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## Functions of Didactic Children's and Youth Literature

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*Jan Czechowski*

## **FUNCTIONS OF DIDACTIC CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH LITERATURE**

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In this article, discussing educational values of young readers' literature is preceded by historical outline of the development of literature as an art form. Separating literature from other phenomena of culture has been difficult since ancient times. According to one of works of H. Starzec, this results from the complex nature of a literary phenomenon, versatility of literature, as well as various categories of theoretical thinking about this art<sup>1</sup>.

### **1. Introduction**

The mentioned author presents the evolution of literature throughout the centuries as follows: "The term *literature* had not been used before the 18th century. Strictly literary works were classified as poetry since they were mainly works written in a verse form. Poetry did not comprise prose writing, journalism, rhetoric, or fictionalized history; yet, it included drama as it was usually written in verse, and first of all, poetry embraced literary works of epic and lyric nature. In the 18th century, a new literary form evolves, namely a novel, written in prose. Thus, the term of literature comprises poetry and literary prose, as well as other kinds of writing. Since that time, the term of poetry has no longer meant the same as *belles-lettres*, it has been narrowed, and the very phenomenon of poetry has undergone various transformations resulting in the present-day scope. Nowadays,

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<sup>1</sup> H. Starzec, *Kultura literacka – wychowanie literackie*, Warsaw 1981, p. 5.

literature is regarded as an art, in the contemporary interpretation of the fine arts. Such a concept of art was established quite late since it took place as late as in the 18th century. Long before that, a different concept of art had been used, originating from the ancient Greece. The Greeks perceived an art as acting subject to the principles of skills, in both material and mental fields. They distinguished between the liberal arts (manual work free) and applied arts (created by means of physical effort). The latter included sculpture, painting, and crafts, whereas the former embraced music. Yet, neither of them contained poetry as this field was neither material production nor was it subject to the rules of action. The word *poiesis* meant creativity for Greeks (from *poiein* – make, create), and the word *poietes* – a poet – any creator. Therefore, poetry was an art of creating – not a craft. It was an individual act, created under the influence of inspiration. It was a contradiction of routine, norm, or rule according to which objects of art were made. Poetry resulted from illumination and intuitive experience and due to that it was of the *divine-like nature*”.

Evolution of children's and youth literature took place in the following periods: the Former Ages, Age of Reason, Romanticism, Positivism, Young Poland, interwar period, post-1939 years. Based on the works of S. Frycie and M. Sobecka, the main aspects of the then children's and youth literature are briefly characterized below.

## 2. Children's and youth literature

Throughout many centuries, there had been no separate literature for young readers. Reading needs of young generation before the times of Enlightenment, thus up to the 18th century inclusive, had been mainly satisfied by oral transmission (national mythology and folklore, religious works, traditional folk literature). In the period of the Early Middle Ages, Polish children listened to fables, fairy tales, oral tales, legends, and knight tales. In Germany, the Nibelungs' adventures were popular, in Ruthenia the Vyelkodooh was a well-known character, similarly, elves in Ireland, whereas a young Pole was moved by a story of legendary princess Wanda or was cheered by defeat of the Wawel Dragon. In the Middle Ages, among the first compulsory literary works were *Hagiographies*. In the Age of Renaissance (15–17th c.) young Polish readers came across Aesop's Fables in *The Biography of Aesop* by Fryg Biernat from Lublin, as well as *Deeds of the Romans (Gesta Romanorum)*, *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer... Typical for the Renaissance interest in the ancient classical authors caused that the ancient literature became a significant element of school education at that time, and together with great tradition of the

humanities of former ages, appropriate educational models were transmitted. Polish language texts from that period are, for example, *The Threnodies (Treny)* by Jan Kochanowski. In the second half of the 18th century (The Baroque, Enlightenment), under the influence of the then popular in Poland pedagogical ideas of J. A. Komeński and J. Lock (the author of the treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*), there was growing awareness of the demand for children's literature. A significant role in this area was also played by National Education Committee (1773–1794) – first in Poland and the then Europe ministry of public enlightenment, which undertook the work of reforming the national educational system. At that time Perrault's fables and *The Adventures of Telemachus* by Fénelon appeared. Also other great authors wrote for children, e.g. Krasicki, Niemcewicz, Defoe, and Cervantes<sup>2</sup>.

The Romanticism period in Poland was a dawn of belles-lettres writing specially intended for children and youth. Short stories and longer prose moral works were written, arising from the ideological traditions of the Enlightenment (Hoffmanowa, née Tański, Jachowicz). The second generation of children's romantic writers paid much attention to civic education and focused on advocating democratic ideas (Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Fredro). Other popular writers were Scott, Cooper, and Hugo. The Romanticism's centres of literary life, children's literature, and publishing movement were Warsaw, and then Krakow, Lvov, and Poznań. For the first time, publishing houses considered editing children's books<sup>3</sup>.

The second half of the 19th century – period of Positivism, critical realism, and Modernism – brought further development of literature for young generation. It was the time of a rapid growth of prose in all its subject-genre's varieties, as well as of lyrical and fairy tale writing – moral prose was strongly connected with the positivist ideology and the banners of organic work (Polish: *praca u podstaw*, lit. work at the bases (Świdorska, Papi, Urbanowska, and Dygasiński). Young readers adopted historical books of Polish language universal literature, as well (novels by Kraszewski and Sienkiewicz). At that time one may observe the richness of themes and the variety of genres in prose writings intended for young generation on the one hand and strong interest in a child in various forms of prose works in universal literature on the other hand (e.g. Prus and Orzeszkowa). It was also a period of outstanding representatives of children's and youth literature, such as Konopnicka,

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<sup>2</sup> S. Frycie, M. Ziółkowska-Sobecka, *Leksykon literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Piotrków Trybunalski 1999, pp. 203–205.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212 and further.

the Grimm brothers, Andersen, Kipling, Carroll, Barrie, et al<sup>4</sup>. During the interwar years, a young readers' book's aim was not only to satisfy demands but also realize the foundations of the concept of culture in a new state, as well as to support education's edifying policy. The literature was to shape a modern man, a patriot, and a good citizen, compassionate, just, generous, as well as critical, and at the same time a Catholic. Literary output of the epoch consists of fables, fairy tales, poetry works, prose on historical and social and moral topics, nature, as well as fantasy books. Authors of that time are all the following, but not limited to: Ostrowska, Jezierski, Dąbrowska, Makuszyński, Korczak, Kownacka, Molnar, Twain, London<sup>5</sup>.

The war and Nazi invasion hindered the unconstrained development of Polish children's and youth literature. Despite the discriminatory policy of the invader, persecution of Polish intellectuals, and imprisoning Polish writers in concentration camps, works of Fiedler, Kamiński, and others were secretly distributed and popularized. An extraordinary phenomenon was the presence of children's conspiratorial magazines: *Źródło* (*The Spring*), *Brzask* (*The Dawn*), *Bądź gotów* (*Be alert*). Just after the war, children's and youth fiction literature referred to literary patterns of former years and also exposed war and occupation themes (many books presented models of young characters who fought for independence of the nation together with adults). In the area of *children's and youth* prose writing a prose of manners became the major genre, presenting the lives of the young in family and friends environment. The examples may be a few following authors writing for young readers after 1939: Korczakowska, Jaworzakowa, Ożogowska, Jackiewiczowa, Jurgielewiczowa, Domagalik, Zającówna, Boglar, and Musierowicz.

In the contemporary prose of manners, an important position is taken by works on school, scout, and sports themes, as well as those presenting lives of the young in informal groups. Also poetry has its well-established position in the contemporary children's and youth literary works. Poets include educational elements in their lyric, being aware of the demand of influencing children's moral attitudes by means of poetry words (Kulmowa, Papuzińska, Zarembina, Kern, Tuwim, Brzechwa, et al.<sup>6</sup>

While getting general acquaintance with the history of shaping young readers' literature, it is worth mentioning at this point the most important events referring to the development of studies on children's and youth literature. S. Frycie writes that those studies were created and began to develop at the moment of appearing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, pp. 214–216.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 216 and further.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 218 and further, see also p. 231.

of original works intended for young generation – original books were initially accompanied by literary criticism, then by detailed historical-literary commentaries, theoretical reflection on the identity of that kind of writing, its distinctive features and position in the world of the literary phenomena. The beginnings of critical thinking and academic reflection connected with that genre occurred at the time of the Romanticism (in 1830s and 1840s in the works of J. Woykowska, E. Estkowski, J. Libelt, J. Lompa, and E. Dembowski proposals and suggestions appeared as to equip a folk school's pupil with proper reading primers, historical pictures, etc.).

At that time first reviews of the children's works appear, by Hofmanowa, Jachowicz, and other writers<sup>7</sup>. According to S. Frycie, during Positivism, children's and youth literature was a subject of interest for P. Chmielowski, A. Dygasiński, B. Prus, H. Sienkiewicz, M. Konopnicka, and other authors. In the period of Young Poland (Polish: *Młoda Polska*) two essays were written, important for further research on children's and youth literature: theoretical study of S. Karpowicz and historical-literary study of A. Szcówna.

In the interwar period, the range of literature intended for young generation was extended by works of K. Króliński, S. Szuman, M. Dąbrowska, and others. Moreover, research in the problem of children's and youth reading habits was initiated. While assessing the *children's and youth* literature, apart from educational values, the artistic ones started to be emphasized, too, which allowed that genre to be upgraded to the level of the proper art. An immense contribution to the development of post-war study on children's and youth literature and knowledge on that genre was made by a generation of literature experts, researchers and enthusiasts of the *children's* books: J. Z. Białek, J. Cieślikowski, S. Frycie. K. Kuliczowska, A. Przeclawska, I. Słońska, J. Papuzińska, R. Waksmund, and B. Żurakowski. Due to common and individual efforts of the researchers, a vast record of research works on both former and contemporary children's and youth literature is available. Numerous essays and monographic sketches on the works of the most outstanding young readers authors are published, many studies and critical works on contemporary young readers literature are announced, research on children's and youth reading habits is carried on<sup>8</sup>.

The concept of children's and youth literature, as well as the problems of its classification is explained in the J. Papuzińska's work. Referring to other research-

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<sup>7</sup> S. Frycie, *Współczesna nauka o literaturze dla dzieci i młodzieży i jej przedstawiciele*, Piotrków Trybunalski 1996, p. 11 and further.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pp. 12–15 and 32.

er, J. Cieślowski, the author regards "the things children took from adults, which were created for them by adults and what they invented by themselves" as children's literature (thus, children's literature comprises *children's folklore*, being partially creation of the very children)<sup>9</sup>. There are many examples of works initially intended for young readers which later on became an adults' reading matter, being of no interest for young readers (e.g. *Pisklęta* by Z. Rogoszówna). Children's literature historians carry research also on works which, primarily meant for an adult reader, became annexed and accepted by children (*Don Quixote de la Mancha* by M. de Cervantes, *Robinson Crusoe* by D. Defoe, and *Gulliver's Travels* by J. Swift). The names of adult reader writers – Dumas, London, and Sienkiewicz, gained also great popularity among young readers and, in the process of education, also works on general nature were used, such as *Parallel lives* by Plutarch<sup>10</sup>.

The work of Joanna Papuzińska characterizes rules and aims imposed on children's literature, as well as processes allowing for distinguishing of that specific poetics. The early period of development of young reader literature was characterized by the priority of didactic purposes and not always accurate identification and often even discounting of the very reading needs. The 18th and 19th centuries initiated children's writing as a professional category, thus a young reader became a specific kind of an addressee. In the 19th century a distinction of the said literature underwent evolution – new genres were established: children's fable, girls' novel, varieties of historical and adventure novels. A separate poetics, word range, and structure models of the works were being shaped. In the end of the 19th century, literature's addressees were divided in view of age, sex, and social environment. Books for young women, younger and older children, youth, children of rural origins and working class children (a reader's address was marked in the subtitle of a work, it was signalled by the graphic layout of a book – font size, number of illustrations).

Considering the children's literature, some kind of characteristic group of trends may be observed, exemplified by a childlike psychic character, moods changeability, happy ending, limited number of drastic or scary scenes. Similarly specific is the selection of themes and problems in the children's literature, resulting mainly from the aspects and psychic properties of a receiver's development phases – it alters depending on educational requirements of an epoch and is differently shaped in various countries. In addition, a young reader (8–9) possesses neither knowledge

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<sup>9</sup> J. Cieślowski, *Wielka zabawa*, Warsaw 1967.

<sup>10</sup> J. Papuzińska, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży – pojęcie i problemy klasyfikacji* [in:] *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w procesie wychowania*, A. Przeclawska (ed.), Warsaw 1978, p. 28 and further.

nor a need to classify works in view of the historical-literary context; they do not make an unimpeded use of time and space concepts and would surely be confused by a novel having disordered chronology of events.

A young reader finds relativism of human points of view difficult to agree with and the processes of identifying with the main character of a work are very strong, even though a character bears a number of negative features, these are accepted by a child as a part of that character. A young reader who is mainly interested in the plot and the course of action, will not find personal themes fascinating, either<sup>11</sup>.

### 3. Literary genres

Genre classification in the area of children's and youth literature and distinguishing children's literature from the entirety of writing, running the typology and grouping that literature in some classification subgroups is often quite complicated and, according to J. Papuzińska, may cause difficulties for a librarian, teacher, or educator (in literature intended for the youngest readers marking the elementary borders between epic and lyric, poetry and prose, realism and fantasy, becomes really complex in practice, therefore children's literature could be classified in reference to its function criteria in the process of education, instead of thematic-literary ones)<sup>12</sup>.

According to K. Kuliczowska, literary education in a nursery school has two aspects. It is education by means of literature (using artistic determination of any notions of the surrounding world shapes child's both passive and active vocabulary range, as well as their speaking skills; children learn how to require explanations of new interesting words and phrases, participate in validating the titles, a book helps them to rationalize an educational or moral theme), as well as education for literature (a child's positive attitude towards a book is created, together with looking for a way to understand the art of word and passion for literature. The aim of education for literature is to enrich and deepen the personality of a child by conscious and planned shaping of their abilities of experiencing literary works in a more and more sensitive and aware way, thus facilitating conveyance of the educational values, too)<sup>13</sup>.

Placing children's and youth literature in literary culture, it is worth to stress that belles-lettres can be divided, in view of readers' circulation and kind of re-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, pp. 30–32.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, pp. 35 and 38.

<sup>13</sup> *Nurty, konwencje, tematy*, K. Kuliczowska (ed.), Warsaw 1983, p. 40 and further.



ipients, into: high level literature, i.e. the first literature, intended for educated literary addressees of high literature awareness and competences, as well as proper knowledge in the area of humanities; and popular literature, i.e. the second one, comprising also pulp fiction, intended for mass reader; folk literature, i.e. the third one, grown up from the rural environment and intended for the receivers from that culture circle; children's and youth literature, i.e. the fourth one, also called *the separate one*, created by adults and the very children, intended for young addressees<sup>14</sup>.

A framework of children's and youth literature is constituted by the following: adaptations of literary texts from high level literature; books belonging to high literature coming from reading selections of young recipients; popular literature texts; processed texts of folk literature; texts based on children's folklore; works intended by authors for children and youth with "children's-youth" readers' address implemented in their literary structure. Children's literature has its defined poetics, separate literary genres and its own readers' circulation. Literary identity of the described literature is based, among other things, on the fact that it joins didactic (educational) functions with proper artistic features. Literary features: plot attractiveness, romanticism of the character's adventures, humour, folk style content, as well as combining dreams with fantasy are the features truly desired in the fourth literature<sup>15</sup>.

Children's and youth literature has a very significant role in the process of education: it introduces young generation in Polish and foreign culture tradition; prepares for reception of general and high level literature and shapes the defined kind of culture needs. In the 1–3 forms, when education is based only on children's and youth literature, school curriculums and excerpts, the preferred forms are the following: small lyric poems, literary puzzles and jokes, scenic miniatures, fairy tales and fables, fantasy stories, nature stories, realistic works on social and moral themes, presenting lives of children in the surrounding nature and social environment, at home, school, and in the group of peers<sup>16</sup>.

Didacticism and artistry in children's and youth writing are not contradictory terms. The former results from both the distance between experiences of an addressor and addressee, as well as from the feeling of a special mission of the authors to educate and instruct (instrumental nature). However, didacticism ceases to have a dominant function when writing for children and youth is done by talented writ-

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<sup>14</sup> S. Frycie, M. Ziółkowska-Sobecka, *Leksykon literatury...*, p. 253.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 254.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 234 and further.

ers. Besides, the said didactic approach is still an element of art for the young and does not have to lower its artistic level. Comparing this kind of literature with the general one, it is characterized by putting emphasis on teaching and educational functions. It shapes the attitudes towards the surrounding world, conveys moral and personal models, shapes imagination, sensitivity, sometimes also beliefs, and at the same time, strongly exposes aesthetic function of that genre<sup>17</sup>.

In 1929, the editorial of *Świat Książki* expressed its desire to fight for a right for a good children's book to have its renowned place in the world of general literature. It was requested for this kind of literature to be evaluated according to the same requirements as used while evaluating any other literary book. It was proposed for content and form, structure and language, thought and word to become influential ingredients of a work of universal artistic value, being convincing independently on any pedagogical postulates. Only in that way a book could, by influencing the mind, imagination, and feelings, shape new generation of a cultured and sensitive reader<sup>18</sup>.

Kinds and genres of children's poetry became the subject of deliberations of many outstanding authors and researchers of children's literature<sup>19</sup>. In the area of poetry addressed for a young reader one may distinguish works in view of their author, who may be an adult or a child, and define them as *children's* (written by adults) or *childlike* (created by the youngsters). Another division of poetry for children is as follows: poems for children (dedication, programme, religious, moralistic, patriotic, *applied* poems – wishes), childlike poems (games, plays, childlike creations, puzzles, question plays, fables), lyric for children (flower bed, childlike zoo, songs, lullabies, carol poems, season of the year poems), childlike lyric (parodies, jokes)<sup>20</sup>. Thematic classification in the area of young readers prose comprises moral, historical, biographical, autobiographical, psychological, fantasy, science-fiction, crime-action, travel, and nature prose, and among literary genres, in chronological order there are the following: a fairy tale, legend, tradition, tale, novelette, short story, story, and novel. Children's literature is characterized by syncretism in the area of literary genres and types, thus the borders between epic and lyric, realism and fantasy get blurred completely<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> K. Kuliczowska, *Dawne i współczesne problemy prozy dla dzieci*, Warsaw 1972, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Cf e.g. the following authors: J. Cieślowski, *Wielka zabawa*, Warsaw 1967; R. Waksmond, *Poezja dla dzieci*, Wrocław 1999; B. Żurakowski, *W świecie poezji dla dzieci*, Warsaw 1981.

<sup>20</sup> "Childlike" means from children's point of view. S. Frycie, M. Ziółkowska-Sobecka, *Leksykon literatury...*, p. 308.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 312.

Writing about literary genres and types of children's belles-lettres, it is worth adding even some more explanations at this point, referring to a literature of manners, especially to novels. From the book edited by A. Przeclawska one may learn that moral-social literature is usually represented by novels and tales comprising children characters, with the action set in the time they were written, and the main themes are family relationships, child-school relations, growing into peer group, first friendships and loves, accustoming social standards and the choice of ways they would spend their lives<sup>22</sup>.

The role of a novel was also described by K. Kuliczowska<sup>23</sup>, who assigned it a double function: on the one hand, a reader could find the elements satisfying their mental needs there, on the other hand, that genre turned out to be specially useful as a literary tool allowing for *imposed* conveyance of content in order to have an educational impact.

#### 4. The functions

Pedagogy and literature are areas of culture which have many common things – education, for a long time, had functioned without reference to a specific field of studies, and the literature had also been created without systematic reference to theory, philosophy or literature – writes the author of numerous works from the area of pedagogy, literature, and reading<sup>24</sup>.

A.M. Bernardinis writes that in some periods of culture a total union of educational and literary education ways existed, thus an analysis of joints between pedagogy and literature seems to be a necessity. The author justifies her thesis by three symptoms: mutual dependence between these two areas, proven by the history of culture and education; structural analogy between educational and literary presentation; basic meaning of projection into the future, thus imaginary dimension in both pedagogy and literature areas<sup>25</sup>. At this point, the article starts an analysis of these three groups of aspects on the basis of the text of the Italian scholar<sup>26</sup>. Activity of a poet is precisely described and limited, similarly to the limitation and

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<sup>22</sup> J. Papuzińska, *Literatura społeczno-obyczajowa* [in:] *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w procesie wychowania*, op.cit., p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> K. Kuliczowska, *Dawne i współczesne problemy prozy dla dzieci*, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> A.M. Bernardinis, *Pedagogika a literatura* [in:] *Nurty, konwencje, tematy*, K. Kuliczowska (ed.), Warsaw 1983, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 20–23.

definition of an educator's activity – the content and functions of both origin from philosophy, which constitutes the last legislative stage of a state. In view of Plato's thinking, it is impossible to make any innovations in the area of educational aims and learning, similarly as in case of the existence of true poetic invention or independent contribution of a poet to looking for the good and truth.

The structure of the book *The Adventures of Telemachus* by Fénelon precisely reflexes a structure of tutor-learner relation between Fénelon and his student, the Duke of Burgundy. Fenelon skilfully uses all the narrative techniques and tricks in order to lead a reader towards identification with the character, experiencing his adventures and learning from them; educational process, which, according to Fenelon, should be based on beliefs and thoughts, combines and unifies with the structure of the novel, educational ideas are represented in all possible practical applications. Results of moral or life choices occur with their all possible consequences; young age of the character makes possible to mark the line of development through gaining subsequent experiences, a dialog with Mentor is an opportunity to ask any possible questions and finding the most exhaustive explanations. In view of the structure, *The Adventures of Telemachus* may be regarded as a prototype of a novel with a thesis, whereas, in view of the content and methods – as a prototype of developmental path of education.

Describing the relation between pedagogy and literature is also clearly illustrated by educational concepts by J. J. Rousseau – he put a child in the centre of educational process, making it a subject, instead of an object of education. Rousseau considered a need of creating books consisting of the maximum number of lessons and able to convince, i.e. strongly persuade, by means of their force of passion, a reader to pursue the purposes which still cannot result from one's own experience. He was the first to regard the necessity of using literature in the process of education, not in view of its content or subjects but because it is the art of invention, able to mark new dimensions for a human and transform them to the plane of the future.

According to the author's thinking, a narrative situation in which a reader is set, may transform into an educational situation provided the reader uses its elements for reflexion and rethinking their own existential situation in terms of the self-education goals which they set for themselves and which they want to achieve (identically – a narrative situation may induce a reader to reflect on the nature and function of literature and their own identity, provided their elements are used in a mutual [contextual] relation)<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 27.

According to B. Żurkowski, education through belles-lettres (subject of pedagogical, psychological, and literature studies research) is based on a thesis that literary texts meet the aesthetic and developmental needs of a child. A significant part of belles-lettres texts has an *imprinted* educational programme formed from the social position. Literature addressed for children and youth accompanies the educational processes and also exists due to the pedagogical inspiration<sup>28</sup>.

This author stresses in his work a role of literature in conveying values, writing that the aim of literary works belonging to the range of literary communication is to convey the collection of values, literary education, and axiological education (including values into the process of education is underlined by education theoreticians). The level of knowledge on values and its development is a condition necessary for understanding and organizing one's own moral life and achieving proper axiological motivation, i.e. one's own moral maturity – the most frequently present aim of education are moral values and values subject to morality (learning, metaphysical, personality, moral, vital, usable, and pleasurable). In Polish poetry the following moral values are conveyed: righteousness, goodness, justice, generosity, modesty, and diligence<sup>29</sup>.

The functions of literary works became a subject of considerations of such children's literature experts as S. Frycie and M. Sobecka. These researchers claim that reading matter provides young students with a possibility to present an artistic vision of the world and of confronting that vision with the surrounding reality. Though, literature supplies the young readers with supplementary social experiences, models of conduct and personal ideals, points at what is important in people, provokes asking questions about life, at times answering them by itself. Literary works create also situations of expressing moral opinions, as well as of learning about themselves. Artistic experiences also influence shaping psychic and cultural needs of students, and lessons, on which one is surrounded by literature, should mainly lead to set a need and habit of reading in children, to shape an approach that a book is something nice, friendly, and helpful in various situations of everyday life, it is as important as food, clothing, or friends; it is a source of joy, a kind of compensation, thus a supplement of something one lacks<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> B. Żurkowski, *Literatura dla młodego odbiorcy jako przekaz świata wartości wychowawczych* [in:] *Pedagogika społeczna jako dyscyplina akademicka. Stan i perspektywy*, E. Hetka, J. Piekarski, E. Cyrańska (ed.), Łódź 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> S. Frycie, M. Ziółkowska-Sobecka, *Kształcenie literackie w okresie wczesnoszkolnym*, Warsaw 1995, p. 41.

A few fundamental functions of literary work were quoted in a book constituting a methodical guide for elementary forms' teachers<sup>31</sup><sup>32</sup>. These are the following: aesthetic function of a literary work (accompanied by other functions of the work of art and expressed in artistic experiences evoked by a work); compensatory function of a literary work (influence of a work on balancing psychic shortages of a receiver, e.g. complexes, frustration, feeling of alienation). A positive influence on a reader may be achieved by the identification with the character, e.g. a harmed one, or an attempt of following the character who is a kind of a role model for a reader. A folk fairy tale may also calm down aggression, minimize frustration, etc.); folk function of a literary work (entertainment function, inspiring the fun); learning function of a literary work (literary world reflexion of the true principles referring to real world – conveying information referring to social, historical, geographical, psychological and other phenomena by means of literary signs); therapeutic function of a literary work (influence of a work on psychic disorders of a receiver by provoking shocks, making a reader realizing their mistakes and shortages of their nature); educational function of a literary work (affecting ideological and moral awareness of a receiver, shaping their beliefs, imprinting habits).

H. Starzec, along with other experts dealing with literature, claims that contemporary literature is to educate even more than in other times because of the current needs, since the range of educational possibilities it covers becomes highly strengthened in view of the necessity of *supporting* personal development of a person in view of the present-day rationalism and collapse of the established culture and moral systems, the necessity signalled by collective prevention defending against nervous breakdowns and psychic disorders<sup>32</sup>.

The author regards education through art, which is school and extra-school education and refers to all the people and all periods of their lives, as one of the most significant concepts of humanistic education – education through conscious participation in culture<sup>33</sup>. By means of children's and youth literature, a language of an entire nation is popularized, being created in line with binding correctness standards. It should be remembered that shaping children's speech by literary texts is an important duty of pre-school and school education, which should care of the beauty and richness of a mother tongue as a mark of national identity<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 204.

<sup>32</sup> H. Starzec, *Kultura literacka – wychowanie literackie*, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Cf S. Frycie, M. Ziółkowska-Sobecka, *Leksykon literatury...*, p. 99.

Due to the fact that the language of a literary work and its richness, variety, and emotional aspects, are phonic properties are characterized in a child's friendly way, thus may make children more sensitive to the beauty of style of an author, direct their attention to the visual aspects of descriptions and accuracy of literary imagining, point at such aesthetic categories as lyricism, tragic nature, comicality, humour, that is, present those formal attributes of literary expression which shape reader's aesthetical sensitivity and deepen the very literary reception<sup>35</sup>.

At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that in literary education a significant role is played by the family home, apart from kindergarten or school, since before a child begins reading independently, they are parents, grandparents or older siblings who familiarize them with a book and magazine intended for them. During the leisure time or before going to sleep, they read to children simple fables and nursery rhymes, comment on illustrations in a book. After a child learns the world of letters, they listen to reading of adults, too. It may be said that family meetings with a book create a specific culture climate at home, which is then remembered throughout the whole life. It also liberates the cultural needs and shapes reading interests<sup>36</sup>.

Another mentioned function of literature in school education is enriching passive and active vocabulary of a child and general support in mastering a language. Reading increases the level of word culture, enriches the syntactic-stylistic structure of one's own expressions, teaches understanding the structure of extensive thought clusters<sup>37</sup>. The development of learning and emotional processes is strictly connected with the increase of language culture – a child, while reading, gains different information on a country, world, and human in such a range to which it could not achieve by its own, direct experiences. Reading also constitutes an important aspect of educational impact – shapes socially valuable personality features<sup>38</sup>.

M. Cackowska observes an important relation between achieving child's maturity for learning how to write and read and the competence level of analysis and synthesis processes. These processes are necessary during learning how to write and read by the analytical-synthetic method. Moreover, a child has to have a proper level of speaking competence since this prevails upon literacy. All the speaking, range of vocabulary, and using accurate syntactic structures, make a child able to

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 99 and further.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, p. 236.

<sup>37</sup> A. Jakubowicz, K. Lenartowska, M. Plenkiewicz, *Czytanie w początkowych latach edukacji*, Bydgoszcz 1999, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 8.



code and decode information, generalize and pack in term categories<sup>39</sup>. Effective reading is based on collected range of words carrying some meanings, appropriately connected with a proper group of terms: each word is a label for a term, a term is a generalization of data mutually connected, these consist of observed subjects, images, and memories (understanding and interpretation, i.e. understanding of printed material, is possible when meanings of words are proper and the terms are clear and precise)<sup>40</sup>. According to Kien's ideas, the process of reading comprises the range of vision of word letters, as a result of which a shape of a word is born, then, the word gets its meaning (sense) being the foreground of the words cluster (a sentence), finally, particular words and sentences connected together, as well as their layout, allow for grasping an idea having been previously put in the read text<sup>41</sup>.

B. Suchodolski<sup>42</sup> sees the usability of reading matter in three aspects: he namely treats it as a factor of shaping thoughts and criticism, widening horizons of knowledge, gaining material for comparisons and conclusions; attributes it with superior function of arousing interests and hobbies – due to reading the world and life become more interesting, more things become appealing, it is easier to get disciplined and make some efforts. Moreover, Suchodolski pays attention to the fact that reading has a great importance in shaping feelings and imagination, the areas of personality usually neglected in education process. Therefore, the school's tasks should include the earliest possible shaping of the habit of reading books and looking for satisfaction in a book.

Concluding the above reflections, the authors would like to quote some thoughts from the work of A. Przeclawska, which appear to be quite relevant, whereas referring to a book as a means of social communication. According to the author, a book is a complete sign of human freedom, an opportunity for a human to define themselves since a reader may choose a reading matter, read wherever and whenever they want, and also has to (such is the core of the reading process) have an attitude towards the read content. Therefore, the reading process used as a means of social communication is democratic in its very essence<sup>43</sup>. It is also an obvious fact that when it is desired to build up an attitude of intellectual activity in relation to all

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<sup>39</sup> M. Cackowska, *Nauka czytania i pisanie w klasach przedszkolnych*, Warsaw 1984, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> M.A. Tinker, *Podstawy efektywnego czytania*, Warsaw 1980, p. 16–17.

<sup>41</sup> H. Kien, *Czytanie w klasach II–IV* [in:] *Nauczanie języka polskiego w klasach I–IV*, T. Wróbel (ed.), Warsaw 1959, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> B. Suchodolski, *Rola książki w kształceniu nowoczesnego człowieka*, "Przegląd Kulturalny" 1958, No. 2 [from:] K. Lenartowska, W. Świętek, *Lektura w klasach I–III*, Warsaw 1993, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> A. Przeclawska, *Książka, młodzież i przeobrażenia kultury*, Warsaw 1967, p. 16.



surrounding phenomena, the activity comprising both an evaluation and choice, then the standing of a book increases and its role becomes more socially useful; thus a book teaches how to think<sup>44</sup>.

In another of her works, the author writes: "[...] the function of a book is instrumental, it facilitates learning, makes child's leisure time fruitful, introduces a child into some elements of cultural tradition, emotionally joints with moral values being most valuable from the educational and social point of view. It can sometimes facilitate temporary solving of educational difficulties or educational problems. However, this organized on everyday basis contact with the book satisfies not only a *temporary* purpose, but it has more long-term task, in some sense more important – it is to teach creative and personal participation in literary culture, independent using of those values which a book, being an element of culture, possesses, interpreting of the read content in such a way as to build a justified and consequent system of one's own hierarchy of values out of them"<sup>45</sup>.

A. Przeclawska, referring to other authors<sup>46</sup>, claims that a book (here understood as a literature socially approved in a given environment) has been treated for many years as a perceptible expression of those values which were of the highest level at a given time. A printed word, preserved by a stable shape of a book's volume, seems to be the most durable and effective form of conveying of the complete message from adult generation to their successors.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 204.

<sup>45</sup> *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w procesie wychowania*, op., p. 5–6.

<sup>46</sup> Cf K. Głombowski, *Problemy historii czytelnictwa*, Wrocław 1966 [in:] A. Przeclawska, *Książka, młodzież i...*, p. 13.

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