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HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The first important book for children's poetry was written in verse in the 1800's, and was originally meant for infant minds. The authors were two English sisters, Ann and Jane Taylor. The best-known poem in their book is "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Stars". The American journalist and poet Eugene Field wrote some of the most popular children's poems, including "Little Boy Blue." Edward Lear of England composed many books of delightful nonsense verse, beginning with a book of nonsense (1846). Lear's best known nonsense poem is "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" (1871).

THE INTRODUCTION OF ILLUSTRATIONS

During the 1800's, illustrations became a major part of children's books. For the first time, illustrations were widely used to help young readers visualize the characters and the action of stories and

poems. The best illustrations were also works of art in their own right. Alice's "Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" contain illustrations by Sir John Tenniel that are perhaps the most famous in all of children's literature. By mid-1800's, colour illustrations were appearing widely in children's books. The use of colour pictures was largely due to the advances in colour printing made by Edmund Evans an English publisher and artist. Caldocott is best known for his interpretations of sense of humorous actions. Walter Crane's best work was created for books intended for young children. Such books include *Baby's Opera*. Crane's illustrations are noted for their delicate colours and attention to details of clothing and objects. Mrs. Greenway's illustrations portray charming graceful scenes of happy children and peaceful landscapes. In 1990's, more children's books had been published than in all the previous centuries combined.

One of the reasons for this was that educational and psychological theories emphasized the importance of reading in the mental development of children. There have also been improved printing techniques, which have allowed publishers to produce good quality books that can be sold at reasonable prices. Libraries with departments serving children also increased greatly during the 1900's.

The federal government in the United Kingdom provided funds to expand the facilities and services of school libraries. These developments have expanded publishers' markets for children's books and these in

turn have attracted many authors and artists who direct their efforts chiefly to children's literature. Authors have also extended greatly the range of subject matter covered in children's literature. Today, children can read books written for them on many issues and problems, including worldwide peace, drug abuse, divorce, racial justice and the generational gap. Most artists now include heavy illustrations in books called picture books.

PICTURE BOOKS

Pictures were the first important new development in children's literature in the 1900's. In picture books, illustrations are as important to the reader's enjoyment and understanding of a story as the text. The first picture book was *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901) by an English author. Today, thousands of picture books are available. Nearly all of the books are intended to be read aloud to pre-school and kindergarten children. A few picture books are published for older readers.

BOOKS FOR BEGINNING READING

Books for beginning readers became important in children's literature in mid-1990's. These books are written for recreational reading rather than for school use. The books tell simple stories often through a carefully selected vocabulary. The first important beginning reading book created for use outside the classroom was *The cat in the Hat* (1957) by Dr.

Sesus! Today, authors and publishers have enlarged the range of books for beginning readers to include such non-fiction areas as biography, history, and science.

CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION

From 1800's to the 1920's most of the important children's books were works of fiction or poetry. Before 1930's most biographies for children were stuffy and filled with lifeless characters. After, authors began to write biographies that they began to use descriptive detail and dialogue to provide a vivid feeling for the subject and the times in which he or she lived. Such books are factually correct and entertaining.

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL ISSUES

Many modern children's books discuss subjects previously considered too mature for children. Some books are published on sex education and family life in schools. Some books are published on human reproduction. Some books talk about young girls or adolescence curiosity about their body development e.g. *It me, Margaret* (1970) by the novelist Judy Blume. , Some books openly criticize adults and aspects of modern life.

CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

Perhaps the most influential early children's literature is that magazine in the United States by St. Nicholas (1873 to 1943). The magazine helped upgrade the

quality of children's literature in America. Today a lot of children's literature provides young people with fiction, non-fiction news about current events, games, and puzzles.