A Critical Handbook of Children’s Literature

Rebecca J. Lukens
Professor Emerita, Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
Contents

To the Instructor xi
To the Student xvii
Reading Aloud to Children xxi

Chapter 1 / Literature: What Is It? 3

Literature for Children 8
Summary 9
Notes 10
Recommended Books Cited in This Chapter 10

Chapter 2 / Genre in Children’s Literature 13

Realism 14
Realistic Stories 15
Animal Realism 16
Historical Realism 16
Sports Stories 17
Formula Fiction 18
Mysteries and Thrillers 18
Romantic Stories 19
Series Books 19
Fantasy 20
Fantastic Stories 20
High Fantasy 21
Science Fiction 22
Traditional Literature 24
Fables 24
Folktales 24
Myths 26
Legends and Hero Tales 27
Folk Epics 27
Poetry 28
Contents

Informational Books 28
Across Genre Lines 29
  Classics 29
Table 2.1: Genre in Children's Literature 30
Summary 35
  Notes 35
  Recommended Books Cited in This Chapter 36

chapter 3 / Picture Books 39

The Illustrative Elements of the Picture Book 41
  Designing the Book 41
  Picturing Figurative Language 44
  Amplifying the Text 44
  Changing the Story 46
The Literary Elements of the Picture Book 48
  Character 49
  Plot 50
  Theme 54
  Setting 56
  Point of View 57
  Style 58
  Rhythm 59
  Tone 60
Lasting Favorites 62
Wordless Picture Books 66
Summary 69
  Notes 70
  Recommended Books Cited in This Chapter 71

chapter 4 / Character 75

Revelation of Character 76
  By Actions 77
  By Speech 77
  By Appearance 78
  By Others' Comments 78
  By Author's Comments 78
Unity of Character and Action 78
Types of Characters 81
  Flat Characters 82
  Round Characters 83
Change in Character 84

Special Issues of Character in Children's Literature 89
  Traditional Literature 90
  Animal Realism 91
chapter 5 / Plot 97

Types of Narrative Order 98
  Chronological Order 98
  Flashbacks 99

Types of Conflict 99
  Person-Against-Self 100
  Person-Against-Person 102
  Person-Against-Society 105
  Person-Against-Nature 104

Patterns of Action 106
  Suspense 108
  The Cliff-hanger 111
  Foreshadowing 112
  Sensationalism 114
  The Climax 114
  Denouement 116
  Inevitability 117

Types of Plots 118

Special Issues of Plot in Children's Literature 120
  Coincidence 120
  Sentimentality 121
  Lack of Conflict 123

Summary 124
  Notes 125
  Recommended Books Cited in This Chapter 125

chapter 6 / Theme 129

Theme or Unifying Truth 129

Types of Themes 130
  Explicit Theme 130
  Implicit Theme 131
  Multiple and Secondary Themes 135

Special Issues of Theme in Children's Literature 135
  Traditional Literature 135
  Didacticism 137
  Nonsense 139
  Mature Themes in Children's Stories 139
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse and Poetry</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinds of Poetry</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Patterns</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurativeness</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compactness</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intensity</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Qualities in Poetry</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books Containing Poems Cited in This Chapter</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### chapter 12 / Biography 261

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biography Defined</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Writer’s Obligations</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography and Fiction</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone and Style</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts and Didacticism</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Books Cited in This Chapter</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### chapter 13 / Informational Books 277

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonfiction Defined</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonder as Motivation</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational Books</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and Scope</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Form</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Issues in Nonfiction in Children’s Literature</strong></td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didacticism and Propaganda</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Publishing Trends</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Books Cited in This Chapter</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A: Children’s Book Awards                                   | 301  |
Appendix B: Selected Children’s Magazines                            | 337  |
Appendix C: Selected Reviewing Media for Children’s Books            | 339  |
Appendix D: Selected Websites about Children’s Literature            | 341  |
Glossary of Literary Terms                                           | 343  |
Acknowledgments                                                       | 347  |
Index                                                                 | 351  |