

## **MODULE 1      BASIC CONCEPTS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

Unit 1	The Concept of Literature and Children's Literature
Unit 2	Kinds of Children's Literature
Unit 3	The Characteristics and Needs of Children's Development.
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### **UNIT 1      THE CONCEPT OF LITERATURE AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

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#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, we are going to examine the meaning of the term literature and children literature.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define and explain the meaning of literature
- explain the meaning of children's literature.

#### **HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

- Read through this unit with care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Definition of literature

The word, literature is an umbrella term which covers a number of different kinds of activity and this suggests that there are many definitions of literature. At its widest, literature refers to all writings relating to a matter in hand. For example, all writings on the entry requirements to National Open University of Nigeria and National Teachers' Institute mean all the literature on matters relating to entry requirements to National Open University of Nigeria and National Teachers' Institute. At its narrowest, literature refers to a special kind of writing of a country like Nigerian literature or French literature. Literature here could also refer to a special kind of writing of a period such as 18<sup>th</sup> century English literature or after the civil war, Nigerian literature.

Literature refers also to the study of books, etc., valued as works of art e.g, drama, prose, and poetry. It refers, too, to books dealing with special subjects like travel literature or the literature of poultry-farming. Literature includes not only novels, but also certain stories, letters, biographies, history, and example is Caesar's conquest of Gaul. There is also literature on travels, as in travels on a donkey. Science example is, Darwin's *The Voyage of the 'Beagle'*. Literature also includes the oral tradition, the legends, myths and sages from classical times right through to the folk tales of non-literate societies e.g Brer Rabbit, Anansi, stories, and the reworking of local folk tales by the Nigerian writer, Amos Tutuola. Literature further includes our own living tradition of children's games, songs and stories as in the *Lore and Language of School Children* by Peter and Lona Opia (1959).

You will see clearly that from these definitions and explanations, the word literature is used very widely and loosely. One way you will distinguish literature from history is by method and language of the artist. Literature is an art; literature is literature not because of what it is writing about but because of the artistic point of view; the artist's transformation of ideas and notions.

It is worth noting that the word, literature can be found in a number of different kinds of statements and human activities. We can talk of literature as something associated with, a characteristic of a particular nation or people or groups of people; for example, Arabic literature, American literature, African literature, and Nigerian literature and so on. You are to note that in such cases, literature obviously has some kind of collective significance, transcending the particular individuals who produce and consume it. Then, again we can talk of the literature of a particular historical period or movement, which may often be found in a

number of different cultures; for example, Renaissance (French) literature, Romantic literature, Colonial literature, the literature of independent Africa, and so on.

In a rather different way, we can talk of the literature of a particular subject or topic, examples are the literature of ship-building, literature of linguistics, and the literature of child development. In this sense, of course, literature means everything of significance that has ever been written about that subject. We can also talk of literature as a school subject on the school timetable as a part of the school curriculum, distinctly different from Economics, Mathematics or Chemistry.

From the above definitions, literature often refers to a subject of study, a form of training or written work. In all these forms, the raw material of literature is language either written or spoken. We can even say that literature is language. It consists of certain rather specialized forms, selections and collections of language. By language, we mean, those distinctive speech sounds which are used in various kinds of systematic pattern to communicate all necessary messages.

Language of course is based on forms of speech, but most languages have developed systems for recording language in more permanent, written forms. Now, language as a means of social communication and control is used countless times each day for greetings, enquiries, instructions, information, news, reports, proposals, contracts, and so on. Anyone who is concerned with literature is also concerned with language because literature is constructed out of language. It is with language that literary writers present their views to the reader with one or two emphasis. The first emphasis is on his experience and other people's experience, in which case the reader adds something to his store of knowledge about the world; an extreme example of this might be Daniel Defoe's *'A journal of the plague year'*. The second emphasis is on the experience in such a way as to help the reader learn something more about himself as a human being; an extreme example here might be Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. You will note that we cannot learn more about ourselves in literature except through someone else's experience which in itself enlarges our knowledge about the world; and we cannot learn more about the world without learning a little about humanity and therefore, ourselves. Language is the raw material with which literary writers articulate their artistic point of view as a means of furthering experience of the world and as a means of finding out more about oneself. This is the reason literature is defined as language.

The two criteria are as follows; the first is whether the heroes are children or teenagers.

The second is whether the theme, that is the ideas, relationships and language are simple or complex. Literature is literature for children if the heroes are children and the theme is simple and not complex.

Thirdly, when they teach moral lessons with a view to entrenching the values of the society in them.

### **3.2 Definition of Children's Literature**

Children's literature as a concept is defined as literature exclusively meant for children. Children's literature refers mainly to stories, poetry, rhymes, folk tales, drama, exclusively created for children such as infants, toddlers and the young people as target audience.

Children's literature which is exclusively written for children seems to rest on three criteria: the first is whether the heroes are children or teenagers, the second is whether the theme, that is the ideas, relationships and language, are simple or complex. Simplicity of theme is therefore, the over-riding criterion that determines and defines literature as children's literature. Literature is literature for children if the ideas, relationship and language are simple. However, literature is not children's literature if the ideas, relationship and language are found too complex whether oral or written. For example, a classic literature like *Gulliver's Travels* is admitted into children's literature because of simplicity of its ideas, relationship and language. But the *Turn of the Screw* or *Lolita*, let us say, would not be admitted as children's literature because the ideas, relationship and language otherwise called the theme are complex. Thirdly, children's literature is often aimed at teaching moral lessons.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. Define literature.
2. What is children's literature?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Literature has been variously defined and explained in this Unit. Generally, literature refers to writings relating to a matter in hand. Specifically, literature refers to something associated with a particular nation, for example, Arabic literature, Nigerian literature. Literature also refers to a particular historical period, for example, colonial literature. We have also literature of a particular subject or topic; for example, literature of ship-building. We also have literature as a subject studied in school distinctly different from other subjects like Economics and Mathematics. Thus, literature could mean a subject of study, a form of work or of training. The raw material of literature is language; hence we say that literature is the celebration of language. We also have literature

for children or children's literature. It means literature exclusively written about children and for children. It refers to novels, books, stories, poetry, folk tales, prose fiction and drama specially created for children as the target audience. Its themes, that is, ideas, relationship and language are simple and not complex, and the heroes are children.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that literature generally refers to anything written relating to a matter in hand. Specifically, literature refers to writings associated with a particular subject or topic; for example, children's literature.

Children's literature refers to literature exclusively for children. It refers to Stories, Poetry, Rhymes, Folk tales, Drama to mention but these specially created for children as target audience. The criteria that define literature as children's literature are that: first the heroes are children and two the theme comprising the ideas, relationship and language are simple and not complex. Finally, they aim at teaching moral lessons.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

- i. What is literature?
- ii. What is children's literature?

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **UNIT 2                    KINDS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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- 5.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In unit 1, we discussed the meaning of the concepts of literature and children's literature. In that unit, we defined literature as an umbrella term which covers a number of different kinds of activities. Suggesting that there are many definitions of literature, one of such definitions sees literature as something associated with a particular subject or topic; examples are literature of linguistics, and children's literature. We also defined literature as a school subject studied as a part of school's curriculum distinctly different from other school subjects like: Mathematics, Economics, History, and so on. In this sense, literature, is sub-divided into various sub-categories like Poetry, Fiction, Drama, Satire, Tragedy and so on.

In unit 1 too, we defined children's literature as literature about children. It refers to Novels, Stories, Poetry, Fiction, Drama, Satire, Tragedy, Folk Tales and so on exclusively created for children such as infants, toddlers and teenagers as target audience.

In this unit, we shall discuss the various kinds of children's literature like: the Novels, Drama, Poetry, Folk tales, Myths and Legends, and real life situations.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the different kinds of children's literature and
- describe the three types of children's literature.

## HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit with care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Kinds of Children's Literature

There are many kinds of children's literature; examples are short novels, poetry, Drama, Folk tales, myths and legends and real life situations to mention but a few

#### 3.2 Short Stories

A short story is a kind of children's literature. Story here means account of the past events or account of imaginary events. Short stories may be found in special collection but may appear from time to time in periodicals. Since they are short, stories of this kind are usually somewhat restricted in their scope, number of characters, etc. Short stories have the great practical advantage of being more manageable. A story can often be read to a class at a single sitting or studied as a single assignment whether in or out of classroom. The short story, also to be experienced simultaneously by the whole class, which often makes discussion easier and invites comparison and imitation. To the child, reading means listening to stories acted as well as reading by oneself.

You will note that whenever we talk of children's literature, we are thinking of children in Elementary/Primary schools within the age range of 6-14 years as well as those in junior secondary schools. The range of what stories to write and the themes are limitless. Children love school stories, family stories, stories of adventures which are meant to entertain and amuse, instruct, teach morals, history, geography and problems solving. Children's stories are about what people do, why they do it and what results from the doing and not what people think about what they do for thought processes are generally a bore to the young.

Children too like familiar stories about animals, toys, pets, parents, grandparents etc. Children up to the age of four or nine like stories of the familiar. Indeed, at some stages, children love the made-up story that is obviously about themselves and their own recent activities. From this delight in the familiar, children move on to the kind of story which opens up in their familiar world, a wider range of possibilities than they normally exploit. Children too, like stories of actual children whose behaviour is somewhat unconventional, and who break the rules or are just unable to cope with them, who get into trouble, challenge authority, and triumph over people who are bigger or older than themselves. *My*

*Naughty Little Sister* is an example of the kind of story book that bridges the gap between the familiar world of the average child and the unconventionally familiar world of little people such as *Peter Rabbit*, *Little O and the Urchin*. Stories within this range of experience, and at this level of simplicity, will continue to appeal to children at least up to the age of eight.

### **3.3 Folk Tales**

Folk tales refer to popular stories handed down orally from past generation. Folk tales give children a sense of security as they find that they belong to the life of the different environments that they have to adapt to. Parents tell children these folk stories at home, and then when they go to school, the teacher tells them too. The children go to a new class and the stories are repeated or read or at least talked about. If the stories should feature in the life of the first year of their junior school, they will ease children's transfer from the infants and develop confidence between them and the new teacher.

The child's first experience of the story will be through an adult who tells or reads and shows him pictures. Later, he will find himself able to join in parts of the story, to tell parts or all of it himself; perhaps, to act it or write about it; and often the greatest thrill comes when he finds that he can read the story for himself in his own book. The story of how the child comes to possess a traditional tale through, perhaps, three years of nursery and infant days may well reflect the history of his whole development as a person during that time.

Children's tastes may move from the very simple rustic tale like 'Jack and the Boan stalk' to the more literary work of Walter de la Mare, Oscar Wilde and Arabian Nights. Folktales like *Grants*, *Monsters and Wicked Step Mothers* for example, can become the source of a rather stereotyped vicarious horror, while a story like 'Beauty and the Beast', which presents the horror figure ambivalently, can start a much needed vein of new sympathy. Between the ages of eight/nine and eleven years, allegorical stories of the type of pilgrim's progress, kind of the Golden River, and The soldier and Death, often tales of moral struggle, following the structure of an arduous journey can take hold on the imagination of children.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain folktales as children's Literature.

### **3.4 Myths and Legends**

A myth is usually a traditional story of seemingly historical events that serve to unfold part of the worldview of a people or a practice, belief or



natural phenomenon. Myths show events, conditions, and deeds of gods or superhuman beings that do things that are not ordinary. These extraordinary events are done in a time totally different from the time of history, often at the beginning of creation.

A mythical story is usually an illustration of the origins of life and death and the fundamental pattern of nature. The stories of Persephone, Prometheus and Loki, for example, are mythical. Persephone was the daughter of Zeus, who allowed her to spend six months of the year on earth and six months in the underworld, a symbol of the buying of the seed in the ground and the growth of the corn. Prometheus made mankind out of clay and when Zeus in his anger deprived them of fire, Prometheus stole fire from heaven for them and taught them many arts.

A legend is a story coming down from the past, especially one handed down from early times by tradition and popularly regarded as historical although not entirely verifiable. A legend tells us about the origin of a people, the heroes or heroines who had fought or overcome difficulties to see the country or town founded.

If myths embody beliefs about life and the nature of mankind, then legends usually tell of the shaping of a nation through the exploits of its heroes. Legends are often quasi-historical and their characters, their actions and the environment in which they live and struggle are fully realised. The action is rooted in recognizable human behaviour, although this may be transcended from time to time by magic and superhuman powers.

Myths are more abstract than most kinds of stories that the child will meet. Their characters tend to be more unworldly, and the action is often less firmly rooted in the circumstances of a particular environment. For this reason they may seem remote from the child, but they will appeal to some children at a level beyond concrete understanding and are well worth telling to any age group.

The dividing line between myth and legend is blurred for two main reasons. First, both kinds of stories express reflect and communicate a picture of the human condition held more or less in common in the minds of men. Second, myths pervade all language and literature, including legend. In other words, many stories will have a mythological centre, or their heroes will give rise to a myth, the embodiment of a system of values and attitudes to life. For example, Ulysses becomes an archetypal figure giving rise to the myth of cunning, man's resourcefulness and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Legendary stories as those of Robin Hood can be told, suitably scaled to junior school children of any age, but they can normally be explored more successfully in the sustained and coherent way that makes for deepening understanding, with children between the ages of nine and

twelve. Legends will provide children with endless material for their own creative work.

### 3.5 Novel

Children's literature could be written in the form of novel. A novel is a story in prose, long enough to fill one or more volumes, about either imaginary or historical people. The novels by Dickens are good examples. Novels tend to have fairly complex structures, in which some or other of the following element can be recognized. Some of these elements include:

- setting,
- characters,
- plot,
- narrative,
- techniques and
- language.

Setting means the geographical, historical, social and political environment or background in which the story is set. The setting of a novel may be unchanged throughout; in many works, however, there may be deliberate contrasts between two or more types of backgrounds. Example could be between life in the urban city and life in the rural areas as in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*.

Character refers to an individual who takes part, that is, as a *dramatis personae*. Character also refers to indications of special notable qualities, or characteristics of particular individuals. An important part of the reading of any novel is the attempt to determine the valuation which the author has placed upon each character, remembering that it will not be always an absolute clear-cut distinction between bad and good. Very often, it is important to follow the author's explanation of what makes his character what they are:

The interpretation of a character in a novel can be a valuable exercise in the collection and interpretation of evidence. Students should learn to give consideration to the following in interpreting a character:

- (1) what the author himself tells us.
- (2) what a character himself says or does.
- (3) what other characters say about each other.
- (4) what a character is represented as thinking, feeling, doing or refraining from doing.

It may be useful to observe certain kinds of grouping or patterning amongst characters or types of characters. Always, of course, the reader will be bounded by what the author has put into the book and represented in the words used. Sometimes, it is quite difficult to remember that characters have no independent existence outside the book. If the reader fails to remember this, his interpretation can easily become distorted by his personal views.

### **Plot**

This is the story line. It is the order in which the stories are narrated. The plot is therefore concerned with how the story follows in sequence or how events normally follow each other in some chronological sequence.

### **Language**

Language is the raw materials for writing novels. In some cases, authors maintain a uniform style throughout. In other cases, authors modify the language they employ, whether in direct speech or narrative, to reflect the thoughts and feelings of particular character at particular moments.

### **Themes**

The culmination of the study of a novel will be to recognize and express, in terms which indicate that we have genuinely grasped the underlying themes which it may embody. Sometime, the themes may be obvious. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, there is an inevitable conflict between old and new in a changing society. Sometimes, the themes may not always be easy to identify. Themes of a novel should be given to the children by the teacher. Children must be allowed to grow into consciousness, as a result of their experience of living through the novel assisted by useful discussion. The children must be seen to grasp relatively simple concepts, as of character, plot, cause and effect, before going on to more high-level abstractions.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Explain the Novel as a form of children's literature.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

There are many kinds of children's literature. These include: short stories, folk tales, myths and legends.

## 5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Name three kinds of children's literature and describe one of them.

## 6.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **UNIT 3 THE CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT**

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  - 3.2 The needs of children
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In unit 2, we discussed kinds of children's literature. You gathered that children's literature is different from adult's literature because children have distinct needs and characteristics. You may be curious to know those children's characteristics and needs which distinguish children's literature from adult literature.

In this unit, we shall discuss the characteristics and needs of children, and the importance of children's literature in meeting the needs.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe characteristics of children's development;
- identify and explain the various needs of children and
- discuss various ways children's literature satisfies the needs of children.

### **HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

- Read through this unit with care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Children and their Developmental Characteristics**

Generally, the term 'children' has been defined by the United Nations Organization as people under the age of 18 years.

Considering the psycho-biological changes that take place in children, their developmental stages are as follows:

When a baby is born, after a short time (about 0-6 months) the mother trains the baby to sit. She continues to do this until the baby is able to sit alone without any help. No sooner has the baby learnt to sit than he starts to creep around the floor. From creeping, the baby, with time, starts to hold things around and practise standing with the help of the objects. By the end of the 12 months, the baby can stand and walk around in the room. When the baby continues to perform these tasks, we say that he is developing. The baby develops physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and in other dimension. The periods of development could be: (0-3) years of infancy period, (3-5) years of early childhood (6 -11), years of middle and late childhood (12-18), years of adolescence period.

We shall collectively refer to all these categories simply, as children. During these periods, children's development exhibit certain characteristics as follows:

- (1) Under physical developmental characteristics, growth in physical dimension during infancy (birth to 2 years) is very rapid to enable the child acquire some measure of individual capabilities. However, in early childhood period (3-5 years) of age, growth changes and slows down and never accelerates as in infancy. At early childhood stage, the child begins to assume the body proportions of an adult. He grows in size and weight. The larger muscles and brain also develop. The child also develops a variety of motor skills such as self-feeding, self dressing, bathing, brushing the hair, playing with toys, jumping, hopping and holding pencil normally.
- (2) The intellectual developmental characteristics manifest in the following:
  - Verbal components: understanding and use of words
  - Numerical components: working with numbers
  - Spatial component: seeing and manipulating figures and space.
  - Social components: reasoning with problems in human relationships
  - Mechanical components: working with objects.

According to Piaget, intellectual development progresses in four stages namely:

- Sensory motor stage (0-2 years)

- Pre-operational stage (2-7 years)
- Concrete operational stage (7-11 years)
- The formal operations (11-18 years)

The early childhood period (3–5) years falls within the pre-operational period of development characterized by rapid development of language ability and of the ability to represent things symbolically. This is called symbolic function. For example, children at this age would represent a car with a steering movement. Symbolic representation of this nature is called 'signifies' understood only by the child. This is the reason adults have difficulty in communicating with the early childhood school children. This explains the frustration on the part of the children expressed with various outburst of anger which adults see as naughty behaviour of children. For example, a 3year old child represents a concept in his mind with a bottle top and he asks the mother to call its name. The mother may call it bottle top which may be different from the concept the child had in mind, the child may become annoyed and throw himself to the ground and start crying. This shows that children at this stage, represent the world in ways different from how adults represent it.

At this stage too, children are egocentric, that is, whatever the child has like biscuit or cake must be his and his alone. At this stage too, children are strongly attracted to physical properties of tasks and problems, colour, size and arrangements are the good examples. Children at this stage tend to focus attention on just one single object or on a particular problem or feature that attracts him most. The child's actions are based on trial-and-error process. Representation of reality is distorted. Problem-solving skills are at its rudimentary stage. Conservation ability is absent. The child also lacks operational reversibility in thought and action. The child does not think forward and backward.

- (3) Social developmental characteristics indicate that the child is born in a social environment where his personality development is shaped.

The other characteristics are that:

- feeling of autonomy develops in children. And they begin to explore their environment independently.
- children of both sexes play together without any discrimination.

They actively participate in group games in which physical energy is used; example is hide-and-see game. They learn to co-operate with others and make friends on shared interests and similar personality traits.





The child seeks social approval of his actions:

- (4) Emotional development characteristics of children are in various forms:
- The emotional expressions in children are intense, irrespective of the intensity of the stimulus.
  - Emotions are frequent and are expressed in relation to the concrete objects.
  - Emotions are temporary. It means a child shifts very rapidly. For example, a child of 3 years who is weeping, if given a biscuit will stop crying and become happy.
  - Children fail to hide their emotions but express them indirectly through different activities such as crying, nail biting, thumb-sucking and speech difficulties.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Outline the developmental characteristics of children and explain one.

### **3.2 The Needs of Children**

Children in general have their basic needs as growing individuals. Needs here are necessities which must be satisfied for the continued survival of the child. Children's needs tend to be physiological and psychological. We shall now discuss these two major categories of children's needs.

The following are the physiological needs of children:

1. Need for food: Children need food for nourishment to grow and develop normally. Children who are not properly fed but are sent to school gain very little from the activities undertaken in the school. They are often restless and very irritable. Children need balanced feeding for growth and development and to become effective in their learning at school.
2. The need for activity, quiet time and rest. Children need plenty of activities, thereafter they need enough hours of sleep and rest.
3. Need for elimination of body waste: children need to eliminate body waste through frequent urinating and reduction of heat through sweating from playing.
4. Children need good health habits and conducive home, school and social environment and sound information about sex differences.

The other needs of children are psychological. Examples are:

1. The need for affection: This refers to children's need to receive love from those around them, such as parents, siblings, age-mates, school mates, and teachers. Children tend to show love to those who love them and show hatred to those they feel to be their enemies. Children like to experience love demonstrated by parents' and teachers' actions through companionship, conversation, playing, answering their questions and involvement in household chores like dish washing, emptying waste bins, reading with them and taking them out on trips.
2. The need for belongingness: Children need to be reassured that they belong to the group. They get this reassurance while they notice that people around them need them and their services. Children need to feel that they are accepted as members of a group. Ridicule by adults around them can make them feel unacceptable.
3. The need for achievement and recognition: Children have the natural urge to achieve and be recognized as the achievers. Children should be praised for very little effort exhibited to achieve.
4. The need for independence: Children need independence. They reject adults meddling with their business. Parents and teachers should encourage the children to tackle appropriate tasks when there is no danger or physical injury involved in the task performance.
5. The need for status: Here, as children grow they develop individually, the concept of self-identity. With the development of self-identity, in every home the child needs the recognition of parents; on the play ground, the recognition from his teacher. Any child who is denied this need of recognition and status may begin to seek other ways for its gratification.

Generally, the child may resort to anti-social activities like bullying or even stubbornness to the teacher, peers or parents. However, if the recognition status, that is, recognition and attention is gratified, the child will become satisfied and even spurred to further achievements.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Explain the child's need for belongingness.

### **3.3 Importance of Children's Literature in meeting the needs of Children**

Children's book includes picture books for young children. They are books written from the heart and from at least, some memory of and contact with childhood. Children's literature or children's books are written to meet the needs of children. Such needs are children's mental health, security, to love and be loved, to achieve, the needs to know and the needs for aesthetic satisfaction.

Children's literature plays important roles in meeting the above needs. For example, generally, children's literature creates a unique world into which the child will go willingly and actively. They contain some portions of adult comments delivered from one intelligent individual to another without condescension.

Specifically, children's literature or books foster reading habits in children to provide pleasure, entertainment and enhance their educational development. It is believed that success in many academic subjects later in life is dependent upon the children's reading ability fostered by children's literature. Literature written for children can help to fulfil a child's need for security, to love and be loved, to achieve, to know and the need for self-esteem, independence and aesthetic satisfaction. Furthermore, other important outcomes of children's literature reading are: extension and enrichment of children's experience of complex ways of man's living. Gaining insight into one's personality and problems, giving opportunities to relieve and experience the adventure and ideas of others, providing materials which help to create an appreciation and understanding of the problems of others. The development of love of country and democratic ideals. The discovery of ethical values which are common to different creeds and which form a foundation of good character in the modern world, providing opportunity for fun and escape. All these bring the development of worthwhile tastes and a permanent interest in good literature. A reading programme aided by children's literature can contribute to positive mental health. Reading disability produces in most cases, personality maladjustments so that normal mental health cannot be maintained.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Explain the role of literature in meeting children's psychological developmental needs.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Children have various needs and characteristics that are recognized and satisfied by literature. These needs range from physiological to psychological. Children's literature plays important roles in meeting all these needs.

#### **5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List (a) The physiological and (b) the psychological needs of children.

#### **6.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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## **UNIT 4 THE ROLE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The role of children's literature on the development of children's Perception. .
  - 3.2 The role of literature in meeting children's psychological development.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 6.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In unit 3, we examined the characteristics and needs of children's development. It is assumed you have learnt that children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional developments have specific characteristics. You also gathered that children have physiological and psychological needs, which literature plays some roles in providing for children. In this unit, we shall discuss those roles which literature plays to satisfy children's developmental needs.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Identify and discuss various roles literature plays to satisfy children's developmental needs.

### **HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

- Read through this unit with care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The role of literature in the development of children**

##### **(a) Perception**

Literature can provide materials, opportunities and encouragement for children's intellectual development.

For example, the study of literature can be used to extend the range of perceptions of all the senses of sight, hearing, taste, scent and touch. Following many literature writers' insights and interpreting words they have used, children are led to recognize an ever-extending range of perceptions and distinctions, as for example, between yellow and golden, loud and stirring; fragrant and odorous and countless others.

**(b) Sensory Motor**

Similarly, literature can make a fundamental contribution in providing sensory motor physical activity through drama to train the human body to express itself.

**(c) Intellect**

Literature helps to train children's intellect. For example, literature trains the child in the logical thinking process which depends on such things as accurate perception, precise interpretation of language, the grouping and classification of data, the drawing of correct inductions and deductions, judgements of various kinds and the formulation of appropriate course of action. No child on entering secondary school is expected to confront all these weighty responsibilities from the very beginning. However, teachers of literature can encourage respect for facts, distinguishing between what is certain and what is conjectural, establishing the evidence for an opinion, recognizing fallacious methods of argument, and so on. Literature is a discipline. Discipline is concerned with learning to do something in accordance with a body of well-established rules or standards. Literature as a discipline provides opportunities, expression, exploration and imitation. It helps children to learn to solve problems, how to get things done right, and test the degree of success.

**(d) Emotions**

Literature helps in the training of children's emotions. Literature certainly presents us with a wide range of situations and predicaments which seem to stimulate some kind of emotional response; and also that on the whole, the writers of literature present these situations in ways which enable us to explore and develop our feelings in an appropriate humane way.

You will have to note here, that the culture of the feelings, the training of the emotions is more frequently associated with the study of literature. Certain feelings are very complex and intricate element in human behaviour. To a large extent, any society is concerned with the training of the feelings of its members, inducing people to like what they ought to like, and discourage them from liking what they ought not to like. For example, the sight of a grown man beating a small boy seems

to demand our indignation, whereas the sight of the sea breaking upon a rocky coast demands our awe and admiration; and we can say that anyone who fails to make these normal responses was less than human.

**(e) Social Awareness**

Social awareness here means to have a comprehensive awareness of other people. Social awareness is effective understanding of other people and this can only be based on understanding and appreciation of oneself and of one's own culture.

A successful educated person is one who has achieved an attitude of respect towards all other people in the world, which include at first, his own family, his own friends, his own village, his own tribe, but then beyond that, all the other tribes, nations, and roles he may encounter in the world. A mature attitude is based on understanding and interest, and expresses itself in tolerance and friendliness. To be effective, this understanding must embrace all aspects of the ways of other people, including their work, their behaviour, their customs, their religion and so on.

This social awareness attitude is not in children. A newly born infant has no conception of the world apart from its own needs, and all its activities are directed towards the satisfaction of its egocentric requirements. The process of growing up for the human individual is a very long one especially where it is, concerned with the recognition and appreciation of other people, and of course, this is often quite a painful process involving conflicts, clashes, and friction of many kinds.

Literature is used to produce a comprehensive awareness of other people. For example, modern writers have done much to stimulate interest in and sympathy for the problems of the unfortunate, the oppressed, the unsuccessful, the deranged, the offender against society. In literary writings, these writers have great capacity for identifying themselves with other people, putting themselves into other people's position for seeing into the heart of a problem. A teacher of literature, by making a judicious selection, can do a tremendous amount to help his students understand other people, and in the process understand themselves also.

**(f) Character**

Literature shapes children's character. First, study of literature is likely to develop a keener sense of values in children who gain an intimate acquaintance with it. More than most other kinds of studies, it acquaints us with the whole range of possibilities of human life: from happiness, achievement, ecstasy, joy, love, freedom, friendship, self-respect to

greed, defeat, despair, apathy, hatred, disintegration, death. We may reason that a person who has been through the reading of a number of works of literature is likely to have a better sense of what is worth-while and what is not. The general probability is also that he will thereafter look upon the complexities of life with much greater understanding, insight, tolerance and sympathy.

Secondly the character training possibilities of literary studies is that they can contribute to the development of personal qualities which include such things as perseverance, resourcefulness, imagination and creativity. Literature therefore, is an excellent means of children for character development.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Explain perception as one of the roles of literature in the development of children.

### **3.2 The role of literature in meeting children's psychological development**

We appreciate that children are quite different in their psychological make-up and that they develop through fairly distinct stages. For example, excluding the years of infancy, children (8 or 9 years of age) are in the autistic stage. Here their imaginations are not yet initiated into the world of reality, but delight in many kinds of fantasy.

(About 10 -12 years of age), children are in their romantic stage where they develop the grasp of reality, but see the world in highly simplified categories. At this stage, children love stories of heroic exploits, during adventures, dastardly villains, and so on.

(13 -16 years of age) children are in their realistic stage. By now, children have moved out of the stage of fantasy, and are keenly interested in what really happens. Is it true? How does he do it, they wish to know and are ready to follow up with the detail which seems to explain actual affairs of life.

(From 16 onward) children at this stage are not only interested in practical details, but are prepared to abstract, to generalize, to search for the underlying causes of phenomena, to make moral judgements, and generally, to philosophize. Hence, this stage is called generalizing stage.

These stages determine the works of literature that are chosen for children because they affect children's interests, enthusiasms and aversion. These in turn affect their readiness to co-operate, ginger their powers of memory and willingness to make the efforts requested by the



teacher and the possibility of finding significance in what they are invited to read.

Literature selected for study make their appeal at children's stage of physiological development which a particular class has reached.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Explain the role of literature in meeting children's psychological development.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Stages of children's development guide the teachers of literature in choosing appropriate literary works for children. In this unit we have learnt the roles literature performs in the children's development.

## **5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List the areas literature can make contribution -in children's development.

## **6.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING**

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## **UNIT 5      CHARACTERISTICS      OF      CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Characteristic of children's literature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 6.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In Unit 4, we discussed the roles of literature that satisfy children's developmental needs. You learnt that literature provides materials, opportunities and encouragements for the development of children's perception, intellect, emotions, social awareness and character. Literature too promotes the psychological development of children.

In this unit, we shall discuss characteristics of children's literature that distinguish it from adult's literature and enable it to help children's development.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to describe the characteristics of children's literature.

### **HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

- Read through this unit with care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Characteristics of children's literature**

Children's literature is produced largely with a child's interest and needs in mind; one that deals honestly with children, portrays them candidly and in a medium to which they can respond with imagination and pleasure. A writer of children's literature is always aware of the mind, psychology and understanding of the child. He recognizes the differences in the children's psychology, needs, understanding and interests of the various developmental levels. All writers of children literature must of necessity, be aware of children's peculiar

characteristics and should not allow their own tastes and interests to influence how a child will react to a particular book of short-stories, folk tales and so on. The writer should be aware of the implications of children's differences and should be able to envisage the nature of a child's world and predict his interests, responses and feelings. This is the only way he can produce convincing pictures of children as beings capable of distinct and individual experiences.

Literature that is written for children should not be junk or mediocritic material but should please them, stimulate their imagination, build up their sensitivity to experiences of all kinds, develop their perceptive powers and help them to grow up in a cultural environment responsive to African and international world.

The themes should revolve around the local life stories which try at the same time to project the African or Nigerian culture, pride and self identify.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Describe the characteristics of children's literature.

#### **Other characteristics of children's literature**

- Pictures, stories for pre-reading age and beginners in reading are usually colourful and attractive. Fantasy stories should stimulate children's imagination. Humorous books should arouse laughter and sense of humour in the children. Poetry should stimulate children's imagination, sense of beauty and inward vision of understanding. Rhymes should teach children to appreciate the beauty of rhymes and rhythm. Folk tales from oral literature should have moral undertone, e.g good triumphs over evil.
- Fables, myths and epics are legends and stories of supernatural events or long narrative poems meant to explain certain beliefs, practices and natural phenomenon. Animal stories should be built around animals, pets and wild creatures to show friendship, loyalty, tragedy and sadness in some cases. They inculcate in the children, the desire to protect and care for others. Realistic stories should be based on real life events and life history of real people to convey a sense of historical past 'of' the children. Adventurous tales should be built around action, suspense, danger, mystery, success based on courage, perseverance of individuals. Information books should give information on data, facts and figures like handbook, experimental and reference books etc.

One of the primary objectives of children's literature is to provide pleasure for the children. In order to achieve this, the author must consider the audience and relate the theme to children's culture and age so that they will benefit from what they read.

Additionally, children's literature helps in transmission and reinforcement of customary values and attitudes to children. For example, in a traditional society where schools are devoted to the study of religious texts in foreign tongue, folk tales, proverbs, historical legends and etymological narratives that represent approved and deviant behaviours and their consequences are, virtually for lack of competition, among the most influential instrument for transmission and reinforcement of customary values and attitudes among children growing up. You will notice this point in Edgars "Hausa Tales and Tradition". In a traditional preliterate society, folk education consists mainly in the transmission and reinforcement of stereo-typed folk attitudes, values and conceptions, rather than in the transfer of technical knowledge, data or moral maxims. Children's literature could also foster education of children early on institutions of our society, inter-ethnic relations and social stratification, values, belief, social orientations, social history, culture and development.

You will remember that folktale, as a particular genre of children's literature even when dealing with fabulous creature and events as in Amos Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* serves as media for the socialization of successive generation of children of an area who are gradually inducted from realm of cultural fantasy in which animal talk and act like adults into the love of white (good) and black (bad) spirits, of magic and the mysterious, and so, with certain transformation and changing stress, into the complex work in society, when differential of birth, status and power are often interpreted in mystical terms.

Similarly, Harold and Ruth aim of writing a collection of TIV tales were to encourage interest in traditional culture as revealed in oral literature, as well as provide stimulating reading practice for school children.

In a similar vein, Manton in his book of tales states that his motives in writing the book were to enable the reader learn cause and meaning of all things, how the earth and the stars were created or water divided from dry land, how their own cities were founded, why some people seemed by nature to be brave and generous and others small-minded and mean.

Beyond these, children read folk tales, novels, myths, legends, etc. They love books that reflect children's perception of the world in which there are characters they can identify with. They read stories about other children; those that deal with youthful problems and those concerning

their forbearers and these problems are solved. Such literatures add to the status of the child who has read them. He is a little more capable of enjoying new impressions and receiving new ideas which will illuminate his next new experience whatever that may be. The child is able to gain something permanent which can never be taken away from him.

Finally, a child's experience of life is confined within the narrow hints of his environment. What he is looking for is a swift passage beyond its boundaries. Children's literature books give him this opportunity for transition. And he is able to gain something permanent which can never be taken away from him or her.

Children's literature fosters creativity in children. It draws out knowledge from children by encouraging creative thinking in our young ones through imaginative writings.

Children's literatures are the books that children read to satisfy their spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs irrespective of their content. It provides pleasurable and instructional values to children and satisfies children's curiosity.

Children's literature in Nigeria is reclaiming our lost pride, re-affirming our cultural heritage in order to build a consciously aware future. It feeds Nigerian children on their glorious history and culture with recourse to the numerous myths, legends, and folktales in our traditional societies.

You are to note that at (2-10 years age group) the Nigerian child is exposed to foreign literature that demeans his humanity which makes him bereft of a cultural base and personality. What today obtains in many qualitative International Nursery/Primary schools speak volumes of this situation. But, despite this sad state of affairs, modern Nigerian writers have pursued vigorously, the task of writing good literature for children.

By their literary contribution, children are motivated to see themselves as the pillar in the building of a solidly happy future. Also, children gradually are becoming politically sharp, critical and witty. Children's literature is waging a kind of cultural battle in raising generation of school children as vessels of visionary optimism of the adult world with promise of better tomorrow. This is one sure way of overcoming those nightmarish years of denigration.

Children's literary works like Mamman Vasta's *Constitution*, *Soldiers' Children as Poets* and Anezi Okoro's *Education* are stimulating, educative and motivating children to see themselves as the pillar in the building of a happy future.

The corpus of children's literature beginning from Cyprian Ekwensi's *An African Night Entertainment*, *The Drummer Boy*, *The Passport of Mallam Ilia*, *Samankwe and the Highway Robbers*, Nkem Nwankwo's *Tales out of School* and Onuora Nzekwu's *Eze Goes to School* and so on have honestly chronicled the historical past of their environment, revealing the beauty and uniqueness of the Nigerian culture to recreate the past epochs in the present, in order to instruct and entertain the child and restoring his confidence in his cultural heritage.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Write five other characteristics of children's literature.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Children's literatures have characteristics that distinguish it from adult literature. In this unit, we have learned about the characteristics of children's literature.

## **5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Identify three characteristics of children's literature.

## **6.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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