

History of Children's Literature

Dr. K. A. Korb
 University of Jos

Ancient History

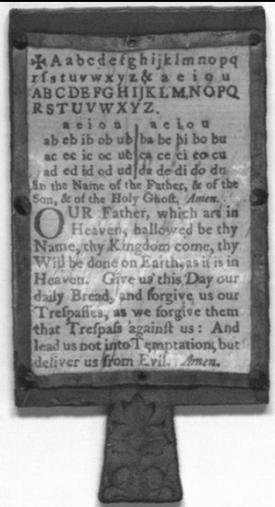
- Children have always loved stories
 - Traditionally in Africa, stories were a primary teaching method
 - Call and response was a common storytelling technique
 - Aesop's Fables are a collection of stories credited by Aesop from 620-560 BC

Two Travelers and a Bear
 Aesop's Fable
 Two men were traveling in a company through a forest, when all at once, a huge bear crashed out of the brush near them. One of the men, thinking of his own safety, climbed a tree. The other, unable to fight the savage beast alone, threw himself on the ground and lay still, as if he were dead. He had heard that a bear would not touch a dead body.
 It must have been true, for the bear sniffed at the man's head awhile, and then, seeming to be satisfied that he was dead, walked away. The man in the tree climbed down. "It looked just as if that bear whispered in your ear," he said.
 "What did he tell you?"
 The man answered the other, "That it was not at all wise to keep company with a fellow who would desert his friend in a moment of danger."
Moral Lesson: Misfortune is the test of true friendship.










Renaissance

Period in Europe from 14th to 17th Century

- Printing press was invented that enabled books to be mass produced (not copied by hand)
 - Text became cheaper and easier to access; literacy increased
 - The main books available for children were primers for learning how to read
 - **Hornbook:** Primer used to teach people how to read using a piece of paper attached to a board with a handle



New England Primer

	In Adam's fall We sinned all.		As runs the Glass, Man's life doth pass.
	Thy life to mend, This Book attend.		My Book and Heart Shall never part.
	The Cat doth play, And after slay.		Job feels the rod, And blesses God.
	A Dog will bite A thief at night.		Proud Korah's troops Were swallowed up.
	An Eagle's flight Is out of sight.		The Lion bold The lamb doth hold.
	The idle Fool Is whipt at school.		The Moon shines bright In time of night.

18th Century: Rise of Children's Books

- John Newberry (1713-1778) was a businessman who marketed books specifically for children
 - He is regarded as the father of children's literature
 - *A Little Pretty Pocket Book, intended for the amusement of little Master Tommy and pretty Miss Polly with two letters* (1744) is considered the first children's book
 - The book presents simple rhymes for each letter of the alphabet
 - Though his books were not very good, he opened the market for children's books to be bought and sold



Golden Age of Children's Books

- Children's books began to flourish in the later 19th century in the US and Europe due to:
 - Increased prosperity
 - Rising middle class
 - Increased public education
 - Better publishing technology with color for illustrations

Popular Types of Children's Stories Historically

- Trickster tales: *Anansi*
 - Stories with Religious/Moral Themes: *The Pilgrim's Progress, Simple Susan*
 - Folktales: *Mother Goose, Grimms' Fairy Tales*
 - Adventures: *Robinson Crusoe*
- BAA, BAA, Black Sheep*
Mother Goose
- Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes Sir, Yes Sir,
Three bags full;
One for my master,
One for my dame,
But none for the little boy
Who cries in the lane

Current Trends in Children's Literature

- Increasing diversity in children's books characters and writers (race, ethnic groups, gender, social groups, etc.)
- Broad scope of books that are written on a wide variety of topics
- More diverse and creative illustrations
- e-publication of books, though print books are still popular
- Links between children's books and media such as movies or video games