in it for the overall benefit of children, and instructors can use it for development of the language, reading skills and strategies. The aim of the research here is to focus on the dominant themes in the English language children’s books in India. The first chapter focuses on uncovering the ambiguities in children’s literature, relation and difference between children’s literature and adult literature and how the child got recognition in the literary books. It also highlight the condition of child and childhood throughout the ages, and discusses some social philosophies related to children and childhood. The second chapter tries to highlight the importance of classical children’s literature of India in connection with global classical children’s literature and contemporary children’s literature. It surveys how classical literature shaped the contemporary children’s literary scene. It also provides some light on children’s literature in Indian regional languages and gives a clear overall understanding about the Indian children’s literature and its roots. The third chapter titled as ‘Contribution of Publishers to Indian Children’s Literature’ bring forth the contribution of private and government run organizations and institutes who work for the promotion of children’s literature in India. The fourth chapter is the central chapter titled as ‘Themes and Trends in Contemporary Indian Children’s Literature in English’ which is further divided into five subchapters. It highlights the main themes discussed in current English literature for children. This chapter is followed by the conclusion. The study discusses both short stories and novels as well, and these stories and novels cater to all groups of children. As younger group of children have shorter attention span they cannot focus for long on novels so short stories are appropriate for them. On the bases of dominant themes prevalent in children’s literature in India in
English, the following set of themes are taken for exploration. The subchapters and books/stories focused upon in this study are as follows

4.1: Science through Children’s Literature

*The Robots are Coming; Stories of Robots* (1989) Collection of twelve stories by Dilip M Salwi

*From Somewhere Out There* (2009) by Karthika Das

4.2: Eco-Consciousness and Children’s Literature in English in India

*Curse of Grass* (2010) by Ira Sexena

*Ranthambore Adventures* (1998) by Depak Dalal

4.3: Gender Role, Representation of Girl and their Voices in Indian Children’s Literature in English

*The Battle for No. 19* (2007) by Ranjit Lal

*Go, Girl, Go!* (2015) by Deepa Agarwal

4.4: Bibliotherapy: Children’s books in India

*Lighthouse in the Storm* (2012) collection of 24 stories by AWIC

4.5: Mystery, Detective and Adventure Tales in Indian English Children’s Literature

*The Kaziranga Trail* (1978) by Arup Kumar Datta

*Mystery of the Falling Mountains* (2004) by Nilima Sinha

The present study explains and highlights the condition and current themes and trends which are being represented in Indian children’s literature written in English language. This study does not focus on the particulars of the literary process or the detailed construction of story components such as setting, characterization, style, plot, or point of view. It is eclectic in nature. The study is viewed through the theoretical perspective of ecocriticism, reader response theory, gender approaches. The main objective of this
study is to bring forth these trends and themes so that it facilitates further researchers and at the same time provide Indian children’s literature a place in academic sphere. It also highlights children’s literature’s instructional purposes and at the same time emphasizes how children’s literature can play a significant part in their holistic development. Children eight years above of age are taken in to consideration for this study. Keeping in consideration only textual stories the study excludes pictorial and pictographic literature like graphic novels, picture books, comics, adapted novels and animations and cartoons for children.
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criticism against German bakers Jacob and Wilhelm.