REFUGE AND REFLECTION:
AMERICAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS SOCIAL HISTORY, 1920-1940

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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* * * * *

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Story</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature in the Social Studies Curriculum</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature as Social History</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Relationship Between Children's Literature and Social History</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE SOCIAL SCENE, 1920-1929</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: The Twenties</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Writers in the 1920's: The Expatriates</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Writers in the 1920's: Children's Literature</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE SOCIAL SCENE, 1930-1940</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: The Thirties</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Writers in the 1930's: The Proletarian</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Writers in the 1930's: Children's Literature</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE OUTSIDE WORLD: THEM AND US</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twenties</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thirties: World Community</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>INTERPRETING AMERICA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Frontier in American Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Colonial Experience in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-Nineteenth Century America and the Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Hero Myth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Fiction in the Thirties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Times Remembered: Family Reminiscences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Stories in Historical Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary America in the Twenties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary America in the Thirties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>URBAN-RURAL CONFLICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Folklore and Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Image of Primitive People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Discovery of the Proletarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Rural Myth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nostalgia for Simpler Things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>RELIGION AND FAITH: THE CHRISTIAN ASSUMPTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Moral Imperative: Puritanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manners and Morals in the Twenties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spirituality and the Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manners and Morals in the Thirties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>THE GENERATION OF THE CHILD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Twenties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tomboy and the Saint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Thirties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Demise of the Saint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .................................. 269
    Literature as Refuge ........................................... 270
    Literature as Reflection ....................................... 274
    Literature as Social Studies ................................. 278
    Suggestions for Further Research ............................ 284

APPENDIX

A. SELECTION OF BOOKS ANALYZED IN THIS STUDY ............ 286

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................... 325
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate children's literature, 1920-1940, from two perspectives: first, literature as an expression of social history, and second, literature as an influence on children's perceptions of the world. In this study, children's literature will be confined to fiction for the age group, nine through twelve. Children's perceptions of the world are assumed to be within the province of the social studies, defined as:

1. The process of learning about variety and change in the actions of people as they arrange to live together in groups. This learning goes on through the gathering and interpreting of social data, as well as through critical examination of the conclusions and generalizations of social scientists.

2. The development of intellectual skill appropriate to this study.
   a. Acquiring a language whose content and structure are capable of patterning, ordering and communicating social realities.
   b. Acquiring the "suppleness of mind" that permits the examination of alien individual and cultural forms.

The hypothesis of this study is that narrative (or story) is the primary way in which children begin the process of social study. The stories children hear or read are more than entertainment. They provide social data about the actions of people and may influence the acquisition of language for communicating that information as well as the suppleness of mind for dealing with it.

1
In addition, children's literature presents an image of childhood both as it appears to be and as society wishes it were. This is important in placing children's fiction in a larger perspective. Stories for children do not appear in a vacuum. They are a reflection not only of the mind of their author, but of the publishers who chose to print them and the society that purchases and reads them. The social data supplied to children by narrative are not independent of prevailing social attitudes nor free of historical influence.

Writers have attributed at least two patterns to the manner in which children's literature responds to social attitudes. The first, closely allied with Phillipe Aries' work, *Centuries of Childhood*, links changing patterns in children's literature with the larger society's changing concepts of childhood. This view may be characterized as reflective in the sense of Aristotle's mimesis: art as an imitation of human experience.² The second pattern suggests that children's literature is the last refuge in which society preserves for children all that is moral and good, but too unsophisticated for adult taste.³ This moral-philosophical approach would reveal the ideal rather than the actual, preserving it not only for the child reader, but for the adult he will someday become.⁴ This study suggests that both patterns exist and must be considered as part of the child's experience with literature.

Looking at the literature produced in the past provides data on the forces that shape the future. Children's literature, particularly, sheds light on the social and psychological expectations placed on children. Dorothy Canfield Fisher, an author of children's books,
explained the importance of understanding the influence of books: "... What children are now decides what human society will be twenty years from now ... the experiences of boys and girls influence and mold them far more intimately, more unescapably than what happens to them in later life." Literature, as a childhood experience, can influence the future. More immediately, literature can color a child's attitude toward race, sex roles, ethnic groups, his country, the world and especially toward himself, for in addition to reflecting social attitudes, literature can help perpetuate them. For this reason, books that run against the social current are as interesting as those that move with it. Those moving with the current reflect society, those moving against it may presage a change.

In either case, literature must be placed in its historical context if it is to be understood as an historical document. To do otherwise is to risk the charge of presentism. A book taken out of historical context may appear, in the light of present social attitudes to perpetuate stereotypes when, in fact, it represents a move in quite the opposite direction.

The relationship between books and social history has long been recognized, especially as it relates to adult literature. The body of scholarship on children's literature and social history has generally emphasized books published before the twentieth century. Monica Kiefer, American Children Through Their Books, looks at the status of the child in the Colonial and early national periods, finding evidence of a move from stern pietism to a utilitarian philosophy. Paul Hazard, in Books, Children and Men, claimed that "England could be reconstructed
entirely from its children's books." F.J. Harvey Darton, in Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social History, set forth a similar approach in his title. Gillian Avery also investigated English social history in her book, Childhood's Pattern. Yet this recognition has not resulted in an outpouring of scholarship. 200 Years of Children, a bicentennial overview of typical books from Colonial to Modern America mentions the connection between literature and social history, but does not elaborate. Even A Critical History of Children's Literature confines itself largely to literary trends apart from the larger social and historical context. This has been the direction of histories of American children's literature such as Florence Barry's A Century of Children's Books and Caroline Hewins' A Midcentury Child and Her Books. Monica Kiefer alone states her purpose as "an attempt to trace the changing status of the American child ... as it is revealed in juvenile literature."

Studies of childhood and the family tend to give limited attention to the literature written for children. Scholarly emphasis through the first quarter of the twentieth century has been on health and protective legislation. One major exception has been historians whose interests find literature as revelatory of psychology. This approach employs the narrow focus of psychogenic history. Others have emphasized colonial and nineteenth century American children's books. Such emphasis may be due to the greater control of sources possible with the smaller number of books published in the earlier periods. In addition, distance sometimes provides for more objectivity.
A literature of significant proportions and authors of talent have appeared in the twentieth century, but little has been done to put them in historical perspective. Critical attention has been concentrated on adult fiction in spite of recognition of the contrast between the adult and juvenile literary worlds. While critics characterized the theme of the twentieth century as "break-up," children's literature was enjoying what some have called the golden age of story. The contrast is important in understanding children's literature as social history.

Two further considerations are indicated by new research in children's literature. First, story is an important way in which children move toward a more objective view of history and the social sciences. Second, story has significant impact on the acquisition of the suppleness of mind necessary for social study as well as the language for dealing with such study. It also provides what a textbook rarely captures: emotional impact, value conflicts and empathetic involvement.

No investigation can ever hope to recapture the full emotional and intellectual impact of a story. No two people experience it in quite the same way and time increases that disparity. With that limitation in mind, however, it is possible to look at stories in terms of the world view they present and to consider the possible import of that presentation. In this connection, the time period, 1920-1940 seems particularly appropriate.

Earlier studies which focused on pre-twentieth century books investigated a body of literature limited in its influence by low literacy rates, limited numbers of books and limited access to books. Not
until the twentieth century did increasing literacy match an increased flow of publications for children. Early in the twentieth century, libraries began to admit children and provided children's rooms. For the first time, a concerted effort was made to encourage the use of children's literature in the schools and to provide information on literary quality. While nineteenth century books were available to a limited audience, this was not the case in the twentieth century. Yet this should not be construed to indicate that these books reflected all levels of society or that all literate children read them. It does indicate, though, that social attitudes as depicted in children's literature had a greater potential audience than in earlier times.

During the first half of the twentieth century, too, literate children did not have the distraction of what some have called the post-literate society. Television did not consume so much of the average child's day. Children had time to read. The combination of greater access to stories and more time for reading combined with the societal upheaval of the twentieth century provides an optimum time for the purposes of this study.

Method of Study

Due to the enormous volume of children's books, even for the age group under consideration, some limits on selection were necessary.

1. Selected books are either historical or realistic fiction.

2. Selected books are among those recommended by authorities in the field of children's literature during the nineteen-twenties and thirties. Additional recommendations were taken from
The Horn Book, Elementary English Review, literature texts and award lists.

3. Selected books are among those recommended by literary historians as representative of the time period.

Once selected, books were read three times. The first reading was done without note-taking in order to gain a general impression of each story. During the second reading notes were taken and categorized with reference to the following questions:

1. What morals or values predominate?
2. How is American history presented?
3. How are social problems interpreted?
4. What child-rearing practices are evident?
5. What attitudes toward other parts of the world are evident?
6. Is there any evidence of political or social ideology?

The third reading served as a check on the previous two. When it was completed, any additional information was also categorized. Reviews were then checked for each book, along with biographical information about the authors. This data aided in ascertaining if a book was representative of more than an author's idiosyncrasies.

Viewed in isolation these data do not indicate anything but trends in children's literature. There is no way of knowing if the selected books were moving with or against the intellectual and social currents of their time. This could only be done with reference to a more general history of the two decades under consideration. As a result, the study includes brief histories for the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties, including literary trends.
Because the selected books represent what was recommended as good reading for children, rather than what was most popular, it would be inappropriate to compare them with popular adult fiction. Instead, comparison is made with those books which were on the leading edge of the adult literary world. The writer recognizes that this results in an elite history, as does any research based on literary sources. The study proposes to investigate one aspect of social history, limited to the population reading children's literature. Conclusions will be drawn with the recognition that literature is not the sole determinant in forming a child's world view. Literature is, however, a part of social history available to most classroom teachers. As a piece in a larger pattern of developing social values and attitudes, it is important to understand this aspect of the literary experience.
Footnotes


16Concern with children's fiction as a way of analyzing childhood can be seen in the work of Glenn Davis, Childhood and History in America (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1976), Lloyd deMause, The History of Childhood (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974) and in various issues of The History of Childhood Quarterly.


19Townsend, op. cit., p. 10.


CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Child and Story: Making Sense of the World

When Carl Becker declared every man his own historian,¹ he gave voice to a human activity so common as to be unconscious. Out of memory humans construct authobiography parallel to history. The narrative act has been called the most significant way in which we explain our place in the world.² As with history, story extends our present into the remembered past and towards a possible future. We tell stories to ourselves when we are alone, to others in the form of gossip and everyday conversation. Barbara Hardy calls it a primary act of mind transformed from life to art, in which we vascillate between truth and fiction. Stories provide an outlet for the "subversive discontents" that are a part of human development. Story, or narrative, provides escape, but it also allows a safe look at the "unwished-for worst."³

This function of story lends imagination to memory and rational planning. It "creates, maintains and transforms our relationships," as we know each other by stories.⁴ Individual incidents, casual remarks and daily events can be ordered and understood when transformed into story.⁵ This is particularly significant when considering the child reader. Piaget suggests that children and adults order their mental world quite differently. Story should not be expected to affect them similarly, either.⁶
Story offers the child a world that he can enter and explore from the inside. He can "get lost in the story," a behavior more characteristic of the child than the adult reader. Especially with the youngest readers, there is a commitment to the story as real. Story events are a part of the child's world. It is not until adolescence that the reader begins to perceive a story as one of a number of alternatives. At this point the adolescent becomes interested in using narrative as a tool in reforming the world and in trying on adult roles. The adolescent reader has generally made the transition from seeing the story as real to recognizing it as a literary convention.

The reader's growth from subjective involvement to objective consideration of a story has implications for the social studies as well as literature. James Britton theorizes that young children understand geography and history as fictions. They become involved in the social sciences through narrative before a more impersonal appreciation occurs. As a result, fiction can be a powerful teaching tool during the elementary years.

Development is also affective and moral in that the child becomes willing to allow the author's implicit demands for the sake of the story. As a result he tolerates a wider range of literary experiences. Dorothy White suggests that the very young child rejects literary experiences that are too remote until age and gradually expanding experiences encourage exploration. The dual nature of the child's maturation is significant, for chronological age is not sufficient. Literary experience provides the complement to chronology. A base of stories confirming experience encourages the acceptance of stories which
expand experience. Arthur Applebee explains the process of assimilation as the way in which new experience is given meaning by incorporation into the existing framework. "It is" stories provide the base from which the child moves to "It might be." The child at play improvises in much the same way. By doing so, he is better able to meet the demands of real life. This type of escape is both fruitful and healthy, for the child's conception of the world is rooted in narrative organization. By placing real problems in a created world they can be experienced in a manageable situation. Lillian Smith suggests that stories provide a "steadying power, like a sheet anchor in a high wind ... something to hold onto." The sense of being rooted in human experience may allow more mature approaches to later problems.

Literature's unique contribution is an empathetic knowledge of the world, not objective information. Though the reader may acquire information, the literary experience is primarily a subjective one. Louise Rosenblatt explains that "literature provides a living-through, not simply knowledge about." In fiction the reader is involved in reflecting on value choices in a subjective context. Rosenblatt believes literature serves a heterogeneous and democratic society by encouraging participation in the variety of philosophies and lifestyles found in literature and in reflection upon them. Reflection on choices encourages the suppleness of mind that social study require.

The Spectator Role

Basic to the way in which literature helps the reader make sense of the world is reliance on subjective modes of thought. A social studies text generally attempts to be objective. Most of the sources
of information drawn on for the social studies do the same. In literature the reader assumes what D.W. Harding labeled the "spectator role." If one views the reading of a novel, for instance, as the process of looking on at imagined events, the onlooker does two things. First, he attends. Second, he evaluates. The novel draws attention because of our interest in other human beings. Novels call for empathy. Harding suggests that the spectator role fulfills a psychological need as the reader comtemplates the action within the novel. He connects with the event watched and evaluates what he observes. In doing so, the spectator extends his repertoire of possible human actions and experiences.22

Applebee further explains the spectator role by distinguishing between the experience of the spectator/reader and experience in the world. Experience in the world is unstructured. Structure is imposed on raw experience, but unlike the literary structure, it does not compete with alternative constructions. Experience in the literary world implies evaluation by the reader of the story's construction.23 Narrative requires a subjective reaction to the proposed alternative. This reaction, in turn, serves to clarify the world for the child reader.

Developmental changes affect the experience of the reader. A mature reader is conscious of fiction as a literary convention through which an author proposes and evaluates human experience.24 Applebee's research indicates that this detachment comes gradually. The young child does not distinguish between literary convention and reality. A story is not perceived as a choice among alternative structures. It is the story. When a separation between fact and fantasy is finally
perceived, the tendency is for the child to accept only those stories he thinks are true. Even pre-adolescents continue to see the events in a story as "made-up correlatives of events in the world." As a result, a well-written but inaccurate fictional account of an event is true for the young reader. This places considerable responsibility on those choosing books for pre-adolescents. More than an exciting story line is involved in choosing books. Accuracy is important, as is allowing discussion that encourages children to grapple with the conflicts within and between stories.

**Vicarious Experience and the Spectator Role**

Both Harding and Applebee distinguish between the literary experience of the spectator role and vicarious experience. Applebee argues that the literary experience is more than vicarious. He appears to equate vicarious with second-hand acquisition of knowledge: "knowledge that could as easily be gained in other ways." One suspects he really objects to using literature to broaden knowledge on the informational level. Such a narrow definition fails to allow emotional content to a vicarious experience. Edward Rosenheim makes a helpful distinction in describing the satisfaction of reading. He allows the transient satisfaction of "escape-cum-identification," but suggests a second, deeper level. Within this second experience the reader actively exercises "the gifts of apprehension, imagination, of discrimination, of relationship, of judgment." The first level corresponds to Harding's and Applebee's use of vicarious experience as surface identification, not empathy. Rosenheim's second level moves into the spectator role where imagination is freed to contemplate a proposed world view. The
second level requires cultivation. It is not temporary, uncritical surrender, but a sustained, active encounter paralleling the thinking required for social studies. The subjective response comes first and sustains interest in pursuing a more objective appreciation. Appreciation, whether literary or historical, comes with experience and practice. It is probably not a natural initial response.

Louise Rosenblatt also ascribes levels to literary experience, beginning with emotional outlet, and then:

It may enable us to exercise our senses more intensely and more fully than we otherwise have time or opportunity to. Furthermore, it may provide experiences that it would not be either possible or wise to introduce into our own lives. A great work of art may provide us the opportunity to feel more profoundly and more generously, to perceive more fully the implications of experience, than the constricted and fragmentary conditions of life permit.

Rosenblatt explains the reader's participation in imaginary situations, in exploring self and the world, as "the capacity to sympathize or to identify .... We tend to 'feel ourselves into' to empathize." Apparently Dr. Rosenblatt does not make the distinction between vicarious and literary experiences. She does emphasize that the literary experience is not a simple acquisition of fact. That would be the job of a text book. Literature provides an essential human element.

**Literature in the Social Studies Curriculum**

Each year the National Council for the Social Studies publishes a list of trade books recommended for use in the social studies. Methods textbooks frequently include fiction for children in their bibliographies. The implicit assumption is that there is a place for children's literature
in the social studies curriculum. That assumption is rarely made explicit in terms of what particular contribution literature is expected to make. Perhaps this results from general agreement that literature can be useful, but disagreement as to just how.

Justifications for the inclusion of literature in the social studies vary. In 1955 Hilda Taba participated in a study of human relations in an eighth-grade classroom. Two books grew from this study: With Focus on Human Relations and With Perspective on Human Relations. Both described an approach to building human relations by extending sensitivity through story discussions. Taba concluded that stories aided in the transition from the child's ego-centric orientation to social learning, to a capacity to identify beyond the known. Stories appeared to enlarge the reader's capacity to identify with "the values of unknown groups and the generalized values of humanity." Literature in Taba's schema would serve to extend social sensitivity. In practice, this resulted in stories chosen to investigate a particular value or problem area. The choices implied an acceptance of bibliotherapy as an approach to literature. Investigations into children's response to literature indicates that this is a weak premise. The connection between child and book does not appear to be that straightforward. Unless the connection is on a deeper level, change is likely to be on the verbal but not behavioral level.

Hilda Taba states two hypotheses in her study which support the bibliotherapy assumption. First, she hypothesizes that fiction "is one potent source for internalizing values different from the current experience of a given group," and second, "by inducing identification
with characters, problems and feelings expressed in fiction, individuals can be helped to make a transition from an ethnocentric to an 'other-centered' orientation. Taba expected open-ended discussions to accomplish both aims. The hidden assumption is made that internalizing such values and becoming "other-centered" are desirable goals.

At the end of the study, Taba concluded that literary experience brought increased tolerance of differences and respect for the complexity of human motivation. She found that the integration of literature and social studies occurs not on the basis of specific content, but in changing modes of thinking and feeling, a move away from bibliotherapy. The increased sensitivity to feelings and personal biases combined with the facts and ideas provided by social studies resulted in a gain in perspective in the application of data. At adolescence, then, literature would appear to support the reader's move to a more objective view of the content of the social studies. Taba's study does not make any suggestions concerning the implications for pre-adolescent learners.

Literature as a source of data on human relations is frequently mentioned in the literature. The American Council on Education, for instance, provides periodic updates on its Reading Ladders for Human Relations. In the 1963 edition, edited by Muriel Crosby, the role of children's literature is explained as follows:

Books have a unique role in human relations education, for they help a child to live more fully in the world of reality and the world of imagination. Books may help the child, learning under skillful adult guidance, to understand and appreciate the fact that these two worlds are a projection, one of the other.
The suggested reading ladders were to make choosing books, particularly those that would give the impact of experience, easier for teachers. Through literature the reader could step into situations remote in time and place or socially distant.\textsuperscript{43} Categorized and annotated lists of books considered appropriate in guiding human relations made up the body of the book. The only claim made for fiction was its power to help the child "live more fully." Crosby's caution has not been shared by all advocates of incorporating literature into the social studies curriculum. In 1977 Marian R. Bartch wrote in \textit{Language Arts} that:

Many lessons can come from children's literature. These lessons must be learned before children are set in a mold of uncaring, unfeeling, selfish disregard for others—before they discover too late that it's no fun living in a cold, inhuman world .... The power and influence of children's books as inculcators of societal values cannot be overemphasized.\textsuperscript{44}

Again, the assumption is that child and book meet on the basis of surface information without reference to the meaning the child brings to the book. This attitude is not far removed from nineteenth century didacticism which assumed that every word was influential.

Support can be found for literature as citizenship education as well as literature as human relations. Mildred A. Dawson proposes the development of the good citizen as the ultimate goal of the social studies. Literature in the service of citizenship would be expected to "develop interested, constructive citizens, locally, nationally and world-wide."\textsuperscript{45} Dawson claims for fiction the ability to develop patriotism, world citizenship and a sense of responsibility. She does
not define her terms, though she does state that literature accomplishes these ends as a result of making the life and conditions of the past explicit. Not only does Dawson claim that literature makes the past live, but that it causes the basic teachings of the social studies to be absorbed or assimilated and encourages children to read for fun.\textsuperscript{46} There is little evidence that this is, in fact, what happens.

There is more likelihood that the function of literature is in the area of offering alternatives rather than in teaching democratic values. What appears to happen is that literature allows the reader to "try on" different values, motives and life-styles. Individual authors may promote or attack certain values, but continued exposure to literature is likely to present contrasting offerings.\textsuperscript{47} This may make literature less palatable to those who believe in the necessity of presenting only one set of values.

Whether or not fiction teaches values, it does provide a source of information about value systems in general. In 1974 Richard L. Mandel suggested that children's books provide an interesting resource in the study of society's methods of instilling basic value systems in the young. Using two sets of series books, one from the nineteenth and one from the twentieth century, Mandel compared the value systems motivating each. In the nineteenth century "Rollo" books, for instance, morals were learned by precept: "Poor boys, if they had done as their mother told them ...." In contrast, the twentieth century Dick and Jane learned by everyday experience.\textsuperscript{48} Similarly, Rollo looked to an authority figure, his father, and tried to earn his love. Dick and Jane received love freely and found support from peers as well as parents.\textsuperscript{49}
Mandel proposed that literature in the social studies raises questions about how social character relates to value systems and to the social and historical factors influencing changes in values. Literature, in this case, would enter the social studies curriculum as an historical and social document. It would be a piece of information in the same way that a plantation owner's record-book would be.

Moving further from the human relations and didactic views of literature, one finds the proposition that literature aids in concept development. This view was advanced by Dewey Chambers in 1971. Chambers looked at the role he saw for literature in the social studies curriculum. In much of elementary social studies, he claimed, children never developed the depth of understanding necessary to see the relevance of content. Too often social studies operated at the factual level rather than at a level where children could internalize broader implications. Facts, Chambers said, do not of themselves lead to understanding. Facts are tools. In this sense the social studies text is generally a framework of facts, lacking interpretation and providing few opportunities for concept development. The problem lies in the absence of human emotion and the motivation which prompts human action. The text verbalizes concepts; literature presents materials from which the reader constructs concepts. A framework cannot begin to satisfy a curious child, for it presents a limited way of knowing. Literature pushes back those limits. Chambers argues that the emotional dimension provided by literature should be an essential part of learning in the social studies.
Recent research in child development suggests additional reasons for incorporating literature in social studies. In her 1979 article, "What Children Know Best," Kieran Egan presents an alternative to the commonly accepted interpretation of the expanding horizons curriculum. She suggests that this curriculum design grows from too narrow an interpretation of the way children learn. The truism that learning must start with what children know best is translated in the expanding horizons curriculum as a focus on the content of experience not the underlying capacities of children to take meaning from experience. Egan contends that what children know best are ways of organizing experience. Children know categories such as love and hate, good and evil, more clearly than they know the configuration of their home town. Children's underlying categories are fundamentally moral and emotional. Thus they gain access to things expressed in those terms. The power of story, according to this theory, is that its underlying categories are intuitively familiar to children. Ideas drawn from these categories are more understandable than factual statements.

Consider the event referred to by the words 'He shot Tom.' By itself, this event is not very meaningful; we don't know how or why or where he shot Tom, or who he and Tom are, or most important, whether to feel glad or sorry that he shot Tom. The only linguistic unit that can answer all these questions is the story.

The text that appears to affix the truth of historical events really does not fix the meaning of the event. Meaning changes in light of new information or changing values. But it is not only meaning that changes. Feelings change, too. Whether a given event was good or bad changes over time. Egan states that within the story events can be
ultimately fixed. More accurately, one alternative is presented for examination with the emotional component included. Stories are not immune to changing interpretations, but their form provides the most meaning to children. Learning for children is a process of connecting unknown things to known categories and then adjusting the categories to accommodate new information. The clearer the connections, the more successful the learning is likely to be.

Building on children's underlying categories and need for story form would result in curriculum change. Egan's approach is not to add stories to existing structure but to alter the entire curriculum. Story would not be confined to trade-book fiction. Instead, it would infuse the social studies. Story would be the curriculum, allowing children to explore what Egan considers their most basic question: "What's it all about?"

What it's all about is a life and death struggle against ignorance, fear, poverty and hatred; it's a struggle for security, love, confidence and knowledge. And at its heart ... it is infused with mystery .... Children can have access to all of this in one form or another; to the sense of mystery at the heart of things, to the knowledge of good and evil, to the fears and struggles and failures and successes in building and sustaining a society and a culture to the fallibility and strength of individuals .... We do not build towards these fundamental perceptions by means of provincial trivia.

Egan's proposal is supported by the work of several scholars researching the connection between child and story. One of these, James Moffat, stated that children do not differentiate their thoughts into the categories of discourse available to most adults. For a long
time the child explains himself and understands others almost entirely through story. Building on the child's way of knowing makes narrative an essential part of the social studies, as more than an aid in developing human relations.

Kieran Egan's proposals concerning the link between narrative and learning in the social studies is also supported by the earlier work of Louise Rosenblatt. In 1938 Louise Rosenblatt set forth a description of the literary experience as it relates to history and the social sciences. In the wake of renewed interest in what happens between reader and text, Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* has been revised and reissued. As it has been particularly influential in preparing the present work, *Literature as Exploration* is discussed here in some detail.

Louise Rosenblatt considers the nature of encounter between reader and text to be reciprocal. The reader responds in terms of his temperament and background of experience to the text. The nature of his response and the meaning he brings to the text must be considered basic teaching material in any educational use of literature. Personal involvement in the text, Rosenblatt explains, generates greater sensitivity to imagery, style and structure. This in turn enhances the reader's understanding of the human implications of the text. "Growth in human understanding and literary sophistication sustain and nourish one another." The link with experience and interest makes the work live for the reader. Experience, in this sense, can be both general life experience and past literary experience. From this element of personal emotion grows interest which allows the reader to enter the created
world of the story and feel as well as think about the life-style created there. 63

Rosenblatt's argument for literature as the emotional, explorative element in the social studies rests on the reciprocity described above. Literature operates in the growth of social concepts by developing human sensitivity and by nature of being an image-forming medium. The human complications which appear in literature reflect what is recognized as important enough to be made explicit. Frequently stereotyped conceptions of human nature appearing in fiction grow out of this social context. 64 Rosenblatt argues that literature functions in the area of human relations and as a social document. Unlike Bartch, she cautions that the power ascribed to literature as a medium of change is limited by other social conditions. The stereotype and its refutation grow from the same social matrix, filtered through the experience and perceptions of an author. Literature may serve to diffuse social thought and to develop a "social imagination" but it does not appear out of social context. The literature attacking the prevailing culture is as much a part of that culture as work glorifying it and should not be assumed to be more influential than can be justified. 65

Literature also functions in the area of cultural assimilation by providing images of behavior and appropriate ways of thinking and feeling about behavior. Literature suggests ways of seeing; it links behavior with accompanying emotional response. 66 Through books, readers can assimilate moral and social attitudes, customs or racial attitudes. Unless selection is severely limited, however, cultural assimilation need not mean that literature functions to confine the reader to a narrow
interpretation of society. Books can serve to release the reader from provincial views of the world by providing experience with more complex cultural patterns than would otherwise be available. The reader has the opportunity to see the variety of choices open to him. As a result he may come to see himself and society more rationally. The author's construction can reveal the life around the reader or propose alternative images.

Louise Rosenblatt describes the habits of mind essential to sound literary judgment in terms of reflective thinking. John Dewey's description of reflection brought to bear on life problems applies to literature. The process begins with conflict or discomfort giving impulse to thought. Without emotion, however, reflection is incomplete. Emotion involves the reader in perplexity from which thinking grows. Problems in the abstract are more easily considered than those with emotional impact, but they are unreal. Real problems involve emotion and cannot be fully understood without reference to the feeling component. Some social studies educators, Rosenblatt claims, have looked to literature as an aid in acquiring information. While that might be a by-product of the literary experience, it is more significant that literature can create a sense of the human implications of information. Literature forces information beyond easily dismissed abstractions; it describes human situations and human emotions. Again, reciprocity functions. Out of human empathy the reader understands and may desire more information. Fact and fiction nourish each other. Fiction reminds the reader that behind generalizations and statistics lie living, feeling people. Fiction describes the universal in particular terms. The social sciences
tell the student that behind the particular situation there operate general social situations. Literature and the social sciences combine to aid rationality, a "working harmony among diverse desires."

Rosenblatt's explanation of the relationship between literature and social studies denies the worth of information-as-fiction books for children. When Robert Lawson complained of the crop of books with titles such as "Little Kookoo, the Eskimo, and His Pet Narwhale," he echoed Rosenblatt's objection to sugar-coating information. These stories in which characters were types, not individuals, in no way function in Rosenblatt's construction.

Louise Rosenblatt's theories on literature as exploration incorporate arguments advanced by Hilda Taba, Dewey Chambers, Muriel Crosby and Kieran Egan while maintaining her essential point that literature and social studies nourish each other and the reader. By nature of the relationship between the two, it becomes possible for concept construction and values education to occur, for human relations to improve and increases the likelihood of a rational, educated citizenry. By excluding literature from the social studies curriculum educators strain the links that can exist and may limit the power of learning in social studies for children.

**Literature as Social History**

When an author sets pen to paper and tells a story to a child the intention is generally to involve the reader in a created world. Rarely does an author conceive of his work as social history that will increase adult understanding of one historical era or another. One doubts that Shakespeare wrote his plays to tell twentieth century readers about
Elizabethan England or that E.E. Milne planned on letting us know about the life of an upper-class British child. It is probably best so; a self-conscious author is less likely to tell a good story or to write good history. In some ways it is the implicit assumptions an author makes that delineate a historical era. Children's books that attempt to present historical information, Leland Jacobs observed, are less likely to have the impact of a well-written novel in which information is unobtrusive. Especially in children's literature, the story must be an encounter with "truth" as well as information. Literary truth, filtered through the values and perceptions of the author, is one agent in the enculturation of youth.

Literature also provides information on society's attitudes toward children and childhood. In stories, images of children are presented that reflect perceived reality and a wished-for ideal. The volume of literature for children is also indicative of the regard for childhood in society. The content of the stories reflects what was regarded as appropriate for children, or needed by them, or understandable to them. Narrative supplies social data reflective of prevailing social attitudes and historical influences.

The Relationship Between Children's Literature and Social History

Several scholars have noted a relationship between the content of literature for children and the content of the culture from which it grows. In 1945 Leland Jacobs proposed a method for looking at that relationship. Jacobs suggested that culture was reflected in children's fiction in two forms. First, the material culture, generally the most obvious, is the pattern of daily living presented through cultural
details such as dress, recreation, holidays, occupations and the like. Second, the non-material culture is concerned with values, beliefs and morals. The most difficult to observe, the non-material culture is generally imbedded in the action of the story and may be unconsciously accepted by the reader. To fail to accept the non-material culture is to fail to believe the "truth" of the story.

Jacobs suggested two difficulties in dealing with the non-material culture in children's fiction. First, verbal acceptance of ideals may be denied by action in the story, and second, conflicting views may co-exist in the same story. Such conflict may be an eloquent expression of the external culture; no culture exists without change or conflict on the non-material level. It would be unrealistic to expect literature to present a monochromatic picture of a polychromatic society. If we claim that literature is a social document—a product of its times—we must also accept the inconsistencies that entails.

Adult literature has been accepted as a source material for the social historian for some time, but it is only recently that children's literature has been so regarded. Leland Jacobs recognized the historical nature of children's literature, though his own interest was in fiction as an agent of democratic acculturation. Not until 1948 did attention focus on a social history using children's literature as a major source. *American Children Through Their Books* studies the status of the child in America as revealed in children's books. Monica Kiefer traced a movement toward the gradual emancipation of the child that paralleled increasing political freedom for the American people. As the country expanded and moved toward more democratic goals, the status of the child
advanced. Increased publication of children's books was indicative of the change, as were illustrations which depicted freedom in dress and play.\textsuperscript{76}

Kiefer also concluded that children's books were an elitist literature. For instance, at the end of a description of the little match girl, "all good children" are reminded that the comfort they enjoy is the result of the labor of the poor who are "entitled to much humanity and no ill will."\textsuperscript{77} The attitude expressed by "all good children" was part of the non-material culture, an assumption so basic as to be unconscious. "Good children" did not include poor children.

Though Kiefer concluded that the status of the child improved, she did not reach the same conclusion about the status of children's literature. As an occupation, writing for children was reserved for women and therefore remained fairly low in status. Children's literature also suffered from the assumption that the married woman should have no occupation aside from home and family and while single women were allowed occupations, they were not considered to have any understanding of children. The future of children's literature in the early eighteen-hundreds did not look very promising.\textsuperscript{78} Not until the twentieth century did children's literature receive the attention of serious scholarship.

In the twentieth century children's literature was "discovered." Paul Hazard, in \textit{Books, Children and Men} made a number of claims for the beneficial effects of children's literature, including its ability to reflect the character of a country. One must be careful of Hazard's
claims, however, as he tended to romanticize the effect of books and children. Of children he wrote:

Reason does not curb them, for they have not yet learned its restraints. Happy beings, they live in the clouds, playing light-heartedly without a care.79

Because Hazard's definition of childhood is ignorant of the life experiences of many children, his statements about the picture children's literature presents of child life must be viewed with caution. In discussing the "national traits" he saw so clearly in children's books, Hazard described nursery rhymes as springing from "the hidden depths of nation's soul."80 Children's literature is also supposed to form and sustain "a national soul."81 Hazard explains that this soul is affected most by subtle teaching:

Children's books keep alive a sense of humanity. They describe their native land lovingly, but they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live ... and so it comes about that in our first impressionable years the universal Republic of Childhood is born.82

In a more reasoned vein, Gillian Avery investigated children's books in nineteenth-century England. She, too, found a strong cultural imprint, largely middle-class, in children's books.83 In America, Abraham Rosenbach concluded that the cultural imprint was so strong that "... no better guide to the history and development of any country can be found than its juvenile literature."84

William Targ, in Bibliophile in the Nursery, claimed that children's books were most significant because they were read in the child's formative years. As a result, a good children's book could "strike a vibration in the soul that lasts a lifetime."85 Looking at children's books,
then, could help bridge the gap between the youth that was, the adult he has become and the adults of the future. By understanding something of times past, we may gain some understanding of the formative influences on the present. At least we may find that the study of children's books illuminates changing ideas concerning children and childhood.
The Affect of Literature in the Social Studies Curriculum

Values Education
1. Provide medium for comparing value systems
2. Literature as a historical document of social change

Citizenship Education
1. Inculcate appropriate values
2. Develop 'good' citizen

Human Relations
1. Bibliotherapy
2. Cultivate sensitivity—"other-centered-ness"

Louise Rosenblatt Transactional Theory
Accommodates portions of the categories advanced by others.

Concept Construction
1. Make information more palatable.
2. Provide 'depth of understanding' lacking in traditional social studies

Child-Development Theory
1. Children understand via story
2. Children make sense of the world via story
3. Stories relate to children's categories
Footnotes


9Meek, et.al., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

10Ibid.


12*Ibid*.


14White, *op. cit.*, p. 50.


19 Ibid., p. xiii.

20 Ibid., p. 275.

21 Applebee, op. cit., p. 128.

22 Meek, et al., op. cit., p. 63.

23 Applebee, op. cit., p. 129.

24 Meek, et al., op. cit., P. 10.

25 Applebee, op. cit., p. 132.

26 Ibid., p. 129.

27 Ibid.


29 Ibid., p. 20.

30 Ibid., p. 18.

31 Rosenblatt, op. cit., p. 36.

32 Ibid., p. 37.

33 Ibid., p. 38.


36 Ibid., p. 100.

37 Ibid., p. 101.
A number of works discuss this topic, including previously cited work by Louise Rosenblatt, Arthur Applebee, D.W. Harding and Barbara Hardy. In addition, research in progress by Janet Hickman at The Ohio State University, indicates that the connections a child makes with a book are quite complex; that the child has the story the author meant to tell on paper in front of him, but has another story that may be quite different in his mind.

Taba, With Perspective, p. 102.

Ibid., p. 138.


Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Ibid., p. 4.


Ibid., p. 117.

The role of literature in offering alternatives is discussed at length in Arthur Applebee, The Child's Concept of Story, in Louise Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration and in Selections in section one of The Cool Web, all previously cited.


Ibid., p. 111.

Ibid., p. 114.


Ibid., p. 42.
53Ibid., p. 44.


55Ibid., p. 44.

56Ibid., p. 132.

57Ibid., p. 133.

58Ibid., p. 134.

59Meek, et.al., op. cit., p. 8.

60Rosenblatt, op. cit., chapter six.

61Ibid., p. 51.

62Ibid., p. 53.

63Although Rosenblatt describes this as a vicarious experience—in keeping with the dictionary definition of that term—it compares with Harding and Applebee in their use of construed and re-construed experience.

64Rosenblatt, op. cit., p. 91.

65Ibid., pp. 186-187.


67Ibid., pp. 191-193.

68Ibid., p. 195.

69Ibid., p. 227.

70Ibid., pp. 239-241.

71Ibid., p. 238.


74Ibid., pp. 72-73.

75Ibid., p. 177.


77Ibid., p. 94.

78Ibid., p. 92.


80Ibid., p. 81.

81Ibid., p. 111.

82Ibid., p. 145.


CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL SCENE, 1920-1929

Introduction: The Twenties

In the opening years of the twentieth century Americans were interested in reform. Social Darwinism not withstanding, numbers of Americans believed that human progress could be spurred by social reform. Theologians preached the social gospel, proclaiming that Christians had an obligation to deal with this world as well as the next. In 1908, the Federal Council of Churches outlined the "Social Creed of the Churches." This document included such progressive platforms as support for the "principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions ... the abolition of child labor ... a living wage ... and the abatement of poverty."1

The spirit of reform touched schools as well as industry. Educator John Dewey called for a change in traditional patterns of schooling. Unlike traditionalists who viewed education as learning things, Dewey proposed that the purpose of education was to equip humans with the capacity to cope with novel situations. Thus the tendency of schooling to promote passivity had to change. Schools should fit children. In addition, schools were to promote cooperation rather than the competition that stressed individual success.2

Even the time-honored stance of avoiding foreign alliances sway under pressure from reformers. An Association for International Conciliation advocated peaceful cooperation with Europe.3 Dewey
suggested that Americans' fear of entangling alliances was obsolete and dangerous. "In actuality we are part of the same world as that in which Europe exists and into which Asia is coming. Industry and commerce have interwoven our destinies."4

Dewey's remarks, published in 1961, found America on the brink of war. The reformist zeal turned international affairs into a crusade. The slogan "Make the world safe for democracy," was calculated to create in American minds the idea that they were about to engage in a just war. Perhaps wars need such rallying cries to direct national emotion and energy for the duration. Certainly it was naive to expect not only that the world would be safe for democracy, but that it would be democratic.5 Illusion failed to survive the war. High expectations, especially among liberals, disappeared in the post-war reaction and the nineteen-twenties were born.

Aftermath of War

Born in the aftermath of World War One, the twenties died in the Crash of 1929. The ten year period was so traumatic that survivors felt compelled to label it: "The Jazz Age," "The Lost Generation," and "The Decade of Bad Manners."6 And over all the twenties was cast the shadow of the Great War. War was the yardstick for much of the social history of the time. Pre-war and post-war were significant dating devices. Nor was this turmoil confined to the "highbrows." Though many Americans did not consider themselves lost or their world chaotic and meaningless, few people remained entirely untouched. The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the ways in which America survived the aftermath of war.
Reaction to War

Disillusionment followed quickly after the peace. To many it seemed that the war had been a terrible mistake. They felt betrayed. The old values and the old idealism were rejected. As Dewey had predicted in 1961, the war fervor collapsed and what had once been patriotic, right and good, became anathema. Caught up in the war-fervor of 1961, citizens had demanded military drill in schools for the preservation of democracy. In the post-war twenties, courses in world friendliness and permanent peace were advocated to prevent another world holocaust. The post-war pendulum swung from one extreme to another. What was valued before the war was likely to be replaced by its opposite. Pre-war idealism, reform liberalism and optimism gave way to pessimism, irresponsibility, rugged individualism and iconoclasm. The disillusioned might have been a minority, but they were vocal and influential. As Frederick Lewis Allen commented, they were part of the "fads, fashions and follies of the time, the things which millions of people thought about and talked about and became excited about and which at once touched their lives ...."

The animosity of war failed to disappear with peace. Instead, enmity was diverted toward enemies at home. Enemies were not hard to find. Pre-war trends of antagonism toward Catholics, Jews and Southern Europeans remained. The nativist leanings stirred up during the Progressive Era remained. The wartime fear of alien saboteurs hung on. Conversion from wartime fear to peacetime dread of foreign radicals disrupting America's stubborn fight for normalcy came easily. One
hundred percent Americanism rallied the fearful to fight the tide of European immigrants and the rise of radicalism at home.

Immigration actually showed a net loss during the latter half of 1919. Aliens left America for Europe, disillusioned by their reception in the United States and having accumulated some savings during the war. This might have diverted anti-immigration fervor, but the tide turned in May of 1920. Arrivals reached 5,000 per day at Ellis Island that May. Unemployment worsened as veterans flooded the job market, and much of the American press reacted with outrage. Newspapers charged the immigrants with undermining the entire economic system. Madison Grant's reissue of *The Passing of the Great Race* added pseudo-science to outrage. Newspapers began to sprinkle anti-immigration articles with such terms as "mongrelization" and reference to Nordics, Alpines and Mediterraneans. Lothrop Stoddard, lawyer and historian, wrote *The Rising Tide of Color*, in which he warned of the menace of the Under Man, racially impoverished opponent of the white elite. Stoddard, as with the rest of those espousing scientific racism, drew on the eugenics movement. The logic of eugenics held that the multiplication of unfit, non-white persons far exceeded that of the fit, white population, thus imperiling the world. Data from I.Q. tests were also used to support eugenics. If the unfit were truly out-producing the fit, then inter-marriage, particularly in the face of the charge of mongrelization, was to be avoided at all costs. Combined with a loathing of the outside world lingering after the Great War and a post-war reaction calling democratic values into question, few checks could stem the nativist hysteria.
Henry Ford felt unconstrained in publishing anti-Semitic attacks in *The Dearborn Independent*, disseminating the fraudulent "Protocols of Zion," and fear of "the international Jew."\(^{14}\) Congress passed restrictive immigration legislation and even considered banning all further immigration. With public support, Congress decided that what America needed in the nineteen-twenties was homogeneity and unity. Belief in America as a great melting pot diminished; America closed her doors and declared herself finished and sufficiently cosmopolitan. Despite the words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, America did not want the world's poor and hungry. Americans feared jobless masses in their already jobless economy. There was fear, too, of the "abnormally twisted" immigrant, the "unassimilable Jew ... filthy, un-American and often dangerous in their habits."\(^{15}\)

Though total suspension of immigration was suggested, a quota system was finally chosen. The Quota Bill of 1921, passed over Woodrow Wilson's veto, enabled the Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island to report by 1924 that "virtually all immigrants now looked exactly like Americans."\(^{16}\) Not until the mid-twenties did anti-immigration feeling begin to wane. John Higham suggests that it was checked by the resurgence of old values. Perhaps, too, the new quotas made the problem less visible and therefore less urgent. Undoubtedly the residual effects gave new power to the idea that national loyalty equaled political and social conformity.\(^{17}\)

Pressure to conform, to be loyal, was not subtle in the nineteen-twenties. Rumors grew of a radical conspiracy against the United States. The radicals most easily attacked were the communists.
Bolsheviks came to the United States, it was claimed, in boatloads of despised immigrants. In some newspapers and journals of the early twenties Jews were equated with communism. Jews were supposed to be radicals--Jewish Bolshevik became redundant; and proof was offered in the "Jewish Bolshevik doctrines of Morris Hilquit and Leon Trotsky."\textsuperscript{18} Feeling ran so strongly against radicalism that raids were directed by the federal government against suspected radicals which "set a new record in American history for executive transgression of individual constitutional rights."\textsuperscript{19} These Palmer Raids, named for Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer who instituted them, deported suspects to Russia via Finland. The deportation ship, the S.S. Buford, became known as the "Soviet Ark."\textsuperscript{20} Not even the children were forgotten, for the call came to censor textbooks, speakers and curricula. Teaching reverence for the Constitution was to be both universal and compulsory. Pressure increased on the schools to instill respect for America's heroes and history.\textsuperscript{21}

For those untouched by immigration restriction or the Red Scare, and still non-conforming either by choice or by virtue of race or religion, there was the Ku Klux Klan to contend with. The Klan was anti-Semitic, anti-Roman Catholic and anti-foreign. It was also strongly rural and fundamentalist. Religion was such an intrinsic part of the Klan that a member claimed the Klan stood for the same things as the church, "but we did the things the Church couldn't do."\textsuperscript{22} Even clergy were involved. In 1921 a Methodist minister and Klan member shot a Roman Catholic priest to death on the priest's doorstep. The assassination appears to have been in reaction to a rumor that the Pope was
planning to invade Florida.\textsuperscript{23} By 1923 the Klan reached its zenith, with the largest memberships in Ohio and Indiana. An outraged urban press combined with urban liberals, old-line conservatives and minority groups to denounce the Klan and seek legal repression. The Klan lost power after 1924, as much from internal dissension as external pressure.\textsuperscript{24} Dwindling along with anti-immigration and anti-Bolshevik fervor, the Klan retained some influence in rural areas. The association with fundamentalism and rural America made the Klan an examplar of much of what young intellectuals rebelled against.

The Klan was part of the rejected rural and middle-America which cultured Americans saw as an affront to their most deeply held beliefs. Intellectuals turned away from America, bitter, alienated and contentious.\textsuperscript{25} Rural middle-America became a metaphor for stodgy, dry-as-dust fundamentalism. Middle-America was the place one came from but where one never stayed. Small town residents despised the urban intellectuals who, in turn, despised middle-America. Urban life represented the negation of the most deeply held values of middle-America. The technological city and the power of reason equated with urban dwellers were an affront to the fundamentalist beliefs of many small town and rural dwellers. In the conflict between the two it often seemed that religion and sobriety and virtue were synonymous with the country, while scientific technology, agnosticism and immorality dwelt in the city. The fact that these perceptions were neither true nor false made the antagonism no less fierce.

With the passage of prohibition it appeared that rural strength had prevailed, but the urban intellectuals refused to surrender.\textsuperscript{26}
The changes in manners and morals characteristic of the 1920's grew in part from the intellectual revolt against old restrictions, and it was here that inroads were made in middle-America. The changes might have been more obvious in urban areas, but the countryside was not immune. Americans of the twenties began to discard the restrictions of the past.27

Changes could be found in many areas, but one of the most obvious changes occurred in relation to the role and status of women. Frederick Lewis Allen commented that women in the nineteen-twenties wrote a new code for themselves. The nineteenth century code for women went somewhat as follows:

1. Women were guardians of morality and virtue. They were made of finer stuff and could (should) act accordingly.

2. Young girls should look forward in innocence to a romantic love match which would result in marriage and the traditional end--"Happily ever after." They were to allow no man to kiss them until the right man came along--and presumably proposed.

3. While some men succumbed to temptation, it was only with a special class of outlawed women who were shunned by all decent women.

4. It was generally agreed that it was morally wrong for women to smoke or drink.28

Conservatives added a fifth article in reaction to hair styles in the twenties. This article declared that it was a sign of radicalism at best and free love at worst for a woman to wear short hair.29 In July of 1920 The New York Times added short skirts to violations of the code.
The Times complained that the American woman had "lifted her skirts far beyond any modest limitation." The hem rose a shocking nine inches above the ground. Nine inches must have looked modest soon after as stockings rolled below the knee and hems rose above the stockings. Visible use of cosmetics gained popularity. Women gained passage of suffrage, and it seemed to some that women had consolidated their position as "man's equal."30 There was talk of companionate marriages and birth control becoming legal.31 A new openness in male-female relations relaxed restrictions on conversations, books and theatre. Plays such as "What Price Glory?" and "Strange Interlude" drew large audiences, and novels dealt more openly with sex.32

Changes in the status of women in the economic world were frequently mentioned. The 1920 census revealed over eight million women in the work force, employed in 437 different job classifications. There were women plasterers and lawyers, bankers and entrepreneurs. This was the "New Woman," "... cigarette in mouth and cocktail in hand ... shocking and unshockable."33 To her male contemporaries, woman's economic equality appeared firmly established. Once financially independent, they said, she shed the moral and paternal hand of home. Her flapper image appeared in journals throughout the twenties.34

Whether or not women gained what was claimed for them economically and socially, it was true that they gained a good deal of attention and publicity. Avoiding the new woman would have been a difficult task. Her image was ubiquitous, and that can be as influential as reality. The new woman was the beneficiary (or victim) of the new media. Her "liberation" was reported in tabloids presenting American life as a
round of sports, violence and sex. Her new freedom was exploited in
bathing beauty contests. Finally, as if to insure that no American
remained unconscious of the new women, she was discussed on radio.
On November 2, 1920, KDKA, Pittsburgh, opened as the first broadcast
station and radio grew to a national passion. Rural areas were in
touch with modern trends via radio.

Radio was only one sign of the changes evident in the twenties.
The war also changed America. Even the nativism endemic to the early
twenties took its strength from the anti-democratic intellectual climate
of the post-war period. The war placed its stamp on the urban-rural
conflict and the angry rejection of middle-America by its young intellec-
tuals. So, too, with women, who gained greater freedom as the old
social codes eroded. The media facilitated these changes by publicizing
them wherever newspaper, tabloid or radio entered a home. Before
the nineteen-twenties, an intellectual revolt might have provoked less
interest, less outrage and considerably less publicity. It might also
have been less influential in its own time.

Intellectual America

In 1928, 437,000 people left the United States by ship for foreign
ports. A significant proportion of them were part of what Frederick
Lewis Allen called the "rush of innocents abroad." In the second
half of the twenties, when prosperity seemed the birthright of almost
every American, young Americans fled to Europe. They rejected Coolidge
Prosperity, the Horatio Alger success story and Middle America. As they
left they fired parting shots at religion (particularly fundamentalism),
monogamy, middle class morality, censorship and the repression of the
intellect in America. Those who could not get all the way to Europe offered their criticism from urban refuges such as Greenwich Village. Labelled "highbrows," Allen defined them as:

[The men and women who had heard of James Joyce, Proust, Cezanne, Jung, Bertrand Russell, John Eddington; who looked down on movies but revered Charlie Chaplin, could talk about relativity even if they could not understand it, knew a few of the leading complexes by name, collected Early American furniture, had ideas about Progressive education and doubted the divinity of Henry Ford and Calvin Coolidge.37]

A minority, their voice was loud in the land. Books reflecting the intellectual critique of America flooded the market. In 1922 Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt joined Mainstreet and Harold Stearns' Civilization in the United States in proclaiming America an emotional and aesthetic wasteland.38 Along with scores of articles and books, the intellectuals demanded an end to legally enforced propriety, censorship and a culture of mass production. They scorned religion and intolerance, while indulging in debunking as a favored pasttime. The popular intellectual hero was stifled in his hometown and fled for his cultural life to Manhattan or Paris. From there he wrote articles such as "Our American Stupidity," or "Childish Americans."39

The intellectual's discovery of America's "cultural immaturity" was an integral part of the social and moral criticism of the decade.

American society failed to provide a place for the uncommon person. Among intellectuals it became popular to point out the absurdities of democracy. The leveling effect of America's version of democracy were claimed to be particularly insidious. Scorn was heaped on religion along with democracy. Christian virtue, the intellectual claimed, was
no more to Americans than "a business asset, pure and simple."\textsuperscript{40} Democracy and Christianity appeared to conspire against the individual.

Although the preceding discussion refers to intellectuals as a group, they were not an organized, cohesive whole. Their most striking characteristic was rejection and refusal—"refusal of the comfortable platitudes of the middle class."\textsuperscript{41} This attitude failed to survive the Crash of 1929, but while it lasted it encouraged a spirit of experimentation, disrespect for tradition and enthusiasm for controversial ideas. Refusal and rejection were particularly evident in the literary world.

\textbf{American Writer's in the 1920's: The Expatriates}

Gertrude Stein once opined that writers have two countries, "the one where they belong and the one in which they live really. The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but it is really there."\textsuperscript{42} For many American writers this second country of the imagination was France.

Eighty-five writers are known to have spent time abroad in the nineteen-twenties. Of these, fifty-eight were between the ages of twenty and thirty-two in 1920. The majority of them came from small towns and farms in the Midwest and east and supported themselves by such odd jobs as could be had.\textsuperscript{43} Ford Maddox Ford estimated that the Midwestern expatriates produced eighty percent of the manuscripts written in English.\textsuperscript{44} They also had seen war. Many of the expatriates had first-hand experience in World War One, some suffered physical wounds, most retained psychological scars. Post-war America made them
uncomfortable, so they stayed in Europe and committed their memories and bitterness to paper.

The literature of the twenties reflected the war. There was scorn for America and its crude, vulgar pretensions. America was a businessman's country—practical. It knew nothing of death which survivors had discovered was not clean, hallowed or noble. Willa Cather might still demand that death have meaning, but she was an anachronism in the twenties. New writers such as the young Ernest Hemingway, had no time for sentimental heroes.

Frederick Hoffman describes the young writers as haunted by death, even courting it. Malcolm Cowley, describing his own war experiences, argues that this was not the case. While there was a thirst for danger, and the sense of imminent death, it was not dying that was attractive. Rather, the heightened sense of life brought on by the closeness of death was appealing. The goal was to survive what the writers knew to be a violent, irrational world. A sense of violation and outrage is present in the major works of these writers. War had been committed by the "elders, who were brutal, insensitive and stupid...."

Once the elders were found guilty of war, it was a logical step to indict all of the past. The Puritan in American history was discovered to have outlived the early settlement period and to have corrupted American life. It mattered little that the critique was unhistorical and prejudiced. The culprit had been found and from the 1908 publication of VanWyck Brook's *The Wine of the Puritans* to the 1930 publication of Mathew Johnson's *Portrait of the Artist as American*, the Puritan was
excoriated. In an orgy of self-approval, writers of the twenties found continuous evidence of Puritan transgressions.

American writers shared more than a rejection of the past. There was much in the present and foreseeable future to dislike. Eugene O'Neill's *Dynamo* and similar works worried about a technological takeover. In spite of their own flight away from rural areas, writers argued that technology stripped man of the "old mystery" that contact with nature provided. Sherwood Anderson suggested that woman should replace man in the factory: "she is and will remain untouched by the machine." For man, he said, the machine is degrading, humiliating and dispiriting. Along with women, primitive people were thought to be able to avoid technological contamination. "Primitive" music, art and tradition figured in much of the writing of the twenties.

For some writers, the new freedom, the "flapper," hip flask and youth held abiding fascination. While Hemingway wrote about death and war wounds in Italy, a spokesman for the Jazz Age appeared in F. Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda, lived like the characters they both wrote about. Their flamboyant life-style made them the archetype for characters in other books. The glamour and excitement of youth spoke in Fitzgerald's books, but he was not untouched by death, nor by the crassness of the life he lived and wrote about. Death was losing youth. Fitzgerald gave fictional life to a notion gaining in America, that this was the generation of youth. "The passing of time is itself an ominous event, to be feared for what it might bring of furrows, wrinkles, a slower step, and other jarring intrusions upon the sophomore spring." Fitzgerald also wrote of wealth and its absence.
Prosperity tormented him. His rich men never deserve their money. This was Fitzgerald's blast at America: The rich were not deserving; all the money was wasted.54

Though neither Hemingway nor Fitzgerald were the most read of American authors, they, and writers like them, were significant. The world they described symbolized much of the intellectual revolt of the twenties. That many of them felt it necessary to leave the country is, in part, a measure of the intellectual rejection of America. The war novels of Hemingway with their wounded and impotent heroes expressed the outrage of a people shell-shocked by war. The changes in manners and morals portrayed by Fitzgerald, the protest against science in O'Neill and the censure of small town America in Dreiser and Anderson grew in the intellectual climate of the twenties. Even if one refused to read them, or once read, rejected their work, an impact was made by virtue of the critical and popular attention paid them.

American Writers in the 1920's: Children's Literature

The authors of books for children were predominantly Midwesterners. Many attended eastern schools before they began writing. Several, including Elsie Singmaster and Booth Tarkington, had established reputations in the adult literary world. They too lived in the aftermath of war, were exposed to the writings of H.L. Mencken and Van Wyck Brooks, and heard America accused of killing the sensitive soul. They may have considered themselves sensitive people. They chose, however, to write for children rather than succumb to the prevalent intellectual temper. Their choice makes children's authors an interesting contrast to the authors of adult fiction.
Among those writing for children in the twenties, several won critical acclaim for their novels for pre-adolescents. Of these, Cornelia Meigs maintained the most enduring reputation for producing good literature, from the publication of Master Simon's Garden through her award-winning biography, Invincible Louise. Lucy Fitch Perkins also began writing before the war, but some of her most successful books were published in the twenties as part of the popular Twins series. Constance Skinner and Caroline Snedeker were lauded for historical fiction as were Charles Hawes and Eric Kelly. Numerous other authors were praised for their contributions to the field, but these are a sample of the leading figures in this genre as Hemingway and Fitzgerald were in theirs.

Lucy Fitch Perkins, the oldest of these authors, was born in 1865 and died in 1937. She spent almost half her life in the nineteenth century so despised by nineteen-twenties intellectuals. Her Puritan ancestors had come to New England on the Mayflower. Her father had been principal of a Chicago school and then moved into the lumber business. Perkins was sent to art school in Boston for three years and then moved on to teach at Pratt Institute. She married an architect and moved to Evanston, Illinois, where, in her own words, she "lived fully in the events and thought currents of the time."55 Perkins joined the Chicago Society of Artists, the Midland Author's Club, the Women's Club and the London Lyceum Club. Until 1911 she spent most of her professional life as an artist involved in commissioned murals for public buildings and homes. In describing how she came to write for children Ms. Perkins explained that in the early 1900's she was fascinated by two ideas:
One was the necessity for mutual respect and understanding between people of different nationalities if we are ever to live in peace. In particular I felt the necessity for this country where all nations are represented in the population. It was at about this time that the expression 'the melting pot' became familiar as descriptive of America's function in the world's progress. The other idea was that a really big theme can be comprehended by children if it is presented in a way that holds their interest and engages their sympathies.  

Around the same time, Perkins visited Ellis Island and was overwhelmed by the diverse population coming to American shores. Soon after, she observed in a Chicago school where twenty-seven different nationalities struggled with the complexities of language and culture. "It seemed to me it might help in the fusing process if these children could be interested in the best qualities they bring to our shores."  

Perkins began to write books about foreign lands and then about "what had been done for this country by those who had founded and developed it." She was particularly interested in the problems of land ownership, but most of all, Perkins meant her books to help "build the nation of the future." At her death, twenty-four Twins books had been published. In 1935 the two-millionth book bearing her name rolled off the presses. It is likely that children who had access to books were familiar with at least one by Lucy Fitch Perkins.  

Cornelia Meigs (pseud. Adair Aldon) was another prolific author. Born in 1884, Meigs spent her working life in the twentieth century, but her literary life was lived in America's past. She was raised on stories of proud ancestors such as Commodore John Rodgers and his seafaring descendants. It was part of family tradition that the first
ancestors to settle in America came because they were promised "decent and temperate living." Most of them followed the sea, passing down stories of sea battles and slave rebellions in far-away ports. For an author born in Rock Island, Illinois, the sea became a powerful influence. Even the stories her father told of his travels along the Oregon Trail failed to still the whisper Meigs said she heard each time she wrote: "Let it be about ships."\textsuperscript{60} In her adult years Meigs moved to the coast and lived in the ancestral home at Havre de Grace, Maryland.\textsuperscript{61}

Cornelia Meigs was graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1908. She taught in Davenport, Iowa for one year, then returned to Bryn Mawr as an instructor in English. She listed herself as Republican and Episcopalian.\textsuperscript{62} Unlike the noteworthy authors of adult fiction, Meigs refused to reject her heritage, whether religious, political or historical. Nor did she follow other intellectuals in rejecting her family. Ms. Meigs lived with her widowed father until his death. She frequently had one or more of her nieces and nephews living with her and took an active role in the lives of her sisters. When Meigs traveled in Europe, it was not as an expatriate, but as a tourist along with her niece. During the war Meigs left Bryn Mawr for a position with the War Department, and if she found the work disillusioning she did not mention it in print.\textsuperscript{63}

\textit{Horn Book} described Cornelia Meigs' work as an "expression of indomitable spirit triumphing over physical handicaps of pain and illness such as would incapacitate most of us."\textsuperscript{64} There is no specific illness mentioned and Meigs survived to eighty-nine years of age.
Whatever her physical problems, her personality must have been indomitable. She is described as having a "spiritual reserve and seriousness that shields her, like an armour of polished steel that reflects all, and is impenetrable."65

Cornelia Meigs explained that she came to write for children because in the years before the war, few good books were available for children. "[A]s time went on ... I began to understand that I was at the beginning of a great movement to recognize and remedy that lack."66 Meigs chose as her themes "the vital throbbing story of our country's development."67 Certainly Meigs was enthusiastic about the history of America. By 1928 she had published ten books, largely historical fiction, and received substantial critical acceptance. Clarissa Murdoch, a frequent literary critic for Elementary English Review, wrote in 1928 that Meigs' books were significant for the following reasons:

1. They proved that American history was full of exciting stories. Children reading Meigs' books would look upon history as something real and vital.

2. Cornelia Meigs wrote truthfully and entertainingly about important periods in America's story.

3. The reader was sure to feel the love of the country so strong in these books.

4. Meigs had a keen feeling for the beauty of America.

5. Her books have atmosphere.

6. Her stories appeal to the reader's imagination.68

Bertha Mahoney praised Meigs' work in terms that point out the essential difference between Cornelia Meigs and the highbrows. Meigs, Mahoney
claimed, was on the side of young people. She brought out "the innate human dignity of our boys and girls and how they rise to the occasion when history knocks suddenly at their door and asks something of them." Hemingway might have had some argument with history and its demands; Meigs did not. She believed that there was a plan for America, and that the country progressed towards its achievement.  

Cornelia Meigs represents the antithesis of the intellectual revolt of the twenties. While rejection and bitterness were well received in adult fiction, the reverse was true of criticism of children's books. Other authors of the genre support the contention that in children's literature the past was celebrated. Authors who kept stories of the past as others save the family silver, found publishers and an audience for their stories. One commentator exclaimed that history "as rich in romance and adventure as ours can scarcely help but make entertaining reading, and if at the same time they preserve a little of its traditions and spirit for the youth of today, they will have performed a great service as well."  

Constance Skinner sought to preserve America's traditions and to pass them on to youth in historical fiction. She was new to children's fiction in the twenties, having previously published frontier histories. As with Cornelia Meigs, Skinner grew up in a family steeped in history. Her father, "my measure of a man," worked for the Hudson Bay Company at a fur trading post. The group of log buildings around the post lay between a stage road and a river, affording Skinner the sight of canoes and pirogues loaded with furs and colorful trappers. Her father told her stories of Indians, native lore and wild animals. Besides filling
the lonely hours for the child, her father's tales passed on his "aesthetic passion" for the wild.73

The population of the northwest settlement, whites, Indians and Chinese, provided Skinner with diverse histories. Her mother, an invalid, taught her how to read, and finally, how to write the stories she loved.74 Constance Skinner's whole childhood created within her a desire to "awaken in Americans, both young and grown-up, a love for frontier history."75 She began as an historian, but soon decided that children were being "cheated out of many legitimate and patriotic thrills."76 Skinner set out to remedy that lack.

Constance Skinner's historical novels revolve around a young hero or heroine thrown into conflict with a villain. Generally the youth effects some reform in the villain. Skinner's stories praise the frontier virtues of self-reliance, courage and honesty. In some ways they are as unhistorical as the criticisms of the Puritan in America. Skinner took liberties with historical incidents, placing them several years on either side of the actual occurrence. Historical figures move about with no regard for historical evidence.77

In addition to rearranging history, Skinner wrote stories that ran counter to the trend in adult fiction of presenting death as unheroic and meaningless. Skinner's people die for causes and they do so bravely. Hornbook found much to praise in this approach to historical fiction. Skinner's books were claimed to teach important virtues.78

Cornelia Meigs drew on seafaring tradition as Skinner turned to frontier lore. Caroline Dale Snedeker grew up on another frontier and inherited an equally strong tradition of history and legend. Her
ancestors had settled on Nantucket among the Coffyns and Starbucks. Snedeker's childhood was sprinkled with tales of the hardy, self-reliant Quaker women who carried on while their husbands were at sea. Later, she wrote that the danger and isolation of island life bred unique people. After her own marriage, Snedeker lived part of the time on Nantucket or another New England island.79

Quaker ancestors made good stories, but Caroline Snedeker's own experiences were equally interesting. Born in 1871 in New Harmony, Indiana, Snedeker was the granddaughter of Robert Owen, founder of that utopian community. Above the door to the room in which she was born was imbedded a fossilized trilobite, symbol of the communitarians passion for science. Those among whom she lived believed in science and reason as passionately as the people in the surrounding towns professed religion. At a time when youth rebelled at the narrowness of their parents, Caroline Snedeker wrote that, far from inhibiting her, "My parents inspired me."80 She was proud that New Harmony had been founded for humanitarian reasons rather than monetary gain. She revelled in the world around her. There was always someone willing to talk to a child, to teach her. Her grandmother was a splendid narrator of history, whose stories were an integral part of the "lighted and glowing world" of childhood. The child, Caroline, had no desire to grow up, "to lose my wings and be a prosy grown-up. Few people really know when they are happy. But I knew."81

The death of Snedeker's father forced Caroline and her sisters to go on the concert circuit to earn a living. In recalling the era of uncomfortable trains, snowbound churches and smelly concert halls,
Snedeker claimed that the worst of it was the dress she had to wear. "Most things of the old time I love, but not the dresses. They were hideous." Music was her passion in those years. Not until her marriage to Charles Snedeker, rector of St. Paul's Cathedral in Cincinnati, did Caroline Snedeker start writing.

With her husband's encouragement Snedeker pursued her interest in classical Greece and Rome. The resulting books were well received, but it was not until she wrote *Downright Dency* and its sequel, *The Beckoning Road*, stories based on her Nantucket and communitarian heritage, that she gained real popularity. *Downright Dency* is still listed as one of the best children's novels of the nineteen-twenties.

Caroline Dale Snedeker is far from the "Lost Generation." Her adult life was lived as an Episcopal rector's wife, the epitome of middle-class respectability. She was shy, not partaking of the flapper life-style around her. After her husband's death, Snedeker retreated to Beach Island, Maine, where she and her stepson were sole inhabitants. Her intelligence was nurtured in an atmosphere conducive to critical thinking, but she seems to have retained a strong sense of decorum.

Perhaps female authors did not really feel as free as the flapper's publicity would have them feel. At any rate, they tended to live more restricted, conventional lives than did the leading male author's of children's fiction. The differences are minimal, however, in relation to authors of adult fiction. The two Newbery winners for 1924 and 1929 serve as an example. The distinction between male and female authors is made because children's lists were frequently divided by books for
girls and boys. Generally the sex of the author coincided with the sex of the intended reader.

Charles Boardman Hawes left little biographical information aside from a few paragraphs written by his wife. He had written his third historical sea adventure, The Dark Frigate, consolidating his reputation as a writer, when he was stricken with spinal meningitis and died at the age of thirty-four. His wife accepted the Newbery Award for him and read the praise offered her late husband. In the years before his death, however, Hawes managed to make an impact on children's literature, particularly in regard to what was considered appropriate for the young adolescent. His books managed to be rip-roaring adventures in the style of Treasure Island, and yet to move in new directions for the genre.

Born in Clifton Springs, New York, Hawes was educated in Bangor, Maine, and later attended Bowdoin College where he edited the college literary magazine, The Quill. He went on for one year of graduate work at Harvard University, appears to have avoided military service and moved on to the staff of Youth's Companion, a popular children's magazine. Hawes remained on the staff until 1920 when he moved to the associate editorship of Open Road. There he remained until his death. Whatever happened to him besides the biographical outline is unclear, but somewhere during those years he developed into a strong, uncompromising individual. He also acquired a passionate love for long walks and sailing ships. In her reminiscences, his wife spoke of twenty and thirty mile a day walks. Hawes began hiking in his teens, but could find only one companion stalwart enough to walk the distance with him.
As an adult, he was equally intense about his interests. Hawes' wife describes him as uncompromisingly honest, never pulling punches, never apologizing and yet always courteous. Mrs. Hawes describes her husband's passion for providing children with the best literature. To his sons, even as infants, Hawes read poetry that they might "come into their inheritance." He opposed the simplification of literature for children. When a local committee suggested buying a re-write of the Bible for the children's section of the library, Hawes was contemptuous. "Rewrite the Bible--the greatest literary achievement of all time? Who has the audacity to rewrite the Bible?"

Along with poetry and the Bible, Hawes exposed his sons to "adventures." For Hawes, adventure must be around every corner. This feeling is inherent in each of his books. Combined with technical knowledge gleaned from old ship's logs and building plans, he recreated the world of sailing ships. As with Cornelia Meigs and Constance Skinner, Hawes found the adventurous past a natural home for the values he prized. One critic explained these central values as strength of character, even in villains, straight speech and honest action, loyalty and trustworthiness in men and boys, common sense and a healthy philosophy of living. The same critic commented that there were too few books like these, that took one away from the industrial age and gave salt air to breathe and the company of brave heroes and bold villains.

Charles Hawes apparently enjoyed a good argument, and believed in tolerance of diverse ideas, though one suspects so positive a thinker might not have been quite so tolerant or as universally loved as his wife suggests. This strength of conviction, however, led him to write
tales for children with characteristics rare in children's fiction in the twenties. Violence and sex appear where other books stepped aside. Characters are drawn more strongly. They have human strengths and frailties, whether villain or hero. They are refreshing in an era when sweetness and light still threatened to overwhelm children's books.

Death is not glamorized by Hawes and a strong strain of anti-Puritanism can be seen in his work. His love of adventure, of the grand gesture, his scorn for the dull piety of the Puritan, move him towards the intellectual revolt of the twenties. Hawes' fictional men are closer to those in adult fiction than are those of any of the other leading writers for children. In Hawes, parts of the new and much of the traditional combine. Just before his death he had decided to write "mature fiction." It would have been interesting to see what he meant by that.

Eric Kelly, the 1929 Newbery winner, is a transitional figure. His book, The Trumpeter of Krakow, is part of a trend particularly strong in the thirties. The impetus for the book, however, was the experience of World War One. In his autobiographical notes, some years after the war, Kelly described his life in terms of what happened after 1929. What came before created the book upon which his reputation as an author rests.

During World War One, Eric Kelly was involved in establishing relief facilities in Europe. His success resulted in an invitation to continue his work in Poland. Kelly became so involved with the country and its people that he returned after the war to the University of Krakow as a student and instructor. The city fascinated him so much
that he felt himself "vibrating with the most exquisite pleasure..."90
Kelly spent hours each day in the Church of Panna Marja meditating and
studying the church in all its moods. He listened to stories and local
legends and steeped himself in Polish history. "The subject matter of
the Trumpeter had launched me into the destiny of a new nation. I was
one of those who were building Poland into a very miracle of a
nation."91 It seemed to Kelly that tolerance and a desire for peace
had grown out of the debacle of war. Publishers were demanding the
kind of romantic tale he wanted to tell. Eric Kelly wrote a book about
the phoenix rising out of the ashes of war. Not until 1926 did he
return to the United States and have his story published.92

Though he was to suffer the anguish of defeat later in the thirties,
Eric Kelly survived the bitterness of the post-war period by making
Poland his cause. In this way he delayed the realization that came so
quickly to other writers. Even in the thirties he fought to hang on
to his dream. When Hitler invaded Poland, Kelly worked to set up camps
for Polish refugees in Mexico. It was not enough.93 "I can never
express my anguish at seeing Poland broken ... occupied ... and surrend-
ered ... to the Soviets at Yalta."94 In 1954 Kelly retired from the
faculty of Dartmouth College and sought solace on Chebeague Island,
Maine.95

Eric Kelly may have delayed his own intellectual revolt to a
certain extent, but not entirely. He does not say how he felt about
America after World War One, but his return was brief. It was neither
America nor America's past he chose to write about. Kelly identified
himself with a country that appeared to be all the things for which one
could fight and nobly die. He ascribed to Poland the virtues Americans had once believed belonged to them. Kelly's anguish after World War II, when for the second time he saw the ideals of his youth destroyed, is not surprising. His championship of Poland marks the opening of the thirties in children's literature.

Summary

The social and intellectual conflict of the nineteen-twenties manifested itself in the contrast between the leaders of children's literature and adult fiction. In the themes, settings and character types portrayed, their work expressed different world views. Adult and children's authors responded to the war differently as well as to the "new freedom" of their time. The critique of democracy and America found them on opposite sides. Where adult fiction blamed democracy for the disaffection of the young intellectual, children's fiction indicated that democracy had been and should be again, America's strength.

There were points of contact, too: similarities in background, some common intellectual threads, even limited flight from the Midwest. Authors from both groups moved across the spectrum of intellectual debate so that no generalizations cover them all. In terms of social history, children's authors tended to be more conservative, adult authors more liberal. The authors of children's fiction were more likely to have stayed in the United States after the war. They retained a middle-class life-style, a sense of idealism and respect for what may loosely be described as traditional American values. Patriots rather than expatriates, they felt called upon to restore youth's interest in and enthusiasm for America's past. In this they moved against the
intellectual, if not the popular, current. They seem not to have felt similar enthusiasm for their own time. Where adult fiction portrayed the present as if there was neither past nor future, children's fiction ignored the present, celebrated the past and tried to save the future. Many children's authors found no place in the present for the themes they valued and saw little hope for the future if things continued as they were. Hope was in the past and in a resurgence of the old values.

An interest in history need not label one as conservative nor indicate a rejection of the present nor fear for the future. In this instance, however, there is evidence of a conservative trend in the nineteen-twenties in society in general and in children's literature in particular. This conservative tendency supported the popularity of historical fiction. Seven of the nine Newbery prizes awarded in the twenties went to historical fiction or stories set in foreign locations. Books of contemporary American life tended to be boarding school or outdoor adventure stories and did not receive the enthusiastic critical response accorded historical fiction. Critics consistently praised historical fiction in terms that left little doubt that contemporary life did not measure up to the past. A return to the values of the past and to role models such as Daniel Boone or Ethan Allen might turn the tide. The authors themselves felt a mission to supply good history for young people.

In addition to concern for the state of the world and especially its youth, other factors encouraged increased publication of historical fiction. There was popular demand for teaching history in the schools. The intellectual penchant for debunking was met by forces that demanded
compulsory citizenship training and teaching a litany of American heroes. The pressure was so great in some areas that any books praising the past must have pleased beleaguered schools.

The eugenics movement added interest in books that showed white courage and fortitude in conquering primitive, non-white natives. The authors might have written out of a passion for history and high adventure, but their work satisfied a variety of factions. Thus their work was more easily published, and once published, it drew praise from the literary world as well. Here was a body of well-written, exciting fiction that was pleasurable reading for children and had the added advantage of supporting the popular interpretation of American tradition.

There were points of contact between adult's and children's fiction. Educators such as John Dewey might call for cooperation and social awareness, but authors of children's fiction and their counterparts in adult's fiction persisted in their regard for individualism. Children's authors used history to bear out this view, claiming that democracy fostered the growth of the uncommon individual. Author's of adult fiction argued that quite the opposite was the case. Both were simplistic in their interpretations, particularly in regard to the "neo-primitivism" popular in the twenties.

Though the expatriates fled the hated Midwest and made no secret of their contempt, they were not so far removed from the children's authors. Children's literature advocated the virtues of the simpler, rural life, but it was not the Midwest, either. As with so many authors of adult fiction, children's authors grew up in the Midwest in
relatively small communities, grew to adulthood and headed east. The
countryside they lived in and often wrote about was New England. Most
of them lived at least part of the year near the ocean: rural, but
with easy urban access. In New England they could be country gentle-
folk without being isolated. There was history aplenty. It was a
solution most available to those whose livelihood depended neither on
writing nor on the land. A modest revolt, this, to live surrounded by
beauty, to be rural and yet escape to the city at will. In the thirties,
the struggling writers in Greenwich Village looked north, too, and
agreed that country living had its merits.96

There was more to the Villager's ten year delay than intellectual
revolt. The Village dwellers and expatriates who escaped the Midwest
escaped poverty as well as place. They could not survive as writers
in their old homes. This was not true of children's authors. Most of
them came from middle-class families. There was an intellectual and
historical tradition in most of their homes. Theirs were old families,
accustomed to certain physical and intellectual amenities. Though
poverty might threaten, these people had the resources to secure their
futures within the middle-class and still write. Some managed to find
security through academic achievement, others through marriage. Few
of them expected to support themselves or their families by writing.
Quite the contrary was true of the expatriates. For them writing was
both profession and livelihood. A frugal life in the city or in Europe
was economically wise. In addition, they did not share the same sense
of mission to Americans felt by Cornelia Meigs or Constance Skinner.
Perhaps children's authors retained their idealism because few of them went to war. Eric Kelly was a non-combatant. Cornelia Meigs worked in the War Department. Most of the others knew nothing of war first-hand. They might have felt differently had they been in Europe, but it is doubtful that a realistic war story would have won the praise offered Meigs' historical fiction. Children's literature offered refuge at the point where adult fiction rejected safe harbor.
Footnotes


15. Ibid., p. 309.
16 Ibid., p. 325.


18 Ibid., pp. 279-280.

19 Allen, op. cit., p. 56.

20 Ibid., p. 56.

21 Ibid., p. 61; Hicks, op. cit., p. 298.

22 Higham, op. cit., p. 294.

23 Ibid., p. 292.

24 Ibid., p. 298; Garraty, op. cit., p. 807.


26 Ibid., pp. 803-806.

27 Ibid., p. 809.

28 Allen, op. cit., p. 88.

29 Ibid., p. 3.

30 Ibid., pp. 89, 96.

31 Ibid., p. 118.

32 Ibid., p. 113.


34 Ibid., p. 50.

35 Allen, op. cit., pp. 77-81.

36 Ibid., p. 175.
37 Ibid., pp. 234-236.

38 Ibid., p. 237.


41 Ibid., p. 43.

42 Ibid., p. 46.

43 Ibid., p. 49.

44 Ibid., p. 51.


46 Ibid., p. 70.


49 Ibid., p. 302.

50 Ibid., p. 306.

51 Ibid., pp. 121-122.

52 Ibid., p. 131.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., pp. 132-133.


56 Ibid., p. 242.

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.


61 Meigs, op. cit., p. 38.

62 Anne Commire, Something About the Author (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Book Tower, 1971).


65 Ibid., p. 20.

66 Commire, op. cit., p. 6.

67 Mahony, Newbery Medal Books, op. cit., p. 121.


69 Mahony, Newbery Medal Books, op. cit., p. 120.


72 Constance Skinner wrote two books for the Chronicles of America series: Pioneers of the Old Southwest and Adventures of Oregon.


74 Ibid., p. 14.

75 Ibid., p. 16.
76Ibid., p. 18.


81Ibid., p. 329.


87Ibid., p. 31.

88Lovis, op. cit., p. 143.

89Ibid.

90Mahony, Newbery Medal Books, op. cit., p. 70.

91Ibid., p. 67.

92Ibid.

93Ibid.
94 Ibid., p. 68.
95 Ibid.
96 Cowley, op. cit., p. 91.
CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL SCENE: 1930-1940

Introduction: The Thirties

The Jazz Age, born in the wake of war, died in the midst of economic disaster. After October 29, 1929, America began its precipitous descent into depression. The Great Depression gripped America throughout the decade of the thirties. The long range effects still touch American life, for during those ten years Americans lost the innocence of the twenties. Those who had accepted the myth of prosperity were shaken by the rapidity with which it vanished after 1929. Some refused to believe that the economic downturn was anything but a temporary leveling, the natural safety valve of capitalism. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon advocated allowing the economy to find its own level. "Let the slump liquidate itself. Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate farmers .... People will work harder, live a more moral life. Values will be adjusted and enterprising people will pick up the wrecks from less competent people."1

By the end of 1929, three million people had lost jobs, and Secretary Mellon still insisted that an upswing in the economy was imminent.2 But prosperity was around a corner ten years distant. Full recovery would not occur until the outbreak of yet another war, much agony and many changes. The extent of those changes can be read in commentaries written in the early forties.

77
From the perspective of the forties it was easy to blame the Depression on the moral and social failures of the twenties. In her Master's Thesis, Beatrice Van Til describes the lack of standards in the twenties as the cause of the Depression. It was hard to remember why the Jazz Age had been so appealing, or why anyone had wished to be the perpetual juvenile. So much had changed. Skirts lengthened. Bobbed hair went out of style and a degree of formality returned. Americans who lived through the thirties knew life as a serious business, with little room for the frivolity of the past decade. Highbrows lost favor and George Babbitt no longer appeared worth worrying about. In 1931 Lewis Mumford declared that society had only been shedding its dead skin in the twenties. Within intellectual America the twenties were considered much ado about nothing. The thirties demanded immediate attention.

**Economic Depression**

"Sophocles could have written the script," Caroline Bird declared in the preface to *The Invisible Scar*. No one else could have captured the full impact of an event that threw into question some of the most fundamental social doctrines of the nation. Here was a country whose intellectuals and politicians had inherited the social doctrine of Herbert Spencer and William Summer. Poverty was the inevitable result of laziness or ineptitude, and certainly not the responsibility of the state. Private charity should suffice to aid the deserving poor, but at bottom, it was assumed that poverty was shameful. Asking for charity meant admitting not only economic difficulty, but personal failure. The Depression became America's discovery of poverty.
Americans lost control of their own lives. Many people became superfluous: without function in a society where function determined worth. Horatio Alger was a sick joke when there was hardly a bottom to start from. Bird describes the way newly unemployed people quietly dropped out of sight. At first they might dress for work each morning, walk away from home and return at closing time, maintaining the illusion of employment. Others simply pulled down the shades and stayed inside.7

Adults and children left home in increasing numbers in the thirties. Critics in the twenties had worried about the social forces working against the family. They discovered in the thirties that economic forces were considerably more effective. As employment slowed down or stopped, local charitable agencies tried to help; but soon their funds were depleted. In desperation, some of the unemployed turned to begging and stealing. The fact that other families were in the same circumstances reinforced these new patterns of behavior.8 The Depression reinforced a culture of poverty and encouraged the desertion of people who saw no hope in staying at home.

Employment did not exempt one from the effects of the Depression. Bird found that college women began majoring in economics. They lived frugally and volunteered in depressed areas. Social conscience became popular.9 Where the twenties intellectuals exalted the individual, the thirties agreed with Dorothy Parker that "There is no longer I. There is We. The day of the individual is dead."10

College women could afford the luxury of conscience. Not everyone else could. For those just making it, or about to go under, a set of
life-denying mores developed. Big families were considered an economic liability. Even marriage was a problem. Alfred Kazin uses a quote from Clifford Odett's *Awake and Sing* to point up the way marriage was viewed.

Ralph: Mom, I love this girl ....
Bessie: So go knock your head against the wall ....
a boy should have respect for his own future."11

Depression bred desperation. A job became more important than social causes for many Americans. People were willing to put up with unjust practices and unsafe conditions in order to be employed. When a Birmingham, Alabama advertisement announced 250 openings at twenty cents an hour, 12,000 men applied. Public relief could aid only a quarter of all those unemployed.12 Desperate Americans committed suicide in record numbers.

Suicide, however, was neither the only, nor most common, reaction to Depression. Fear was a common reaction, as evidenced in literature of the period. Nor was fear a literary invention. Relief was hard to get, and four out of five Americans of working age knew unemployment before the end of the decade.13 " Hoovervilles" sprang up to remind those still clinging to jobs that the world was cold and dark outside. Individual helplessness sometimes led to desperate selfishness.

On the other hand, there were those who responded by banding together to form bartering arrangements. People traded goods and services rather than money. They managed to provide support for each other in spite of fearful economic conditions. Families stayed together and scraped along. Some even recall the Depression as a time that brought families and neighbors together. "We needed each other. You didn't
need to ask. Everyone knew and helped. Not like today." There was a sense that bedrock values reappeared in crisis and carried people through.

There were also many angry Americans. Fear is not far removed from anger, especially for a people used to considering themselves exempt from the disasters visited on the outside world. An English observer noted that Americans were "baffled and enraged" by the Depression. It had been "an article of faith ... that America somehow was different from the rest of the world." During the thirties radicals received a better reception from more Americans than one would have thought possible a decade before. Intellectual migration patterns shifted from France to Russia. At one point, the Russian trading office in New York City was receiving 350 applications a day from Americans who wanted to settle in Russia.

The discovery of poverty brought political changes to America, aside from the interest of some intellectuals in Marxism. By the election of 1932 Americans were ready to blame Herbert Hoover for the Depression, to elect Franklin D. Roosevelt and to allow both the president and Congress considerable latitude in dealing with the economy. As a result government entered more and more into areas directly effecting the social welfare of individuals.

Change was not confined to politics or philosophy. Frederick Lewis Allen, writing of the first two years of the thirties, remarked on a noticeable change in attitude. Debunking, a popular twenties pastime, was going out of fashion along with the short skirt and cloche hat. People, Allen said, were weary of all the arguing. They no longer
stirred much about religious debates among Fundamentalists and the advocates of scientific materialism. Sigmund Freud had been found to be fallible, and was replaced by miniature golf as a national past-time.¹⁸

Long skirts and gloves, frills, ruffles and flounces, marked a change in the relations between the sexes, and in woman's perceived place in the world. The flapper was encouraged to grow up in the thirties. Advertisements presented a more modest, demure and romantic image. Reviewers noted that reticence and modesty were returning to theatre and literature. One did not lose one's intellectual credentials by admitting that "Sex, as a theatrical property is as tiresome as the Old Mortgage.... I don't care if all the little girls in all sections of the U.S. get ruined or want to get ruined or keep from getting ruined. All I ask is: don't write plays about it...."¹⁹

A softer, more alluring image of women also indicated another change in American life. While women had not been terribly secure economically in the twenties, their lot worsened as the Depression deepened. Those modest women in the ads were likely to be unemployed women at home.²⁰ They could not afford the flapper life-style had they wanted it, and the media discouraged that desire. Instead, women were advised to stay home and keep house. They had no business cluttering up the market place when men needed jobs so desperately.²¹

The one place where female employment did increase was in the area of politics. President Roosevelt encouraged the appointment of women to government agencies. During the New Deal, women participated in a number of departments, but were especially apparent in social agencies
where they affected mortgages, emergency relief to infants and mothers and similar concerns. The federal government entered the lives of women and children more thoroughly than ever before. Government provided relief and jobs. Children were soon familiar with Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) crews. Men and women were employed at all manner of jobs through W.P.A., including attending to the historical, cultural and recreational life of Americans.

The Rediscovery of America

Margaret Mead, in And Keep Your Powder Dry, claimed that Americans have a sense of a God who punishes them materially for wrong-doing. If that is so, perhaps it explains the sudden interest in America, for in the midst of Depression, Americans began some fascinating soul-searching. They began to look for what went wrong, but they also searched for a restoration of confidence. The social protest and record of pain that marked the search can be seen in the work of Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, especially, You Have Seen Their Faces. A restoration of confidence can be discovered in Bourke-White and Caldwell's Say! Is This the U.S.A.? Between the two is a wealth of journalism, art and government-sponsored projects.

Henry Luce founded Fortune and Life in the thirties in an effort to capitalize on a growing interest in American life. Life published the work of photographer Margaret Bourke-White, who became one of America's leading documentary photographers. Bourke-White was not the only one photographing America, however. Under the auspices of W.P.A., Roy Striker sent photographers across the country to capture the agricultural
life of America. Among those employed by Striker were Walker Evans, Ben Shan, and Dorothea Lang.25

In painting, a group of American artists also depicted the American scene. Grant Wood, John Curry and Thomas Hart Benton painted rural areas in Kansas and Iowa and the Far West. Under the W.P.A.'s Four Arts Program other artists, musicians and theatre people were employed in interpreting the American scene. Their style tended to be "proletarian," abounding in muscular characters wielding hammer or shovel before a blast furnace. Proletarian art was influenced by Marxism and the celebration of the worker. The style borrowed from the documentary form and neo-primitivism left over from the twenties.

American Writers in the Thirties: The Proletarian

The Depression marks a literary as well as social dividing line. Malcolm Cowley suggests that this is the common rhythm of American literary life: the new generation rejects the old in a passionate acceptance of new forms.26 Alfred Kazin credits the Depression with the abruptness of the change and the willingness of the old guard to retire from the scene.27 Kazin claims that the violence of the Depression precipitated intellectual changes that might never have occurred otherwise. The shock forced Americans to question their understanding of themselves and their own worth. They wanted to know why this had happened to them.28 The need to know the facts, to verify the reality of what was happening, led to a new literary technique. Various called reportage or documentary, this technique was the written equivalent of the camera's eye. In some of the most powerful Depression-born literature, camera and reportage combined. James Agee and Walker Evans
spent five years working on *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, an impressive story in words and pictures of life among white sharecroppers.29

Interest in social phenomena was a distinct break with the twenties, and a distinguishing feature of the thirties. The introverted soul-searching of the twenties, with its reliance on psychological theory was replaced by a determined social conscience. "I" was to submerge in "We," and together "We" would create a new social order. A new social order required dependable values. Malcolm Cowley suggests that writers of the thirties began the re-examination of the past in search of examples of appropriate values. Finally, they found examples and cause in the plight of the working classes.30 The popularity of proletarian themes encouraged, too, the development of a class of writers who had themselves been members of the working class. The "plebes," as Alfred Kazin named them, shared a radicalism with others of the new generation of writers. The Communist party attracted some who believed that Russia's planned economy was more humane than capitalism. Novels appeared with Marxist themes. The style was sometimes more appropriate to political journals than the novel form, with the result that much of it failed to survive beyond the Depression. Marxist novels, along with a tough-guy naturalism and the documentary style figure prominently throughout the thirties.31

Kazin suggests that writers in the thirties suffered from conflict between their desire to serve society and their need to serve their art. The didacticism of some Marxist novels represented the incompatibility of desire and need. Content replaced form and impact resulted from piling one bitter fact on top of another. Authors like James Farrell
and Erskine Caldwell used this technique to drive readers into the novels' desperate and despairing world. Kazin accounts for the new style by suggesting that the Depression had sprung writers free of tradition and the past. All they had was their writing and a sense of delirium shared with those who felt nothing around them but empty air. Like dying men, they were not bound by convention.32

The militant writers of the thirties found a sympathetic publisher in Malcolm Cowley and The New Republic. Their work was published or Cowley found books for them to review and so survive to write again. Cowley understood the appeal of left-wing politics and shared the belief that a new order was imminent. Looking back on the thirties, Cowley assigned that optimism to the first half of the decade. By the second half of the thirties, the Left was split into warring factions and came under attack from old allies. The sense of challenge and hope that marked the early thirties gave way to disillusionment.33

The political involvement of writers is important in understanding the literary climate of the thirties. Documentary realism or naturalism in literature was not simple reportage of facts. Rather, it was political and social criticism. Literature offered parables of social justice and injustice--the vindication of virtue. At least in the first half of the thirties the parables were optimistic: We can make a better future. Writers like John Steinbeck in Grapes of Wrath or Ernest Hemingway in For Whom the Bell Tolls, expressed desire for communion and companionship in the service of a great cause. To the slogan, "Life, Equality, Fraternity," they added "Dignity."34
Dignity was particularly significant as applied to America's dispossessed. Steinbeck found dignity among the Okies, Faulkner among Mississippi Blacks, Hemingway among Spanish guerillas and Agee among white Alabama sharecroppers. In words and pictures they described people such as Fred Ricketts, an Alabama sharecropper, saying "o lord god please for once, just for once, don't let this man laugh at me up his sleeve, or do me any meanness or harm" [sic] or "Preserve my dignity as a man."35

A notable change in attitude towards Blacks occurred in response to new social philosophy. Cowley notes Faulkner's change from the patronizing attitude of his twenties novels to the more sympathetic account in Go Down, Moses. Stirred by social guilt, the neo-primitivism of the twenties gave way to a more realistic portrayal of the Black experience. The naturalistic technique of the thirties was used by white writers to show the plight of Black characters, but it was also an effective tool for Black writers in explaining their own experience with social injustice. One of the most notable of these was Richard Wright. Perhaps Wright, like Dos Passos and Steinbeck, agreed that the Depression was too easily made invisible, and that documentary technique was needed to make it visible in all its agony. Nothing was hidden in Wright's novels. Instead he showed the conditions among which Black children grew up, conditions that denied human dignity.

Documentary expression recorded the Depression years as an accounting and as a political stance. Documentary expression tried to account for what had happened to "real" people, the working people who suffered most from economic reversals. Politically, documentary declared that
the working classes were the real people and that they had been dispossessed. Thirties literature attempted to serve both these social concerns, rejecting the individualism of the twenties.

Writers in the Thirties: Children's Literature

There were changes in children's literature in the thirties, but they were less extreme and moved in gentler, more poetic channels than did adult literature. Instead of documenting the trauma suffered by the real world, children's literature preserved a rational world that was essentially optimistic. With few exceptions, that world was safe and secure, a direct contrast to the insecurities encountered during the Depression.

The changes that did occur indicate that children's authors were not immune to the intellectual currents of their time. Though they responded quite differently than did their peers in adult literature. Where adult fiction raged, children's fiction adopted a quiet stance. The Depression was barely mentioned. Stories about solid families overcoming problems, or foreign people living close to nature appeared in increasing numbers. Instead of works of stark naturalism, there appeared a decided shift towards the poetic, especially in books dealing with peasant or native life. Perhaps the philosophy that a positive attitude was necessary influenced this trend. Perhaps it was a desire to provide beauty as some compensation for reality. Whatever the motivation, the contrast with the naturalistic, documentary style is striking.

Three major themes supported the shift towards more poetic children's fiction: peasant and native romanticism, American themes, and biographical reminiscences. Between 1931 and 1939, four Newbery Medal
books had foreign, peasant backgrounds. Of the remaining five, one was
a Navajo story, one a biography, two historical fiction and only one
had a contemporary setting in America. The richness of detail and
language, the celebration of nature and the spiritual quality charac-
teristic of almost all of them sets them in contrast to adult fiction.

**Fiction in a Foreign Setting**

The most noticeable change in children's fiction was the abundance
of books set in foreign countries. There had been such books in the
twenties, but the emphasis had been on the outsider's point of view.
America was considered superior to the rest of the world and exempt
from its problems. By the thirties, authors became much more interested
in depicting peasant life from the inside.

One of the most important of the authors of this type of fiction
was Kate Seredy. She was both artist and author, critically acclaimed
on both counts. Seredy was also a native of the country she wrote about:
Hungary. Born in Budapest on November 10, 1899, Kate Seredy did not
come to the United States until 1922. In the interim she was educated
as an artist in the Academy of Arts in Budapest. Seredy also took art
courses in Paris, Berlin and Rome.36 Her father, a teacher, took her
with him on travels throughout Hungary, and, according to one biographer,
instilled in the youthful Kate a hatred of intolerance, war and cruelty
as well as an "almost superhuman" will power. The same biographer also
noted Seredy's penchant for "all kinds of things from wild flowers to
politics."37

Kate Seredy credits her loathing of war to her experiences in a
war hospital during World War One. The one thing she learned during
that unhappy time, Seredy says, was discipline. "I learned that it does not matter how tired you are in mind and body; as long as there is a job to be done the job comes first. It has got to be done."38 The job Seredy chose for herself was to become an artist.

In 1922 Kate Seredy came to the United States. She claimed that it took two weeks to convince her that it was not "Kate Seredy, the great artist" who had arrived. After that she set to work learning from artists she considered among the best in the world.39 In 1935 May Massee of Viking Press suggested Seredy try writing as well as illustrating. The result was The Good Master, based in part on the author's experiences.

The Good Master is an example of what was prized in children's fiction. The story of life on the Hungarian plains is told from the perspective of two Hungarian children, not from an outsider's impressions. The style, which one reviewer called "marvelous, moving prose," was a poetic evocation of rural life. Seredy delighted in the natural world, in native crafts and decorative arts. She incorporated folklore into the narrative and native art into the illustrations. Both The Good Master and The White Stag are based on Seredy's philosophy that "one day the light of faith will again outshine the flaming red light of intolerance."40 Her belief in world salvation places her with writers of the early thirties, but her style is decidedly that of children's literature.

Aileen Kassen explained the appeal of Seredy's combination of autobiography, folklore and poetic narrative as the ability to provide children with "warm feelings of security and the goodness of life and presents a world they can easily accept.... Permeating the story and
unifying it is the belief that life at its best is simple--its rewards, love, peace and happiness can be gained by honest work close to the soil--and that man must surely be eternally grateful to God for these blessings."41

Monica Shannon's *Dobry* has similar appeal. Shannon wrote of life in a peasant community in the mountains of Bulgaria. Her style is also rich in the color of peasant life, incorporating folklore into the narrative. Unlike Seredy, Shannon's book is not autobiographical. Instead, she borrowed from the life of the artist, Atanas Katchamakoff, who illustrated the book. Even in her acceptance speech when *Dobry* received the Newbery, Shannon gave no autobiographical information beyond her Celtic heritage. That was significant for it connected her with the peasantry, those people who appeared to have held on to their values and knew how to live successfully, at peace with the world.42

Elizabeth Foreman Lewis was not so caught up in the mythic qualities of the peasantry. She had lived among peasants and America's indigenous poor long enough to be more realistic about them. Her work in settlement houses had educated her out of any notion of equating poverty with beauty.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Lewis went to school there, studying art and Religious Education. Her family encouraged both activities, and Lewis said, gave her the strength for her later adventures. One of these involved going to Shanghai, China as Associate Mission Treasurer for the Methodist Women's Board.43 In China, Lewis discovered that the Chinese reverence for learning and beauty far outdistanced anything she had encountered in her native land. She also decided that the Chinese
had inner qualities of "suffering and endurance," that had served them well over time. Lewis became intensely interested in everything about China, maintaining that fascination even after her return to the United States. Her one interest was to make readers "recognize the inherent greatness of the Chinese, not yet fully destroyed by ... mass tortures and killings...."

Elizabeth Lewis' interest was shared, at least by the Newbery committee, which found Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze to be the outstanding book of 1933. Young Fu, along with the work of Kate Seredy and Monica Shannon, represents the best of a flood of foreign locale books. Most dealt with common people. Dealing with the rich was no longer a popular literary choice. Children's authors may not have adopted the style of their contemporaries, but they shared their opinion that salvation lay with the common people. Unlike adult authors, children's authors did not desire a radical uprising. They wished to share beauty and wisdom gathered from people close to nature in the hope that American children would thereby be enriched.

American Themes

Though greatly outnumbered by books about other countries, American stories remained an important part of children's literature. There was still good historical fiction available which continued to picture America's historical successes. Relatively little realistic fiction received much critical success. It must have been discouraging for those trying to publish contemporary stories. Only one, Elizabeth Enright's Thimble Summer, received a Newbery, and that was a controversial choice. American themes did alter in the thirties as
represented in the work of several authors.

Elizabeth Coatsworth was one of the most prolific of children's authors. Her work ranged from poetry to picture books to novels for older children. Coatsworth's subjects covered foreign locales and American historical fiction. In 1931 she won the Newbery for *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*, but some of her most popular books were those about Sally, a little girl whose first adventure took her to Maine in a house built on runners.

Born on May 31, 1893, in Buffalo, New York, Elizabeth Coatsworth traveled much of her young life. Some of her books about the Orient, North Africa and Europe are autobiographical. Later, Coatsworth attended Vassar College, Columbia University and Radcliffe College. She and her writer-husband, Henry Beston, had two children. The Bestons made their home in Maine.

"I belong to no organization and have never gone to meetings if I could help it ...," Coatsworth said. She and her husband chose to live far off the main roads where people rarely interrupted them and they were surrounded by beautiful countryside. Here Coatsworth could exercise her "superior intelligence of style, and ... her ever-present sense of the poetry of the situation in hand, whether it is expressed in verse or prose." The critical element of style was again, the poetic voice expressing appreciation of nature. If she had social concerns similar to those described by Malcolm Cowley, they did not appear in her writing.

Laura Adams Armer chose an American setting, but not an historical one. Her writing is more closely allied with that of Monica Shannon
than Elizabeth Coatsworth. Armer's passionate interest was in Native Americans, particularly the Navajo. She spent much of her time among them, and the resulting novel, Waterless Mountain, weaves her experiences into a children's book. One can see from book reviews why Waterless Mountain was so popular with critics. "This story 'walks in beauty.' Legend and fact, poetry and prose of life ... are skillfully woven in delicate, bright colors that leave an impression in the mind of a rainbow shining in a tender, rain-washed sky." Waterless Mountain more than matched the demand for poetic narrative.

Laura Armer was born in 1874 in California. Her father had walked to Sacramento from New England in 1859. The youngest of three children, Laura suffered from delicate health, still managing to go through art school, marry and bear two children. The middle years of her life were devoted to home and family. She did not revive her art career until the early 1920's.

Coming back to art, Mrs. Armer found herself fascinated by Native Americans. She began spending time on various reservations, at one point living with a Navajo herdsman and his family. Mrs. Armer's sensitive paintings, especially of the mystic elements of Indian life, won her the respect of the Navajos. Waterless Mountain attempts to deal with the mysticism and spirituality of Navajo life.

Elizabeth Enright received the Newbery Medal in 1939, for Thimble Summer. Thimble Summer is remarkable for being the only award-winner in the thirties to deal with any aspect of the Depression. One of the few stories of contemporary American life, Thimble Summer was criticized as another "girl's book," with little staying power. The critics were
correct in guessing that it would not wear well. Enright's later books about the Melendys were much more popular with young readers. For Elizabeth Enright, however, the Newbery represented success in a new career. Enright had been an artist, illustrating children's books. After years of illustrating books for other people, she decided to try writing stories to go with her own illustrations. *Thimble Summer* marked a new career as author and illustrator. Gradually, Enright moved from being largely an illustrator to being largely an author. Art, she said, was a habit, not love. It had developed by virtue of environment. Writing was a passion.53

Elizabeth Enright was born September 17, 1909, in Oak Park, Illinois, to artist parents. Maginel, her mother, was an illustrator of magazines and school readers. Her father, Walter, was an illustrator and cartoonist. The family moved to New York when Elizabeth was quite young. Her first memories were of watching her mother painting in their New York apartment.54 "Drawing boards, Higgins ink, brushes and paint tubes seemed to me part of the basic equipment of living."55 What the young Elizabeth truly desired was not art but ballet. She wanted to dance like Pavlova.56

Unlike so many children's authors, Enright had neither a middle-class nor secure childhood. Her parents divorced in 1920 and Elizabeth was sent to school in Connecticut. Later she studied art in New York, Paris and Parson's School of Design. She married an advertising man, had three children and settled down in New York City.57 Enright does not appear to have regretted her urban existence. She spent time on a Wisconsin farm during a drought, which may have ended any thoughts of
country idylls. The farm experience did provide her with the beginning of her book, *Thimble Summer.*

Biographical Reminiscences

Autobiography as a source for fiction was popular in the thirties. James Farrell's novels were largely autobiographical as were such Saroyan stories as "My Name is Aram." In children's literature, recollections of childhood were especially well received. The most easily recognized of the type are Laura Ingalls Wilder's books based on the experiences of her family on the frontier. Wilder began her books in the thirties and found them so popular that she continued the family saga through a series of "Little House" books.

Carol Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn* fictionalized the girlhood of the author's grandmother. Ruth Sawyer's books, *Roller Skates* and *The Year of Jubilo* are based on the author's childhood. Mabel L. Hunt incorporated her own and her mother's Quaker childhoods in books for children. All these authors carried on a tradition that had been popular for some time. Even *Little Women* had been somewhat autobiographical, and that was a worthy heritage. These books represent a change from tradition, though. Earlier works which drew on recollection were generally written by authors who had experienced particularly happy childhoods. Their relations with their parents had been loving and secure. Authors in the thirties were more willing to recall the painful places. Carol Ryrie Brink lost both her parents before she was eight years old. She was raised by her aunt and grandmother. "We had a good many troubles in those days,—death, disaster, loneliness,—and yet I
had a very happy childhood." She speculated that troubled times were compensated for by special kinds of happiness. 59

Ruth Sawyer might have agreed. She too had a past that included pain and sorrow as well as happiness. Until the year she turned ten, Sawyer did not like herself much. She had been born far too late for the comfort of her parents and relations. Sawyer explained that her parents, brothers, aunts and cousins saw her as "something of a family blight." Unable to adapt to the kind of regulated life expected of her, Sawyer was given to tantrums. Not until her tenth year when she was given her freedom did Ruth Sawyer end those tantrums. In her tenth year the girl, Ruth, was set free by her parents' European trip. The bells and whistles that ran her life at home disappeared and the ladies who cared for her allowed Ruth to roller skate her way around New York City. 60

Sawyer says of the years before, that if she had not discovered books and fairies she would have been doubly bereft. 61 The kind of childhood Ruth Sawyer lived contributed to her ability to tell a story in a unique way. She ignored many of the conventions of those who wished to protect children. She argued that too much cossetting could be unhealthy. Her own characters find themselves vulnerable, but they lead rich lives. They are enriched by the years of books and fairies and rebellion. They also reflect the voice of a storyteller who traveled all over the world collecting folktales and traditional stories. Along with Rachel Field, Ruth Sawyer was one of the few authors in the thirties who could deal with tragedy and yet write an optimistic story. Sawyer was willing to let children deal with death and even murder in a
way that marks her as unique in a decade when children were still pro-
tected from reality in fiction.

Summary

The reaction to the Depression in American literature points out
the divergence between adult and children’s fiction. Children's fiction
continued to be a literature of refuge. There was a sense that children
should be protected from too much harshness, in the hope that they
would gain strength for the future. Authors rejected the sordidness
often associated with documentary expression. The tendency was still
towards a conservative approach to life and literature, and a softer
style than adult fiction. Among the most critically acclaimed books,
the majority of authors continued to be white, middle-class females.
Few supported themselves entirely by writing.

There were changes, of course. More authors came from foreign
backgrounds. Fiction was less overtly racist and there was genuine
appreciation for other cultures. The wise peasant replaced childish
primitives and the thirties taste for naturalism was exhibited in
illustrations of robust peasantry. Men and women toiled and played
lustily. There was a real celebration of physical labor, of planting
and harvesting, of caring for animals. The sense of dignity so powerful
in the proletarian literature of the thirties can be found in the
peasantry depicted in Dobry or the Navajo’s of Waterless Mountain. The
peasant had never wallowed in technology, had never been spoiled by
exposure to urban corruption. Peasant values were uncorrupted by
modernism. They had what capitalism had failed to provide: love, peace
and happiness. They also had faith and thus hope for the future.
Ruth Sawyer wrote that faith was necessary "if ever peace is to endure, if we are to have world unity." As with authors of adult fiction, children's authors wanted peace and unity above all else. They hoped the stories they wrote would serve that end.
Footnotes


6 Ibid., p. 22.

7 Ibid., pp. 22-29.


9 Bird, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

10 Ibid., p. 139.


13 Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

14 Woman, sixty-four years old, oral interview (August 9, 1979).


20Chafe, *op. cit.*, p. 53.


22Chafe, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.


28Ibid., p. 363.


34Ibid., pp. 100-101.


39 Ibid., p. 164.

40 Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 220.


42 Miller and Whitney, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-134.

43 Ibid., p. 109.

44 Ibid., p. 110.

45 Ibid.


47 Commire, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-68.

48 Ibid., p. 66.


50 Ibid., p. 98.

51 Ibid., p. 99.

52 Ibid., pp. 102-103.

53 Ibid., p. 169.

54 Commire, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

56 Ibid.

57 Commire, op. cit., p. 62.

58 Miller and Whitney, op. cit., p. 173.

59 Ibid., p. 139.

60 Ibid., p. 153-154.

61 Ibid.

CHAPTER IV
THE OUTSIDE WORLD: US AND THEM

Though war failed to secure a democratic world, it did force world consciousness on the American people. Some rejected further intercourse with foreign countries in a desire for safety through isolation. Others embraced the idea of world unity in hopes of securing permanent peace. To believe that permanent peace was at hand took faith. The war to end all wars was over and war-weary Americans hoped that world-wide cooperation would preserve mankind's future. This hope appealed to those whose professional life was devoted to children. Hugh Lofting, author of Dr. Dolittle, spoke often of the need for world friendship. In November, 1924 he wrote of his war-born conviction that civilization's survival depended on some form of rational internationalism. The world's best hope, he declared, was in "an enlightened development of children." War resulted from the "traditional animosities that were instilled into--bred into--the children."¹ Provincialism and tribal prejudice were the offspring of historic mis-education, handed down through folklore and literature. Folklore, saturated with race hatred and prejudice, kept animosities alive.² Literature embedded folklore in the written word. In addition, literature glorified military life. The instruments of war should be banned, Lofting said. War, an "archaic barbarity," must be abolished, not glorified. To accomplish this, the new generation must be educated in the truth. No longer could the world be satisfied with the way things were done in the past.

104
"Nothing ... that was good enough for father should be good enough for me if I can improve on it." Lofting went so far as to label all opponents of internationalism, opponents of permanent peace. He rejected the idea that God observed national boundaries. "God's country" was the entire universe.4

A booklist compiled to promote Lofting's theme of international friendship included books by Lucy Perkins, Cornelia Meigs and Caroline Snedeker.5 Other education journals echoed the theme with suggestions for promoting world peace in the classroom and assurances that classroom teachers held the key to peace.6 Their optimism was immense; so was their premise. These educators assumed the new order could be brought about by changing the schools. They ignored the influence of home, peers, church and media or assumed they would follow the lead of the school. Education was expected to create the new order:

for which abundant material is at hand in America. [Education] must cease to endow war with romance and significance and frankly recognize America's own shortcomings. It may teach ... the pacific attitudes of all our great statesmen, the historical occasions of generosity on the part of the U.S. as in relations with China and Cuba, the internationalism of the country itself and our eager acceptance of a World Conference on Education.7

Literature was designated as a prime medium in educating for peace. E. Estelle Downing, writing in The English Journal in 1925, claimed that literature gave ethical ideas and a situation "free from the bias of prejudice, while its emotional appeal enriches and broadens sympathies."8 An article in Elementary English Review suggested that story books were the best place to begin the study of foreign lands because they contained "no racial or national warfares ... no shadow of rancour or intolerance."9
One wonders if they read the books they commended for tolerance and lack of prejudice. While claiming to understand the powerful appeal of a story, they failed to realize the bias of authors and the intolerance exhibited in some children's books. Educators knew that children were likely to take fiction as truth and not recognize bias, but the educators lacked the critical acumen to recognize it themselves.

The Twenties

An examination of the selection of books published for older elementary children in the 1920's indicates that children's fiction was far from bias-free. Neither does it escape the charge that children's fiction romanticized nationalism and conflict. On the other hand, children's fiction did respond to interest in foreign places. Analysis of these trends in the twenties is divided into two parts, corresponding to the treatment of foreign lands and people and then to immigrant groups in America.

Foreign Lands and Peoples

Of the representative books in this section, The Dark Frigate, The Trumpeter of Krakow, In the Endless Sands and several of the "Twins" books take place in foreign settings. Hitty: Her First Hundred Years and Mehitable move the main character from the United States to a foreign country. Downright Dencey makes peripheral mention of foreign contact by way of the whaling industry. Only two books have contemporary settings: In the Endless Sands and Mehitable. Only two books attempt to describe non-European countries in any detail: Hitty and In the Endless Sands. The rest deal with Europe:
The Dark Frigate  England  17th century
Mehitable  France and Ireland  20th century
The Trumpeter of Krakow  Poland  15th century

Europe, nearer and more familiar, is depicted more favorably than are more exotic lands. There is also a tendency on the part of these authors to be fascinated by and sympathetic towards European royalty.

In The Dark Frigate, Philip Marsham is the hero and the king's man. In spite of his own social rank, he admires "the old knight in the scarlet cloak so bravely decked with silver lace."10 The trappings of the Cavalier and the dying old order exert their appeal. It is the attraction of fanfare and flourish. In Hawes' case there is also a thrust at Puritanism as represented by the Roundheads. Hawes was a man in search of adventure. Royalty offered the color and bravado lacking in Cromwell's marching men. The drab Roundheads, shorn of curls, laces and scarlet capes represent another version of the despised Puritans of the 1920's. Royalty is romanticized in contrast, not just in The Dark Frigate, but in The Trumpeter of Krakow as well.

The Trumpeter of Krakow combines nationalism and royalty to create an unabashedly idealized version of Polish history. King Kazimir Jagiello is endowed by Eric Kelly with a glory second only to King Solomon. Jagiello, humbled by the obligations of kingship, cries "Oh Poland, when will the day come that thy sons and daughters may enjoy the tranquility that God has designed for all people?"11 And the boy, Joseph, knows he is face to face with the "glory (that) was Poland's king."12 Jagiello is a paternal king, patterned after the "Little Father" of Russian royalty. He takes away the burden of the Tarnov
Crystal, he protects his people from the Tartars. King and country want peace, but they are forced to war. "And yet Poland is ever insulted to the point where nothing but war is possible...." 13

God, according to Kelly, is on the side of the Polish king and the Polish people. At one point, Kelly describes the death of the trumpeter of Krakow whose broken note is preserved in playing the heynal. The trumpeter is to play the evening song. Tartars surround the Church of Panna Marja. The flames of devastation stretch for miles in every direction. There is no escape. The boy lifts the trumpet to his lips and begins to play. Just before the Tartar arrow kills him, he realizes that "he was part of the glorious company of Polish men that was fighting for all Christendom against brutal and savage invaders." The trumpeter dies with a smile of great peace, a sign "that God was very close." 14 His soul ascends to heaven on the flames of his burning city. Joseph, son of another trumpeter, listens and swells with national pride, aware that he is the beneficiary of "brave men and women who had made [Poland] great forever among all nations." 15 Even Kelly's closing lines celebrate Polish nationalism:

"... May we close with the thought that every Pole carries in his mind—with the words that are foremost in the Polish National Hymn:

May God Save Poland." 16

If the reader forgets from whom God is to save Poland, Kelly constantly reminds him of the godless Tartars and the Russian Ivan, waiting to destroy the nation that fights for Christendom. 17

In Mehitable, the reader is again presented with gracious royalty opposed by rude mobbery. The headmistress at Mehitable's school is
descended from French royalty. Her grandson tells Mehitable of the terrible time during the French Revolution when his ancestress, a noblewoman, escaped the guillotine. The lady was saved by the sacrifice of her seamstress' life. The rebellion is presented as the work of base canaille. Marie Antoinette becomes a romantic, misunderstood figure.

Royalty, because it can look beautiful and fairytale-like, is easily romanticized. The lot of the commoner is not so glamorous and thus more easily ignored. Democracy was no match for the romance of royalty. Consciously or not, the glorification of royalty was within the anti-democratic style of the twenties. It also coincided with popular fascination with Europe, especially France. "'France,' almost whispered Mehitable. 'Doesn't it say so much, just the one word 'France?'"18 In the twenties, it did. France was mecca for expatriates. It was also the destination for boatloads of tourists who wanted to see the Bastille, and look through the doorway where Marie Antoinette finally bowed her royal head. Mehitable described them for youngsters who remained at home. She gave Americans a chance to live, vicariously, in a French nobleman's chateau and in the exclusive, undemocratic world of boarding schools.

Neither fascination nor familiarity excluded stereotyped images of Europe from children's fiction. Authors tended to attribute particular characteristics to people based on nationality. In Mehitable, the Irish are described as impulsive, danger-loving and wild-spirited.19 Charles Hawes informs the reader that "... neither Philip Marsham nor I ever saw a Scot yet who would not share his supper with a poorer man
than himself.\textsuperscript{20} The Scottish girl in \textit{Mehitable} might share her supper, but she does so with dour mien.

Few authors were as adept at sketching national traits as Lucy Fitch Perkins. Her work was praised for just this characteristic, that such shorthand notes on foreign lands and people would really aid understanding. Since a visit to Ellis Island was as close as Perkins ever got to any of the foreign countries she described, it is not surprising that she resorted to generalization. In the twenties alone, Perkins wrote stories that purported to describe Phillipinos, Swiss, Dutch and Italians. She had already written about the French, Irish, Japanese, Mexicans, Scots and Belgians. Even had she traveled to these places it would have been difficult to know them well enough to avoid stereotyping. Perkins did have the ability to tell an appealing story. Her sketches of Europeans were not malicious, though they were simplistic, and they did try to tell the story from the native perspective.\textsuperscript{21}

Nationalities in children's fiction were frequently symbolized by costume, landmarks, customs and food. The picture was not intentionally false, but it left the impression that most of the world was rather quaint and old-fashioned. However, the further one moves from the western world, the darker the skin and the more exotic the landscape, the less benign the stereotypes. The non-western world is persistently depicted as savage, heathen and dirty. Beauty of scenery is countered by the strangeness and unattractiveness of the native population. The reader quickly learns that Europe is not so far from home, but that
to venture further in the world, is to find oneself desperately far from all familiar life.

Because *Hitty, Her First Hundred Years*, moves the main character from Maine to the South Seas and India, it is an excellent example of the contrast between western and non-western images. Hitty, a doll, describes her adventures and the people and places she sees. The story is beautifully written and Hitty is so appealing that it is hard not to accept her view of things. Hitty's sense of propriety is so strong that she must surely have right on her side. The reader is led to fear for Hitty's life at several points. Fire and shipwreck do not separate her long from her people, but South Sea islanders almost do. Hitty is taken by the "pagans" to serve as an idol. Sitting in the niche reserved for her, Hitty watches the natives. "They act like a parcel of children." 22 The sailing captains know the childish preferences of the natives and bring along cloth and beads "gaudy beyond all description." Any self-respecting New Englander would "be read right out of Meetin' at home if they ever found out I'd put such colors on my back...." 23 This is probably an accurate portrayal of the New Englanders' feelings if not an enlightened picture of Polynesians.

Attributing childishness to dark-skinned people is not unusual, particularly if they are "primitive." The other attribute often connected with non-western people is an unpleasant queerness, sometimes akin to evil. On Hitty's island the natives are cannibals. The potential for violence or cruelty is present in non-western people. The image develops of a "safe" Europe and risk everywhere else. In *Hitty*, the evil is simply a veiled threat. The islanders have been
known to be cannibals, but Hitty and the Prebles escape before they are threatened. In India, the sense of queerness and sordidness grows as the Prebles tour the crowded, filthy streets. Mrs. Preble pulls her daughter away from a fakir. "'Horrible,' gasped Mrs. Preble, as we passed close to one old man who had let his arms grow together in a way that made one shiver. 'It's plain indecent, that's what it is. Come right along, Phoebe, and don't look at such sights.'"24 If one does not look perhaps the queerness will disappear.

Despite Mrs. Preble's aversion, the strong sights and sounds are compelling. Fascination and revulsion compete in descriptions of exotic lands. Hitty tells about the "weird" music that she hears throughout the Indian bazaar. "Queer" boats, whining beggars and throngs of people make Hitty long for an "honest American face."25

Hitty is not alone in her reaction to the exotic places she sees. Evelyn and C. Kay Scott lived on the oasis they use as the setting for their story, In the Endless Sands. They had ample opportunity to live in a strange setting, to meet and learn about the Arab natives. The picture they draw of the Sahara makes the natives in Hitty charming by comparison. Proximity does not necessarily breed understanding. Throughout the story an American boy experiences nothing but unkindness at the hands of Arabs. Even his companion, an Arab girl, Fatma, is an unpleasant child. Scott explains "... she was not a heroine. If you wanted a heroine in this story, we are sorry to have disappointed you ... just a poor frightened dirty ignorant little girl."25

Fatma is still one of the more appealing Arabs in the story, in spite of dirt and ignorance. Dirt and ignorance combined with cruelty
seem to be the Scotts' definition of an Arab. They try to aid the reader in understanding Arab nature. They explain that the guillotine is still used because it is a wild country where life is so tenuous that "a man may think more of his sheep or his horse than of a human being." 27 The Scotts also note that the attitude of the Arabs to their children might seem unbelievable to American readers. "If you know the Arabs you will think differently. In Algeria, among the poor people, children are not much better cared for than puppies, and many of them run wild like stray cats or dogs and beg what they can to eat and nobody thinks of taking them in or trying to provide for them." 29

American readers might have understood quite well had they seen the street Arabs in their own urban ghettos, but it is likely that they thought stray children a phenomenon unique to Algeria. They would certainly be given further evidence of the queer ways of Arabs in In the Endless Sands. The Arab world is so awful that the boy, Jackie, desairs. "Oh, dear, what a terrible, terrible world it was. He and Fatma wouldn't dare ask anybody for anything." 29 In all the endless sand there is only one group where Jackie feels at home. He and Fatma wander into a community of "Israelites." The authors describe the contrast: "the girls were very pretty, and lots of them had rosy cheeks and the children were fairer than the Arab children and seemed stronger and better fed." 30 Even the chanting in the synagogue "wasn't terrible and brassy like the Koran chanting, but low and excited and very sweet and Jackie and Fatma wanted to go inside where it looked warm and nice and friendly.... the whole room was just like a great big Christmas tree." 31 Jackie is familiar with Israelites; his maid at home is one.
There is a curious note in this description of the Arabs that indicates the hostility of their image in *In the Endless Sands*. An Arab policeman finally recovers the lost boy and puts him in a cell until someone comes to claim him and deliver the reward. The policeman is not a sympathetic figure in spite of rescuing Jackie. His motives are mercenary. His speech is also rendered uniquely for one whose native tongue is Arabic. The policeman discovers the boy, turns to his companion and says, supposedly in Arabic, "Ain't that the one ... ?"32 Why ain't? Except as a reminder to the American reader that this is an ignorant Arab, there is no reason for the use of an English grammatical error.

Behavior and language separate western and non-western characters, as does physical appearance. Non-western people are commonly described as unattractive. The Indian snake charmer in *Hitty* and the Arabs in *In the Endless Sands* are unappealing in physique as well as character. Eric Kelly makes use of this technique, too. The evil Tartar, "Button Face" is a representative of the hated hordes that swept through Poland. He is merciless and vengeful. He is also ugly and physically scarred. There are several reasons for this equation in which inner ugliness is reflected on the outer man. There is a certain symbolism, particularly in children's fiction, in which the countenance gives away the interior. There is reassurance in being able to recognize the face of evil. However, there is also a less conscious representation here. The aversion expressed by Mrs. Preble at even looking at what was "queer" makes it easier to feel that the scene is not only strange, but ugly as well.
There is a tendency to refuse to accept the possibility of beauty in anything so foreign to one's own experience and taste.

It is possible, of course, to develop an appreciation for the beauty of strange people and places, but children's fiction in the twenties rarely moved beyond "queer" to discover beauty. Literature was just beginning to introduce children to distant places. Writers may have been new to world consciousness, too, and so shared the differences newly discovered rather than commonalities. Their stories were generally told from the outsiders perspective. Not until the thirties did the point of view shift with any conviction to the native perspective.

At a time when immigration from many parts of the world was increasing dramatically, and American children were increasingly likely to be of immigrant background or to know people who were, children's literature had barely begun to look at the rest of the world. For children of non-European heritage there persisted in children's fiction a malevolent image which was more likely to promote misunderstanding than appreciation.

Immigrant Groups in America

Traveling to foreign countries was a romantic adventure filled with the thrill of exotic sights and sounds. One could travel, as Hitty did, and then come home to the comfort and familiarity of America. Foreignness was expected abroad. At home it was quite another matter. The rise in immigrants after World War One and the anti-immigration feeling that swept America affected much of American life. Even children were bound to notice some changes, particularly if they lived near port cities. Foreign languages and faces were common in urban centers. City
schools attempted to educate and Americanize immigrant children by placing them in schools together. Children's fiction came much more slowly to recognition of America's increasingly diverse population.

Lucy Fitch Perkins decided to write books based on the experiences of the nationalities represented by America's immigrants. Even in her historical fiction she strove to show the contribution of immigrant groups to the United States. In *The Colonial Twins of Virginia*, English ancestry is important. There is also a Scot tutor who speaks with a burr. It was common in the twenties to attempt all manner of dialect in writing. Most of it impedes the narrative flow. Along with dialect, the tutor is known for his diligence and a weakness for argument. Perkins says it is impossible "to ask any Scotchman to listen to an argument without getting into it." The same kind of generalization which had been applied to foreign nationals applied to immigrants. So long as the immigrant retained his accent and foreign surname, he could be counted upon to act in keeping with his nationality. So prevalent was this assumption, that individual characters were hyphenated as if by deft shorthand one could know their character. In *Hitty*, the rowdies who steal Hitty retreat to the home of an Irish cabby. The wildness and garrulousness that delighted Mehitable in Ireland migrates to America and becomes, in the Dooleys, "a more noisy and destructive lot of children I have never seen." Hitty consoles herself "that it is no disgrace to come down a peg or two in the world," for that is where the Irish immigrant lived.

Lower yet were the Southern Europeans mentioned in *Downright Dencey*. The Nantucket whaling community might have been largely Quaker, but it
had its classes. There were the descendents of the Coffyns and Macys and Starbucks, then the later settlers, a few families cared for by the Fragment Society, and finally, living in the off-limits sections of the island, were Spanish and Portugese immigrants and descendents of immigrants. Regardless of how long they had been on the island, they were all called Portugees and scorned by the Yankees. They are portrayed by Snedeker as strange and frightening men, the dregs of Nantucket society.

These few references to immigrants represent the paucity of information in the twenties. There was very little about any groups beside western Europeans. References generally failed to individualize the immigrant. Behavior and character were referred to by noting ethnic background. Hindsight indicates that this perpetuated stereotypes, but few people were blessed with that knowledge. They thought they were telling the truth. Such naivete was a sign that in spite of America's involvement in World War One, in spite of expatriates living abroad and tourists returning with their souvenirs and memories, America was still isolated from the rest of the world. Naive about the world themselves, authors perpetuated their own misunderstandings in the stories they wrote. There was still no sense of real community with the rest of the world.

The Thirties: World Community

Gradually, understanding and even admiration supplanted the initial reactions toward the outside world. Native characters appeared more frequently than spectators with the result that interpretations of foreign countries were more sympathetic. This change was significant as
a representation of a more open-minded approach to other cultures and as a response to the Depression. Many intellectuals who blamed economic collapse on the acceptance of superficial values were anxious to find examples of people who had maintained their strength and dignity. The working people of the world were chosen as that example. Thus, nationality became secondary and the brotherhood of the common people was the primary theme.

At this juncture children's fiction diverged from adult fiction. Both agreed that common people were worthy literary material. They did not agree on the direction in which this was to lead. Authors of adult fiction frequently assumed the elevation of common people would require a move to the left and sometimes to communism. Authors of children's books preferred the example of rural peasantry to communism. Solutions to social problems in children's fiction came from within individuals, not in massive social changes. The thirties does represent a change, however, in attitudes toward other cultures.

Of the selected books representing the thirties, four take place in foreign countries. Four others make reference to immigrant groups in the United States:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dobry</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Twentieth Century</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Good Master</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Twentieth Century</td>
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<td>The White Stag</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>End of Roman Empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Twentieth Century</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calico Bush</td>
<td>French Immigrant</td>
<td>Eighteenth Century</td>
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A survey of book lists in the thirties indicates that foreign settings were a major trend in children's literature. The November-December, 1937 issue of Horn Book includes three articles about foreign books translated for American children. In addition, it contains Anne C. Moore's reviews of stories set in Iran, Hungary, England, Ireland, South America and Russia. Ms. Moore reviewed these as part of a list of twelve outstanding books for 1937. Foreign settings for stories far outnumbered everyday American settings for most of the decade. The Newbery Medal books reflect this imbalance, too. Throughout the thirties books appeared about countries never mentioned in the previous decade.

Quantity was not as significant as the change in attitude and style. In the twenties a foreigner was suspect if his birthplace was outside Western Europe. In the thirties there was an upswing in books about Eastern Europe and the Orient. These were generally sympathetic portrayals of people and country. Emphasis was placed on the common brotherhood of man and the natural pride and dignity of common people. The peasantry of the world was the most frequent choice of character, emphasizing their faith, joy and simple life-style. Dobry and The Good Master are examples of stories about people who live close to the earth and do not possess great wealth. They have learned to live rich lives...
without the luxuries Americans were used to considering necessities. The grandfather in Dobry explains: "Everything is good but not too much of it."38

The philosophy which permeates both these books is a continuation of the twenties emphasis on the healthfulness of rural life, but it is also a response to the spiritual depression afflicting so many people as the Depression dragged on. Human beings were thought to be happier when they lived simply, and thanked God for each day as it came. The peasants in Dobry celebrate each day with song and stories. The crop is brought in before it freezes--time to celebrate. The bread is light and fresh--time to give thanks. There is little money but much joy. The secret, it appeared, was in living each moment to the fullest: "Na lay! Na lay!---to Now this very moment," Dobry sings.39

The common people served throughout the thirties as an example of survival. The philosophy of "Na lay" included the acceptance of a life of hard work supported by a code of values and beliefs and common interests. Fictional peasantry grows up knowing that much of life is work. Children see what their parents do and are responsible for important jobs themselves. Peasant children are apprenticed early in the work they will do all their lives. Mrs. Nagy in The Good Master explains to her niece, Kate, what a country woman learns in order to make a tablecloth. "I planted the flax, reaped it, prepared it, spun the thread, and wove it into this cloth. It's more than twenty-five years old now, but it's as good as new."40 Jancsi Nagy can see his father's skill with horses and can practice to be equally skillful. The work of each family member is immediately apparent. Failure to do one's work
has immediate repercussions. If the cow is not milked she will bawl for attention. If the seeds are not planted, there will be no crop and no food.

Peasant life appeared manageable and understandable. People work, reap the rewards of their work and then rejoice. There was a semblance of human control that appealed to people who felt the Depression represented lack of control. The simple life took on the appearance of a legitimate alternative to modern problems. Order and reason based on a shared code dominated stories like Dobry, The Good Master and Young Fu.

Young Fu and his mother and most of the people they know share a code of behavior. The code assigns great value to certain behaviors and offers support to those who subscribe to the code. Where learning is valued, scholars are accorded respect and their teachings are prized. In Young Fu learning is part of the code, and it is also the source of much of the code. Wise sayings and beliefs passed on by scholars have filtered down to the common people as basic tenets of the Chinese code of behavior.

Young Fu's mother, Fu Be Be, teaches her son by reciting parts of the code: "It is the good listener who learns well."41 Dobry's grandfather passes on the code in the same way. "Everything is a circle. Both ends meet," he tells Dobry.42 In The Good Master Mr. Nagy is a good master because he lives by the code, even to determining the price of his horses. "It was the fair price--that's all I wanted."43 Thus youth learns from age. Both know what the rules are and there is rarely need for challenge. Age and wisdom rule by common consent. "'That's the way old age should be," Dobry's grandfather says, "'always
the most beautiful time of life. Look at me! ... Dobry looked at him with profound admiration."

Foreign characters presented another contrast to contemporary America in the bonds of common interest shared by peasants. There was always the land, of course, but it was more than that. An American youth might look to radio or movies for entertainment. His recreation and his parents' might be in entirely different activities. Peasant characters found most of their entertainment within the family. One of the most common amusements was storytelling. Stories and folktales appear in *The Good Master*, *Dobry*, *The White Stag* and *Young Fu*. Along with holidays and religious festivals, stories included the whole community, tying them all together.

**Foreign Landscapes**

Unlike the geography lessons disguised as stories that were evident in the twenties, children's fiction in the thirties depicted foreign settings with poetic narrative. Readers were more apt to be swept up by the descriptions of Chungking or Bulgaria than they had been by previous books. Writers indulged in long descriptive passages that had formerly been reserved for American scenery:

> She saw the great Hungarian plain unfold before her eyes. Something in her was touched by the solemn beauty of it. Its immense grassy expanses ... shimmering under the spring sun. ... Calm or stormy, it is magnificent.

Throughout *Dobry* there are descriptions of landscapes and seasons that depict the magnificence of Bulgaria. Even in *Young Fu* with its picture of the dirt and foulness of Chungking, there is a lovely passage describing a rare snowfall on a mountain farm. American readers were
given the opportunity to look at the outside world sympathetically, and even to envy it for its beauty. In addition, readers were exposed to the folklore and faith of each country in a positive context. Characters, no matter how foreign, were presented as decent human beings, very much like all other people.

The sense of solidarity attributed to the early thirties is evidenced in these books. The local color added to the stories, but essentially, the child characters were not unique to a particular nationality. Fictional children were both international and universal in the thirties. Young Fu, who thinks the Yangtze River is the biggest body of water in the world and who has been raised to believe in fire dragons, is not much different than Dobry or Kate and Jancsi. He has the same youthful arrogance and irresponsibility as the others. He has been known to disobey his parent or allow himself to be cheated. Externally Young Fu's world may not be like Dobry's or Kate's, but internally he and they are universal children. Between Fatma and Young Fu lies the conviction that there is truly a brotherhood of man.

**Immigrants**

As more and more books took foreign countries as their setting, so did more immigrants appear in stories with American settings. There was a shift, too, in presentation. In the twenties, stereotypes prevailed. By the thirties, there was evidence of rejection of stereotypes. Extreme racial stereotyping was rare in the selected books. Instead, ethnic characteristics appear as interesting sidelines to a character's personality. The emphasis shifts to ethnic contributions, and though the tone is sometimes a bit strained, a change in attitude is evident.
Rachel Field, a devotee of anything about Maine, became interested in the French influence in that state. She was fascinated by the French names still clinging to places along the coast. The result was *The Calico Bush*. *The Calico Bush* is historical fiction, and the main character is a French immigrant. Field deals with Marguerite Ledoux in the context of the eighteenth century. Not all the English settlers love or appreciate a French girl. Instead, Maggie must endure what immigrants often suffered: prejudice.

The New Englanders in *The Calico Bush* are skeptical of a French bond-servant. "We want no flighty foreign critters under our roof,” one woman complains.47 Her remarks are the beginning of Maggie's discovery that she will have to hide her "Frenchness," her Catholicism and her unPuritan ways. When she forgets once, and looses herself in a dance, Maggie hears the murmurs. Her master comments that the French are both light steppers and light fingered. One of the neighbors sniffs about indecent behavior.48

Maggie is not destroyed by the prejudice against her, nor is she really victimized. Maggie has spunk, as her master admits, and struggles to live in the new land. She works so hard and performs so bravely that the Sargeants must admit her worth "wherever she was raised."49 Field offers no miraculous solutions to Maggie's problem. Respect is won, but prejudice remains. People appreciate Maggie in spite of her nationality. In a touch of irony, it is Maggie's nationality that saves the Sargeants from an Indian attack. By speaking French, Maggie wins the friendship of an Indian who later prevents a massacre of the Sargeants.
The Calico Bush is one of the more positive stories about immigrant life in America. Maggie and the people to whom she is bound remain unique individuals, not national types. Readers are meant to feel the injustice of prejudice and to appreciate the French contribution to New England. Field stops short of suggesting any social solution to the problems of intolerance. When Maggie wins acceptance it is an individual solution. The Calico Bush appears to suggest that intolerance can be conquered only by individuals proving themselves worthy of acceptance.

Other historical stories were not as successful in presenting immigrants in so positive a light. Elizabeth Coatsworth mentions two immigrant groups who came to America and approaches them sympathetically. Unlike Field, Coatsworth does not avoid stereotypes. Neither immigrant is a well-developed character in the book, nor does the story turn on their actions. Thus, it is not surprising that both the Quaker and the Scotsman are more closely allied with their fictional counterparts in the 1920's. The same is true of the Germans in Boy With A Pack. Where immigrants appeared as minor characters they remained ethnic types.

Immigrants essential to the story line tend to be individuals rather than types. Ruth Sawyer's treatment of immigrant groups is essential to her story, Rolier Skates, and provides an interesting mid-point between immigrant-as-ethnic-type and immigrant-as-individual. One of the points of Lucinda's year of freedom is that she will be vaccinated against "snobbishness-prigishness--the Social Register."50 Sawyer is a bit self-righteous about her tolerance, but this is probably more in tune with the time than either Field or Coatsworth. Sawyer is proud that
Lucinda makes friends of immigrants and common people. She is self-conscious about that part of Lucinda's year in a way that the real Lucinda probably was not. When Miss Peters, Lucinda's guardian, meets Mr. Gilligan, the hansom car driver, "She spoke as to an equal ..."51 and Lucinda is delighted. Lucinda also befriends a family of "simple, honest Italians, minding their own business."52 Tony, Lucinda's Italian friend, and his father run a fruit stand. Their home is overcrowded and new "bambinos" keep arriving.53

There are other friends, too, but not so self-consciously described. Sawyer eventually lets Lucinda take over, and then the only clue to ethnicity is a surname. Lucinda forgets about patting herself on the back for her tolerance and simply enjoys the diversity of New York City. Her love of anything Irish grows more naturally from having loved Johanna, her nurse, who came straight from Ireland full of stories and fairies and folklore. An oriental "princess" Lucinda befriends benefits from the child's romantic interest. The woman is no princess, though she is oriental. She is also a tragic, lonely woman who needs Lucinda "for the empty hours." Lucinda returns. "Anyone who has had the door to fairyland opened to them will understand how inevitably one must go back--again and again and again."54 On her final visit, Lucinda finds the princess murdered.

These books mark a significant departure from the ethnocentrism of the twenties. Prejudice did not disappear but there was recognition of injustice and attempts to deal sympathetically with various cultures. White, Anglo-Saxons remained the dominant characters in stories with American settings, but that was a reflection of social reality as well
as literary choice. The major change was in attitude: the acceptance of the contributions of various ethnic groups to American culture. Some of this change can be accounted for by reference to the intellectual emphasis on the proletarian. Part of the change may have been the result of growing world-mindedness. Whatever the cause, the change meant that American children were exposed to more positive images of foreigners abroad and of different ethnic groups at home. In addition, children from various ethnic backgrounds were likely to find a book about their own heritage. America was no longer quite so isolated from the rest of the world. At least in its children's literature America moved toward community with the world.
Footnotes


2Ibid., p. 205.

3Ibid., p. 206.

4Ibid., p. 207.


12Ibid., p. 192.

13Ibid., p. 204.

14Ibid., p. 7.

15Ibid., p. 80.

16Ibid., p. 213.

17Ibid., pp. 3, 7.

19 Ibid., pp. 178, 238, 147.

20 Hawes, *op. cit.* , p. 18.


23 Ibid., p. 81.

24 Ibid., p. 83.

25 Ibid., pp. 91-92.


27 Ibid., p. 10.

28 Ibid., p. 32.

29 Ibid., p. 234.

30 Ibid., p. 231.

31 Ibid., p. 282.

32 Ibid., p. 286.


34 Field, *Hitty, op. cit.* , p. 146.

35 Ibid., p. 147.

36 The *Horn Book*, (November-December, 1937).


39 Ibid., pp. 36, 44.


42 Shannon, op. cit., p. 138.


44 Shannon, op. cit., p. 45.

45 Seredy, op. cit., p. 23.

46 Lewis, op. cit., pp. 82-84.


48 Ibid., p. 118.

49 Ibid., p. 20.


51 Ibid., p. 16.

52 Ibid., p. 68.

53 Ibid., p. 39.

54 Ibid., p. 101.
CHAPTER V

INTERPRETING AMERICA

In the aftermath of World War One, historical fiction experienced exceptional popularity. Writers, rummaging in the past, became interested in interpreting American history for young people. Perhaps they thought to prevent the future exodus of the young to Europe. Perhaps they simply loved history. Some, at least, believed that in historical fiction children would find the strength of tested values and traditional beliefs. There was a strong feeling among some educators that children's fiction was free of prejudice and bias as well as an agent for the transfer of values and morality. Any contradiction in such a belief was not acknowledged. Historical fiction was not criticized on the basis of historiography nor was historical accuracy a concern. There appears to have been an assumption that history was objective: a body of facts not subject to changing beliefs or political situations. In none of the reviews of Civil War stories, for instance, is there mention of the author's interpretation.

If one assumes that the child reader is likely to believe the history, even when aware of the fictional nature of the story, then it would seem incumbent upon the author to maintain scrupulous historical accuracy. This, however, is not the case in children's historical fiction. In several instances historical incidents and people have been rearranged for the convenience of the story line. Real people are moved where there is no evidence they ever appeared. They are given words to
speak with no evidence that they would have been likely to say them. Historical events are moved forward or backward in time at the convenience of the author. Constance Skinner explains the process thus:

The author has endeavored to make a composite picture of communal and family life in Kentucky. ... To this end, and for the purpose of the narrative, she has taken license with minor facts.¹

One might quibble with Skinner's choice of minor facts. By rearranging and changing actual occurrences she perpetuates an image of Daniel Boone and his family which is heroic but inaccurate. Skinner does the same with George Rogers Clark. The result is an idealized version of American history that is closer to myth than historical fiction.

Children's fiction in the twenties preserved a sense of optimism about America and her history. Stories tended to concentrate on a few time periods and locales and certain character-types reappear consistently. Most authors adhered to a single interpretation of history. Children were provided with a quantity of historical material to read that was fairly consistent as to theme, interpretations and situations. Looking at historical fiction in the twenties, it is as if the years from 1870 to 1914 had never been. Instead, historical fiction centered on three eras: Colonial America, the frontier and the Civil War and its aftermath.
The Frontier in American Life

Caroline Dale Snedeker. The Beckoning Road.
Forrestine Hooker. Cricket: A Little Girl of the Old West.
Constance Skinner. Becky Landers, Frontier Warrior.

The three books listed above offer an interpretation of frontier life. Constance Skinner used the frontier as a metaphor for reality as opposed to the artifice of the civilized world. The frontier, in Skinner's interpretation, pared life down to its essentials, stripping away false values. Solid virtue remained along with respect for nature in its wild state. Skinner admired the "Red Man," even though the settlers battled him. She even understood the Indian resentment against white encroachment on traditional hunting grounds. There would be no real frontier for Skinner if the land could be bought too easily and if there was no one against whom to test the frontiersman's mettle. If the last warm spell before winter did not bring the possibility of final Indian raids, the autumn colors would lose their poignancy and winter would only be cold and miserable, not a safe spell before the summer raids. As a result, the Indian attacks in Becky Landers appear less threatening than do those in Forrestine Hooker's story of starving and renegade Indians pushed beyond endurance.

Hooker, too, is sympathetic to the Indians, though for different reasons. Hooker does not romanticize Indian life. Her story takes place after the Indians have been pushed onto reservations. They no longer symbolize the beauty of wilderness and freedom. The tribes around Fort Sill symbolize the tragedy of an Indian policy that forced starving Indians back onto reservations where there was no game to hunt nor
possibility of better times. *Cricket* is a rare story amidst the
general optimism of historical fiction, though it excuses the govern-
ment of responsibility for the plight of the Indians. Instead, abuses
are blamed on unscrupulous, and individual, Bureau of Indian Affairs
agents.

In Snedeker's *The Beckoning Road*, there is an altogether different
frontier. Tom Coffyn felt that there was no hope of pursuing his
scientific interests on Nantucket. The frontier he chose was more
accurately intellectual and social than physical. The Coffyns went west
to New Harmony, Indiana, in order to find a community supportive of the
intellectual pursuits and passions of individuals like Tom Coffyn. Al-
though Tom Coffyn did need elbow room to survive economically, or to
escape the pressures of more populated areas, he was more in need of
intellectual space. The frontier, at least in children's fiction, pro-
vided space for the uncommon individual.

The frontier ethic as represented in these stories argues against
the intellectual stance that America killed the individual by democratiz-
ing life. In spite of the communal spirit praised in *Becky Landers*,
frontier stories emphasized an ethic that protected the rugged individual.
The code outlined by Skinner called for self-sacrifice and chivalrous
conduct towards the weak or disadvantaged. The men were to face, un-
flinching, the hardships of frontier life. Nothing was so despised as
a coward, man or beast, and nothing so honored as a brave spirit. In
honor of this code, the frontiersman does not hunt deer in winter.
Hampered by snow, the deer would be at a disadvantage. Wolves,
contemptable as "the biggest cowards" in the woods, are fair game in any season.\(^2\) This chivalry extends even to the enemy.

In Becky Landers the villain, DeQuindre, is found helpless in a bear trap. Becky cannot kill him. To do so would be murder. Somehow there is a difference between killing an injured man and battling him in open combat.\(^3\) There is something here, too, of reluctance to kill a brave opponent. DeQuindre does not expect mercy. He asks only that Becky shoot him quickly and not leave him to be eaten by wolves. DeQuindre is no coward. He may be the enemy, but he is still a true frontiersman, and thereby earns Becky's respect.

No such sympathy is wasted on the coward. Cowardice and outlawry are synonymous in these selections of children's fiction. George Rogers Clark, brave frontiersman, is captured by a band of outlaws. Knowing, of course, that such men are really cowards, Clark assumes a masterly air, orders them about and cows them into submission. Thereafter the outlaws are obedient to Clark's command. The assumption that evil equals cowardice also appears in Hawes' The Dark Frigate. Blood-thirsty pirates whimper and whine at the thought of their fate if things go badly.\(^4\) In children's fiction it is not pride but cowardice which goeth before the fall. Pride, moderated just short of conceit, is a virtue.

The frontier story promotes an image of the frontiersman as the American knight in shining armor. He is brave in confronting the elements and the enemy. He bears, in silence, the knowledge of the dangers threatening white settlers. He would violate chivalry to allow his
womenfolk to know the full extent of the danger. The frontiersman
humors the brave and does not attack the weak.

Becky Landers patterns her actions on this male model. She
refuses to be protected and joins the frontier conspiracy to protect
women and children. Becky looks with amused superiority upon her weak
and ineffectual mother, "... poor, grieved, terrified Mother." She
tells Mrs. Landers "Ah, but you're only a woman, Mother.... It's these
boys and men who count here." Becky and frontier girls like her learn
early that respect and honor are directly related to male frontier
skills: tomahawking, shooting and hunting. Jemmy Boone reminds Becky
that "'Your Mother was a real girl, .... We aren't.'" For both girls
this is a point of pride. Becky works for hours to avoid the accusation
that she throws like a girl. She plans to join Clark on his journey to
attack Vincennes. There is only one point in the story in which Becky
admits defeat: she cannot help construct the fort at Boonesborough.
"Alas! There were times when a girl had to acknowledge that she was no
man!"

According to the frontier story, older women concede that they are
not men more easily than do younger girls. Men are allowed their de-
lusions, but the women know the real nature of frontier life. There is
an interesting dichotomy here. The ultimate ideal is epitomized by the
frontiersman, but Skinner softens this image by looking at him through
his wife's eyes. The frontierswoman binds up battle wounds and sits up
all night with the dying and is there when bravery slips away. One of
them muses:
... a country for real men. Queer thing about it is that real men can't go no place... ter stay without takin' along women and raisin' young uns. The more real they are, the more they got to have homes round 'em. But I guess that ain't no country ben made yit fer women....

The women treat their men with humorous indulgence. The men see themselves as knights; the women know they are really just over-grown boys. The men protect their women from danger; the women protect the men from knowing that the women are aware of the full extent of the danger. Women also share among themselves the knowledge that their men are not quite the heroes they would have themselves be. The men are allowed to play hero to keep them out from under foot. In Hooker's *Cricket*, the author shares this information with the reader: "... after all, Cricket's father was only a great big boy...." The men are indulged. They are encouraged to tell tall tales and brag about their prowess while women carry on the real work of settling the frontier.

The ultimate frontier boy-knight is exemplified by Skinner's Daniel Boone. Mrs. Landers finds him to be a knight. "He is so brave, and yet so gentle and kind. It gives me courage and a sense of protection just to see him -- poor little coward that I am." Boone is variously described as mild, affable, wise, intelligent, experienced and noble. He is so perfect a knight that Chief Black Fish "was willing to promise anything to get Boone to be his adopted son." The frontier holds no terrors for a man of Daniel Boone's stature.

Boone is brave but he is also a boy playing games with danger. Skinner describes his delight in dressing up and eluding pursuit, his inability to stay any place once the elemental danger is past. His wife
and children are left to deal with surviving in the settlement. They do not fare well. One of the historical changes Skinner makes concerns this part of Boone's life.

Rebecca Boone gave up her husband for dead after his capture by Black Fish. She gathered up her children and possessions and headed back to Virginia. She had already lost several children to the wilderness and it appeared that she no longer had any reason to remain. Skinner, however, keeps her in Kentucky, waiting dutifully for her knight's return. The image, inaccurate as it may be, is maintained, and Daniel Boone is elevated almost to sainthood.

In Cricket the frontiersman is replaced by the cavalry officer, equally brave, chivalrous and childish. The glamour of silver and brass and gallant horses replaces deerskin and Kentucky rifles, but the code remains the same. Women and children follow their men out west and hold down the fort while the men rattle off to deal with renegade Indians. In keeping with the frontier code, the soldiers reserve violence for renegades: armed and worthy opponents. The poor reservation Indians are protected, and rations distributed "so that the Indians would not be hungry, which was a fair and just thing to do." The Indians starve in spite of such justice, and the officers "sincerely pitied the Indians, knowing, themselves, how hard it would be to make the true conditions understood in Washington." Lieutenant Austin arranges to donate food to the Indians.

The frontier myth provided a forum for several social theories. Children's fiction concurred with the theory that the frontier represented a safety valve. The poor man, the man cramped for growing room
or the unconventional man, could move to the frontier. Women's options were more limited, but the frontier allowed them greater freedom, too. On the frontier Americans could carve their own place, limited only by individual ability. The frontier represented a constant challenge and demanded the best from settlers. There was none of the artifice of the urbanized east. There was little attempt in any of the frontier stories to challenge this mythology.

The frontier myth also challenged the critique of democracy prevalent in intellectual circles. The critique blamed democracy for forcing the sensitive soul to live in a society of mediocrities. Children's frontier stories claimed quite the opposite. Democracy was credited with allowing the individual to rise no matter what his class or social position. Only bravery and skill counted on the frontier. Children's fiction rarely addressed the issue of the individual who wanted to perfect skills other than hunting, shooting and fighting, nor did the intellectuals address the problems of rising above class in an aristocracy.

The Colonial Experience in American Life
Dorothy Lyman Leetch. Tommy Tucker on a Plantation.
Lucy Fitch Perkins. The Colonial Twins of Virginia.

Although a number of books set in Colonial America were published in the twenties, relatively few were highly recommended, and most of these were for readers younger than those included in this study. Alice Turner Curtis' Little Maid books were set in various states during the colonial period, but they contained little history and a great deal of costume. Other books failed to live past the first edition. The books
selected here are examples of one type of Colonial story. They are a rather romanticized version of Southern Colonial life. In both Tommy Tucker and The Colonial Twins the setting is a Virginia plantation. There are slaves on both plantations, but they do not play an important part in either story. The children are the offspring of Virginia patricians, tutored by live-in schoolmasters, and distainful of slaves.

Where frontier stories dwelt on the experiences of common people, these Colonial stories emphasized the life of wealthy families. Class is important in each book and is designated by dialect. The main characters speak standard English. The schoolmaster, lower on the social scale, speaks with an accent and the slaves use heavy dialect: "Ketch a holt of this yer pitcher and take it to Mars George." The slaves express their humility in their speech, as well: "Laws no, I'se carryin' little Marse Talbot to his uncle, suh." Mammy Jinny appears in The Colonial Twins. She is completely devoted to her white "child's" no matter how they frighten her with "haints" and such. In both stories the slaves are superstitious, stupid and cowardly. Mammy Jinny is one of the few examples of this stereotype that survived into the thirties. In 1931 Mammy Jinny reappeared in The Pickininny Twins.

Colonial Virginia is introduced to the reader in these stories as a country of gentlemen farmers, horses, hunting and slaves tending tobacco fields. There is no hint of injustice in this system or of the existence of off-plantation life, except sailing. Children lead close to idyllic lives. Both books are for younger readers in the selection range.
Mid-Nineteenth Century America and the Civil War

Elizabeth Janet Gray. Tilly-Tod.

Caroline Dale Snedeker. Downright Dencey.

Rachel Field. Hitty, Her First Hundred Years.

Elsie Singmaster. A Boy at Gettysburg.

In the nineteen-twenties there were still those whose memories included the experiences of the Civil War and its aftermath. They turned to the mid-nineteenth century as a watershed in American history. The Civil War was a war fought on American soil, pitting one American against another. Abolitionists and Southern apologists had filled the presses with the uncompromising rhetoric of war. Moral, economic and political issues were at stake. The whole era was compelling to a number of authors of children's fiction. The four books selected are a small sample of the quantity of books that make reference to the Civil War, and reflect changing interpretations of the war and American history.

For the most part, the interpretation of the Civil War in children's fiction reflects a reaction to the animosity of war and Reconstruction. Radical Reconstruction in the Thaddeus Stevens mold is rare, appearing only in Elsie Singmaster's A Boy at Gettysburg. Singmaster wrote a biography of Thaddeus Stevens and her juvenile fiction reflects her sympathy for the subject. A Boy at Gettysburg is Unionist without apology. Carl's old grandfather cries when he casts his vote for Abraham Lincoln, because he has voted for union and "the greatest government on earth."21 The book combines two issues as justification for war: slavery and union. Carl and his grandfather work to help fugitive slaves and believe
in the preservation of the Union. Neither is willing to "let our erring
sisters go in peace." The only Southern sympathizer given personality
in the book is a crippled spy who eventually shoots Carl in the foot
and spreads the rumor that the wound was self-inflicted to avoid combat.
The spy is described as living on a small inheritance, not working.
His disability has made him bitter and he taunts Carl whenever the
opportunity arises. From this unpleasant and threatening character
comes the argument for the Southern cause: The "nigger" is property
and the North is violating property laws by aiding fugitive slaves.
There is no question that such a despicable person would champion an
equally offensive cause.

Elsie Singmaster does not choose to bury the bloody shirt. The
South, her book asserts, broke faith with the convenant of union. They
enslaved part of their population and then sent slave catchers after
fugitive slaves, violating northern territory and conscience. The
South brought on the war and presumably deserves the defeat it suffered.
In contrast, the Union soldier fought valiantly for a noble cause.

The radical stance of Singmaster is not shared by other authors.
Though generally Northern in their sympathies, they present the war as
a cruel and senseless misfortune. There is a feeling in these stories
that neither side was to blame. Slavery was unfortunate, but it did
not make all Southerners slave-holding monsters. There was difficulty
in reconciling slavery with the image of a misunderstood South. This
was generally accomplished by reference to a popular character is
historical fiction, the Quaker. If it seemed unlikely that a Northern
abolitionist and a Southern slaveholder could have avoided war, or even
seen it as senseless, then one simply avoided them and took recourse to Quakers and gentle Southern spinsters.

The Quaker became a literary symbol in the twenties, representing the strength of faith in a troubled world. Symbol of all that Americans were supposed to hold most dear, the Quaker stood for honesty, courage and conscience. The Quaker aided slaves but believed in non-violence. Quakers called for an end to slavery but refused to go to war. They remained plain, outspoken and faithful. It would have been difficult to find a more appropriate symbol for nineteen-twenties historical fiction, for the Quaker represented the best that could be offered to the post-war child.

In Tilly-Tod, the Quaker children are made aware of the suffering of soldiers and civilians. Their mother tries to instill in the girls a concern for those less fortunate. "It would be noble to give our twelve cents to those who are suffering," the children admit, but spend it on themselves instead. Their lack of feeling is rewarded by immediate disappointment. Their purchase is worthless.22 The twins are aware of the evils of slavery and war and that their money could have gone to ending both.

By using the Quaker as a character, the author can show sympathy or at least compassion for both sides and still allow anti-slavery sentiment. This device is used in Hitty to show the affect of war in both parts of the country and to reinforce the idea that people on both sides were deeply hurt. Even Singmaster allows a Quaker to appear, though he is not the least bit sympathetic to Southerners.23
The literary Quaker sustains his conscience with faith. This characteristic of Quakers is important in understanding their popularity in the twenties. Quakers had maintained their strong religious bonds in the face of persecution, war, scorn and prejudice. They had survived through faith much as people in the twenties hoped their own children would survive the modern world. Quakers proved that it was possible to fight anti-religious currents. For people who felt the current push against old-time religion, the Quakers were a symbolic life-line.

The classic Quaker story for children, Downright Dencey, acknowledges the power and strength of character shared by the Friends. Conscience and the Inner Light illuminate this story of mid-nineteenth century Nantucket. Over and over again the training of the Society of Friends guides characters to behave in caring, humane ways. There is recognition of some of the repression inherent in such a strict religious code, but it is far outweighed by the picture of a life guided by duty and love. Combined with the Puritan religious sense, the product is what Snedeker calls "New England Responsibility."

Eight generations had bred it into Dencey Coffyn. It had begun long ago in the New England faith in immortality—their vivid sense of unending life. They were responsible for their own immortal souls, responsible for the souls of their neighbors, responsible for the town, responsible for the state.24

And lest the reader miss the significance of this, Snedeker declares that "the dynamic of the old New Englander's responsibility still lives and keeps the decency of our American cities."25 New England responsibility or Quaker concern, the message was strong that both were an
important inheritance from America’s past. They were proof that Americans could live by and with the kind of faith and code of ethics implicit in both.

Stories from the mid-nineteenth century also dealt with the uncommon individual. The Quakers represented a collection of non-conformists. Their chosen life-style and Quaker truth-telling set them apart. There also appeared a slightly different definition of a hero. Though some authors sent Quakers to war and allowed them to be valiant in battle, it was more likely that bravery would be in resisting battle. The Quaker hero was likely to be a hero of conscience rather than physical prowess. This increased the possibilities for female characters. Women are more influential in these stories. Lydia Coffyn is a stronger figure in many ways than her husband Tom. Her sister, Dencey’s heroine, is a powerful speaker, often called to travel and express her "concern" off-island.

The hero in this group of stories is more mature. Men are not likely to be overgrown boys. Though chivalry is not dead, it is given a new twist. Responsibility includes more than bringing home the venison. It involves caring for the weak and even the cowardly. Carl, in A Boy at Gettysburg, remembers his grandfather waiting for news of Lincoln’s election. Carl goes home, knowing that some people will think him a coward. Dencey helps Jetsam even though he is a sniveling, nasty boy. Fortitude gains over physical bravery, though the later is not uncommon. The battle-glory of the frontier recedes a bit in the face of the courage to stand up for a belief, to admit a wrong or to help those who suffer.
The Hero Myth

Authors admiring the stories sampled in this chapter were not likely to applaud the debunking so popular among their contemporaries. Their purpose was to build role models for young readers. They believed with educators of the period, that children wanted exciting stories with worthy heroes and heroines. Children's interests had lately become a topic of research in the wake of progressive education's dictum that education started with the child's interests. Educators began surveying children's reading preferences. Surveys indicated that girls' books were innocuous and that juvenile readers preferred historical fiction. They discovered that boys loved blood-tingling stories and that Charles Hawes was popular with both boys and girls. Several also concluded that children enjoyed and needed heroes. Hero-worship, wrote Franklin Mathiews, could provide the moral standards boys needed. Margaret Corcoran and Catharine L. VanHorn called for high standards in heroes for girls. Girls needed characters worthy of admiration and imitation. This was certainly not a call for de-mythologizing American heroes. Throughout the twenties historical fiction continued to provide heroes from Abraham Lincoln to Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark. Even Simon Kenton becomes a crusty, lovable old frontiersman. If anyone thought that children might appreciate a more human picture of human nature, they are not represented in these portraits of historic Americans.

Historical Fiction in the Thirties

Cornelia Meigs, Constance Skinner, Caroline Snedeker and Eric Kelly continued to write historical fiction throughout the thirties. With the exception of Meigs, however, their work was no longer in the vanguard of
children's fiction. Their books were still well-reviewed, but a new generation of writers moved in other directions. The thirties witnessed a growth in interest in the Victorian era and in stories based on personal or family reminiscences. The old optimism that permeated historical fiction in the twenties faded a bit. In its place a new, more cautious note entered. Stories in the nineteen-thirties allowed a more somber view of life to appear, especially in more equivocal endings. There was now some doubt that everyone always lived happily ever after, or that things would at least turn out right in the end.

The Victorian Period

Ruth Sawyer. Roller Skates.

The Year of Jubilo.

Urban settings were rare in children's historical fiction. When Ruth Sawyer chose to write about 1890's New York City, she broke a long tradition of rural settings. Sawyer turned New York City into Lucinda Wyman's personal territory and described the delights of city living in a way that defied the rural myth at every turn. The Victorian age, condemned so heartily in the nineteen-twenties appeared, in Roller Skates, to be romantic, vibrant and fascinating. Sawyer was able to accomplish this without ignoring some of the more stifling aspects of the period.

Lucinda's Aunt Emily is the ultimate Victorian social snob. Aunt Emily assumed, Lucinda complains, "the divine right of putting her finger into family pies."31 Her watchwords are "System, Duty and Discipline ... the 3 R's of living."32 Lucinda rebels and so does Ruth Sawyer. There is more to life than Aunt Emily's 3 R's and Lucinda is given the chance
to be free of them. When Aunt Emily protests, Uncle Earle tells her "You must remember, Emily, that all children are not turned out the same, like button-molds, or like your own little gazelles."33

Roller Skates is more than a plea for individual differences or freedom for children. Sawyer advocates reaching out to the world and allowing one's self to be vulnerable. Children cannot be protected from the pain that is part of living in the world, and so Lucinda is not protected. In freeing Lucinda, Sawyer broke with a Victorian legacy. She allows Lucinda to become attached to two people who die. One is murdered, the other is a little girl who dies of an untreated illness. Having reached out and been hurt, Lucinda retreats: "Lucinda wished to get back in her box and have somebody fasten the lid safely down on her."34 Sawyer's treatment of both deaths and Lucinda's grief makes Roller Skates an unusual book. Death is explained in terms of classical tragedy: It must have been inevitable, and in the end, it must "all add up right."35

Historical fiction had included death before, but it was more impersonal, more heroic and much less painful. The publication of Roller Skates marked an attempt at realism in historical fiction. Roller Skates also marked the beginning of a change in attitude toward children. The old protective response was crumbling a bit as more and more children were forced to assume more adult roles during the Depression.

The Year of Jubilo retreats from this standard. There is death and unhappiness enough, but the child who dies is virtually unknown to the reader. The scene is unhappy and melodramatic. Jubilo is also a
retreat from the city. The Wymans move to Maine and spend the usual winter trying to survive and discovering their own strength. Readers who spent any time with historical fiction must have wondered if a year in Maine, or at least somewhere in New England, would not cure almost anything.

*Times Remembered: Family Reminiscence*

Laura Ingalls Wilder. *Little House in the Big Woods.*

*Little House on the Prairie.*

*On the Shores of Silver Lake.*

Carol Ryrie Brink. *Caddie Woodlawn.*

Mabel Leigh Hunt. *Little Girl With Seven Names.*

Each of the books based on reminiscence details life in the past as a child would recall it. Each is essentially a social history with only superficial mention of political and economic events. The Civil War, for instance, is mentioned by Brink and Wilder, but only as it would have touched the lives of the main characters. Thus, Caddie overhears her parents discussing the war with the circuit rider. 36 Though her parents may have had more than passing interest in the war, Caddie does not. The war has not touched her as much as the local massacre scare or the possibility that she may go to England. Laura Ingalls makes passing reference to the war because it affects her Uncle George. He was a drummer boy and people say he came home a bit strange. 37

The history that is preserved in these books is the daily activities of ordinary people, many of whom did go untouched by war or political activity. Children are more likely to understand political events as they touch real people, and so these stories reflect the concerns
that directly affected individual lives. The problems of Indians and settlers hungering for the same lands is vividly portrayed in *Little House on the Prairie* because it effects the Ingalls family. They are forced to move, with their crops just planted and a year’s work wasted. Though the account is not unbiased, it is most human. Readers gain a sense of what it would have been like to live in the past, not as a warrior or scout, but as a child in a family. History is personalized.

Unlike the frontier stories of the twenties in which cowardice and courage are rarely exhibited by the same person, these stories are about real children who cry and run for comfort and know fear. They are sometimes courageous; usually they are a childlike mixture of emotions. Laura Ingalls and Caddie Woodlawn become angry with their parents and their siblings. Caddie considers running away. Neither has the unflagging courage of Becky Landers; both are more likeable for that.

Because each story builds on the minutiae of living, of how to ford a swollen stream, or latch a door, or bank a fire, the reader is involved in social history. Because each story is told by a child, the links between past and present are more child-like. The reader learns history through involvement with another child.

*Traditional Stories in Historical Fiction*


Cornelia Meigs. *The Covered Bridge.*
Traditional historical fiction continued to concentrate on those aspects of American history involved in building a country out of a wilderness. A new realism entered in the thirties, though there were still books such as *The Golden Horseshoe* that were idealized and optimistic. *Lucinda* is also of this type. Even *Boy With a Pack* is basically optimistic. There are some seedy characters along Bill's route, but the story is more often an adventure by canal boat and horseback than an attempt at realistic history.

Even the hero myth survived the thirties, though only one of the selected books makes reference to an historical character. In *The Covered Bridge*, Cornelia Meigs introduces Ethan Allen into a story that is otherwise a pleasant version of the rural myth as applied to historical fiction. According to Meigs, Ethan Allen was almost sainted in Vermont: "You can have your way wherever you go ... Vermont owes you a debt of gratitude." Allen's mission in the story is to journey up and down Vermont urging people to make no mistakes in their voting. "Farming people live so far apart, ... that they do not always find out the truth about such matters." Ethan Allen, of course, knows the truth. According to Meigs, no one ever disputed Ethan Allen, "It was not worthwhile." Such hero worship was more typical of the twenties than of the thirties.

In Rachel Field's *The Calico Bush*, the emphasis shifts. Field is not interested in making the early settlement of Maine look glamorous or romantic. Instead, *The Calico Bush* attempts to record the reality of life for early Maine settlers. *The Calico Bush* assumes that readers can understand the hurt and tragedy that went into building a homestead
in Maine. Rachel Field has written a strong narrative with something of the documentary power of *Grapes of Wrath*.

The *Calico Bush* piles detail upon detail to build a picture of the daily struggle to stay alive. Clothing is so dear that Maggie's one dress is many sizes too small. The few pairs of shoes must be shared, so that in cold weather not everyone can be outside at one time. Even when the baby dies, there are not enough clothes or shoes to permit everyone to go to the grave. Even happy events, like the house-raising are shadowed. The youngest Sergeant boy receives a blow to the head that requires stitching. Field details the process as Maggie holds the wound closed for Aunt Hepsa to stitch. The boy never fully recovers, nor is he the only victim of pioneering.

Aunt Hepsa warns that Dolly Sergeant should burn baby Debby's fingers to make her stay away from the fire, but Doily refuses. One night when the cold is so brutal that everyone huddles around the fire to sleep, Debby crawls into the fire and burns. Nothing can ease the baby's pain, or comfort the grief-stricken family. Maggie cries, "But she was too little to die.... She was good and happy and--and she said my name, just yesterday she did, all by herself." The only comfort is Hepsa's "what the earth covers we must forget." This is not the usual protected world of children's literature. The story raises powerful questions and does not answer them all. In the end, after barely surviving a horrible winter, Maggie is offered her freedom. There is a ship off the point waiting to sail to Quebec, the last ship before war closes contact between the French and English. Maggie chooses to stay,
knowing that there is no guarantee that the next winter will be better. The reader half agrees with Dolly Sargeant that Maggie is a fool.

_The Calico Bush_, though traditional in setting and format, is decidedly untraditional in its approach to pioneer life. It is much closer to such adult fiction as Conrad Richter's _The Trees_. In its somber aspects, _The Calico Bush_ is Depression literature. The joy and solace in spite of tragedy are more characteristic of children's fiction, for in the end there is a ray of hope.

_Contemporary America in the Twenties_

Elizabeth Janet Gray. _Meredith's Ann_.

Rachel Field. _Hitty, Her First Hundred Years_.

Katharine Adams. _Mehitable_.

Boothe Tarkington. _Penrod Jashbur_.

Historical fiction took precedence over realistic fiction in the nineteen-twenties. Books about contemporary America confined themselves to stories about the everyday life of young people, rather than exploring contemporary problems. A number of boarding school stories appeared that purported to be realistic, but for most American children they were closer to fantasy. Boarding school stories described a life that looked romantic and exciting. In this sense they were not realistic, anymore than the historical novels were realistic in giving an accurate portrayal of the past. In contemporary fiction, as in much of historical fiction, the reader was protected from unpleasant realities and exposed to characters deemed worthy of emulation.

Of the books selected, two are girls' stories: _Meredith's Ann_ and _Mehitable_. Booth Tarkington's _Penrod Jashbur_ is a boy's story, and
Hitty includes commentary on contemporary life. Hitty provides a grandmotherly perspective in contrast to the other stories. She also is not so romantic about youth as the other books tend to be.

Mothers probably envision daughters like Mehitable or Meredith's Ann. Mehitable is popular, intelligent, gifted and able to make her way on her own with only minor spells of homesickness. Ann is helpful, cooperative, loving and gentle. Everyone in town loves Ann. She is her foster parents' joy and treasure. No one in these stories expects or receives serious trouble from their children. The children themselves are not burdened with much trouble, either. They are generally healthy, mentally sound, and involved in wholesome activities.

When Hitty first saw the twentieth century she was taken aback. Women trotted about half naked and children wore almost as little as the South Sea Islanders. The world had changed more than in all her previous experience. There were automobiles to contend with and cities of overwhelming size. Hitty watched the new world from an antique shop window. There was no little girl to take Hitty along to see what life might be like for a twentieth-century child. If she had been able to read the contemporary girl's stories she might have been surprised at how little some things had changed. The books were no longer the moral tracts of the nineteenth century, but she might have recognized the influence of Little Women. Styles of clothing had changed, but not the style of fictional girls. Authors continued to tell stories about little women, though rarely with the style and quality of Louisa May Alcott's original.
Meredith's Ann is an example of the Little Women model. The Ann of the title is an angelically sweet Beth, saved from death. Ann sickens and must go to the hospital, but she is restored to health, continuing to bring gentle kindness to those around her. Ann's concern saves another from death. She is able to make cowardly Tom brave. And through it all, her unsteady health allows Ann to look "wan and pale" and to "stay quiet, wrapped up among the blankets and cushions ...."43 Sainthood is more easily acquired by the sickly.

Barbara Bradley, the eldest of the three girls in Meredith's Ann, plays Meg. She mothers the rest, worrying about sweaters and dinner and whether Tom will ever be really healthy. Her maternalism runs counterpoint to Mickey's robust good spirits. Mickey is Jo March, the tomboy who resists being made a lady. She has a boy's name and dreams of being a boy. Mickey's exploits involve them all in mountain climbing, getting lost in the forest and similar unladylike pursuits. She does have fits of domesticity, fixing jars of marmalade and playing house in the summer cabin, but these seem added on to assure the reader that Mickey is an acceptable girl.

Stories for girls tend, also, to limit acceptable activities for female characters. It is as if the authors had read some of the lists of things girls were supposed to like and included them in each book. One such survey of librarians and booksellers indicated that girls' tastes ran to mystery, boy and girl stories (even for ten-year-olds) and fashion. One suspects that this was somewhat in the nature of self-fulfilling prophecy. These were the books available and recommended for
girls. They were purchased and given to them, complete with mystery, romance and fashion.

Mystery in contemporary girl's books was rarely very mysterious. In Mehitable there is a forbidden wing of the chateau housing the boarding school. No school girl is to enter and the door is kept firmly locked. The headmistress is mysteriously distracted, disappearing for long periods of time. One day the back door is left open by the maid and Mehitable enters. She finds a boy in the forbidden quarters and promises to visit him often. There are enough possibilities here to have made a truly exciting mystery, but it all subsides gently with a rather half-hearted tale of the boy being hidden away to protect him from a scandal involving his father. Once his father is cleared of the unspecified charges, the boy is free, the headmistress is happy and the mystery ends.

In Meredith's Ann a lumberjack watches the children, helps them out of various scrapes and becomes the Mystery Man. The Merediths fear him though he does not appear threatening and no real case is built for his being dangerous to the children. In the last chapter the reader discovers that he is Ann's older brother thought dead in battle. At only one point in the story is there any tension built relating to the mystery man. He appears at the window of the cabin where the children have sheltered while lost. After a moment of panic, the children recognize him, and he takes them home.

Boy and girl themes in these stories involve friendship more than romance. A picture of comfortable, easy relationship between the sexes develops that must have been the envy of many young readers. This
comaraderie is presented as the right and proper way of life for young people. Such an idealized version of relations between the sexes appears to have been one of the appeals of such books. This was what life should be like. Certainly young readers were unlikely to find much indication that awkwardness or pain might be the lot of some human relationships. Even in Meredith's Ann where there is mild acknowledgement that children might have a social problem or two, the story promises that youthful awkwardness will give way to teenage poise. One will be part of "the gang" and therefore happy.

Both Mehitable and Meredith's Ann spend considerable time on clothes. Fashions and fabrics are lovingly described, down to dimity and voile dresses with tiny lace collars. Mehitable is pained by the dowdiness of her wardrobe, though she reminds herself that such vanity is unbecoming. Unbecoming or not, a long passage in the book takes Mehitable shopping in several elegant Paris boutiques, complete with ribbon by ribbon description of dresses, shoes and hats. The reader is told that clothing can be overcome by personality and grace, but she also understands that homemade, country clothes are a problem.

Throughout these books girls are presented with a standard of behavior, dress and social life that could be fulfilled only in the fantasyland of fiction. Here was life as it should be and it was virtually unattainable. There was room for only certain character deviations. No meanness of spirit could be tolerated, though one could be un ladylike in certain circumstances. There was emphasis on being part of a group, though it helped to be a winner at something. Winners were allowed to be charmingly different.
Stories for boys tolerated considerably more deviation, though charm was still a requirement. In fact, "boys will be boys" might have defined one of the popular boys' series, Booth Tarkington's Penrod stories. Penrod had been introduced to young readers in the first decade of the twentieth century. By the twenties readers knew Penrod, his friend Sam and finally, Penrod Jashbur, boy detective. Rendered in the vernacular of young boys, the Penrod stories rambled along like boys on summer vacation. The plot was a slim excuse for stringing together a number of incidents proving that Penrod was a lovable rascal, always into trouble, ingeniously contrived by himself. Penrod steals food from the pantry, tortures his long-suffering dog and invades people's privacy with impunity. He lies, he accepts bribes and he is "all boy."

Penrod and his friend Sam have more freedom, even with their parents around, than do the girls. They slip out to "tail" suspects at night. They are not expected to be clean and neat though their parents make some half-hearted attempts in that direction. Penrod spies on his sister. He follows her boyfriends all over town. His dogs chew up the house. Even Jo March would not have gotten away with such carrying on. Penrod not only gets away with it, but the reader is meant to love him for it.

Boys reading Penrod Jashbur might find it difficult to keep up with Penrod, but it is not an impossible version of childhood. The things Penrod does are exaggerated, perhaps, but they are realistic. Any child, fearing punishment, might hide, as Penrod does. Fictional girls, however, cheerfully made marmalade, cleaned house and washed
dishes before they even went out to play. Girls' stories created a longing for what may never be. The boys' stories give the reader a good laugh and a nod of recognition.

Penrod Jashbur concerns itself with the world of boyhood. Adults and their concerns are interpreted only as they touch Penrod's interests. Mehitable and Meredith's Ann are more adult in outlook. Both stories show some awareness of the world outside childhood. Mehitable closes at the opening of World War One. Though little mention is made of time or current events until the last two chapters, the world finally impinges on the child.

Mehitable's first year at the chateau boarding school ends with an invitation to spend time with "the young madame" and her family. Mehitable gladly accepts, and she and the boy she has befriended travel to Brussels to meet the adults. Brussels is on the verge of invasion. People jam the roads, fleeing the Germans. Mehitable and her friend have a car. They head south to France, taking a refugee and her child with them. For the first time the reader looks at real people fleeing for their lives. This is no Paris boutique, but a flood of humanity terrified by war. The vision is fleeting. Soon Mehitable is safe in France. Her romantic notions return:

And next winter? The future? What did it matter if her little plans were changed? This was a time to help. She had known that, with a very happy feeling at her heart, while she held the sick baby in her arms, and with these dear and already tried friends, she would not be afraid to face whatever might come.
Somehow it does not seem possible that a young girl who barely escapes an invasion and faces the loss of all her plans, should be so righteous. The young madame shares her pre-war idealism:

"It's going to be the greatest time the world has ever known, children. France and England will have need of every one of us. I'm so glad I have you both to help me do my part."

Sunshine touched Mehitable's face as she looked up and said, "I'll do all I can with you and for you." 45

When Katharine Adams wrote those lines she wrote out of the spirit of idealism that went into World War One, not the bitterness that came out of the war. The lack of fear, the sunlight blessing the entire conversation, are romanticisms that survived better in children's literature than in adult fiction. There is pathos in the young madam's belief that war will be the world's greatest time.

Meredith's Ann, published in 1927, seven years after Mehitable is not so enamoured of war. Ann lost her parents to a flood and her brother to a war. Her inheritance came from a profiteering uncle. She hates the blood money and the war that created it. Ann understands the idealism that encouraged her brother to enlist in 1915 in the British army, but she remembers vividly the ceremony when his unrecognizable remains were buried in Ohio. There is still a touch of pride in his soldiery: "... to fight for his father's country, what a wonderful big brother he must have been!" 46

The children know, too, what the war cost some of the young men who survived. One of the lumberjacks in the nearby camp was gassed and left with chronic lung disease. The children can see the pain creasing his
young face, and hear the wracking cough. There are other victims of
the war who "hurl vague Bolshevistic threats into the murky atmosphere"
of the camp. These "Reds raving against the government" have been
recruited from pool halls, obviously an unsavory group. Finally,
the gassed lumberjack is revealed as Ann's brother. The body in the
Ohio grave belongs to someone still unaccounted for. Ann's brother was
a prisoner in Germany, wounded, gassed and shell-shocked. He was such
an "utter horror" to look at that he felt no one needed to see him,
ever. The disfigurement has been his disguise throughout the book.
As a veteran he could not find a job, and so had not wanted to reveal
himself to Ann. Bitter and desperate, he had paraded with other un-
employed veterans, to no avail. He was no use to anyone, he thought,
and had nothing to offer Ann.

Ann saves her brother by sharing her inheritance. They will both
move to the city where Ann will go to a real school and her brother will
go to college. The reader is not given a glamorous hero. Ann's brother
is tired and sick. He has been out of work and the government has done
nothing to help him or other veterans. After the confetti parades, this
was all that was left.

There is an interesting contrast, too, between World War One and
the American Revolution. Mr. Meredith's land was handed down for genera-
tions. Over the fireplace reposes the sword Mr. Meredith's grandfather
left when he picked up his plow again. He had fought for and come home
to something solid and enduring. World War One veterans came home to
nothing so stable. There was neither sword to hang up nor mantle to
hang it on. Meredith's Ann admits that the after-effects of this war
were visible to children. The solution it suggests is individual.
Ann's brother is saved by a lucky inheritance, a solution not avail-
able to other veterans.

*Contemporary America in the Thirties*
Laura Adams Armer. *Waterless Mountain.*
Elizabeth Enright. *Thimble Summer.*

Stories with contemporary American settings reflected the
Depression-born interest in minority peoples. Books by authors like
Arna Bontemps concentrated on Black children and their experiences. Others concentrated on Indians. These books were sometimes hard to
find, one critic complained. Her local bookstore would not stock books
about minorities because no one would buy them. Increasing migration
of Blacks to the northern cities increased awareness of the need for
books about minority experiences. The suggestion was made that schools
and libraries begin to stock such books. Marjorie Hill Allee, a
librarian, suggested books Black children liked to read: animal stories,
stories about American, not foreign, children, and books about Black
children so long as they did not use words like "nigger," "picaninny"
or "darky." She also warned that the Black child's mind "seems to
work with a more direct simplicity," than did his white peers'. The
effects of neo-primitivism lingered.

Interest in Indians had appeared in the twenties and intensified
during the thirties. Indian mysticism was especially appealing, as was
the Indian's closeness to nature. *Waterless Mountain* is a poetic narra-
tive that gives a sympathetic picture of the Navajo life-style,
especially its elements of spirituality and mysticism. The Navajos in
**Waterless Mountain** live in conditions of poverty that would have shocked even Depression-poor white America, yet they managed to "walk in beauty."53 Whether this was the whole picture or not is irrelevant to the power of the image. Urban, white Americans had lost touch with the spirituality they thought the Indian retained. As a result, many people were interested in those who appeared to have kept what so many had lost. Younger Brother, in **Waterless Mountain**, might have something to teach children to help them weather the Depression.

Younger Brother accepts his environment. He befriends it. He keeps singing in his heart the songs that make sense of the world. "I speak only as my heart sings. Sometimes it sings till I feel pain deep down."54 Younger Brother searches not for worldly riches, but for the pattern of things, the "secrets deep in the heart of things."55 His concerns are spiritual, not temporal. When he plants a garden and harvests a crop, he is not being practical so much as responding to a religious experience. Younger Brother sees himself as part of the Navajo people, sharing their lives and trying to keep within the balance of the natural world. He searches throughout the book for understanding, and finally discovers a "new song born in his heart. It was the song of his people, who carried on, who persisted, who danced to the throbbing music of their hearts. At last he understood the pain of beauty."56

The introduction to **Waterless Mountain** suggests that the story was a daring one for a white person to attempt, but that Mrs. Armer came as close as anyone but a medicine man to the truth of the Navajo experience.57 The recognition that there might be something in Navajo culture that a white person could not fully comprehend was a significant
change in attitude. No longer did the white man bring civilization and
religion to the savage. Now the culture-rich Navajo offered a higher
civilization and deeper faith to the rest of America. The new hero
was a person who lived close to nature and lived his life as an expres-
sion of deep faith.

Books such as *Waterless Mountain* were a response to the social and
economic conditions of the thirties as well as an expression of the
interests and philosophy of their authors. It was difficult to find
books that responded directly to the Depression, or even mentioned it
in the narrative. Only one such book appears in these selections.
*Thimble Summer* takes place during the Depression and it includes things
peculiar to that era.

*Thimble Summer* begins during an extended drought. The crops are
wilting in the fields. The heat is so intense that human activity is
painful. Mr. Linden worries about rain and money. "If it would only
rain! Then there would be good crops and more money."58 If things do
not improve the Linden's may lose the farm. Bills keep coming, but
there is no money to pay them. Jay watches his father worry. "I don't
want to be a farmer and watch my good crops eaten with wheat rust or
dried up with drought. I don't want to spend my life waiting for weather."59
Jay repeats the remark later, and a boy who has traveled across the
country tells him about the Dust Bowl.

Mr. Linden is saved by rain and a government loan. The Lindens are
the beneficiaries of the New Deal. They can build a barn and harvest
their crops and pay their bills. Politics have a direct affect on a
fictional family, a rarity before the twenties.
Economic aid and the Dust Bowl are not the only reminders of the Depression. The Lindens take in a boy tramp who has been wandering around since his father's death. When Eric first appears he is dizzy from hunger, but wary. One of the neighbors reassures him: "Take it easy, boy ... Nobody ain't agoin' to interfere with you. They got too much trouble of their own." Garnet Linden listens to Eric and decides that she does not envy him. She appreciates the safety of her own home and family.

It is remarkable that the Depression is so rarely apparent in children's literature throughout the thirties. Perhaps distance was needed in order to make the topic manageable in children's fiction. Depression stories have begun appearing in the nineteen-seventies. Perhaps, too, authors wanted to write about something besides the Depression. Many of their stories are reaction against the apparent chaos of the thirties. Elizabeth Enright managed to acknowledge the fact of the Depression while still writing a story that denied it as totally devastating.
Footnotes


2Ibid., p. 87.

3Ibid., p. 83.


6Ibid., p. 3.

7Ibid., p. 31.

8Ibid., p. 97.

9Ibid., p. 147.

10Ibid., p. 119.


12Skinner, op. cit., p. 47.

13Ibid., pp. 6, 47, 69.

14Ibid., p. 67.


16Hooker, op. cit., p. 83.

17Ibid., p. 217.


Singmaster, op. cit., p. 33.


Ibid.


Mathiews, op. cit., p. 280.


Ibid., p. 47.

Ibid., p. 53.

Ibid., p. 132.

Ibid., p. 167.


39 Ibid., p. 64.

40 Ibid., p. 87.


42 Ibid., p. 193.


45 Ibid.


47 Ibid., p. 74.

48 Ibid., p. 259.


51 Ibid., p. 85.

52 Ibid.


54 Ibid., p. 156.
55Ibid., p. 199.

56Ibid., p. 211.

57Ibid., p. viii.


59Ibid., p. 12.

60Ibid., pp. 41, 44.

61Ibid., p. 49.
CHAPTER VI

URBAN-RURAL CONFLICT

Children's fiction followed a conservative course throughout the twenties and thirties in interpreting the world to American children. Frequently in opposition to the intellectual trends in the adult literary community, children's authors strove to protect and strengthen children. They tried to provide role models worthy of emulation and values of lasting merit. They offered alternatives to the modern, technological world, and in doing so found themselves sharing an enthusiasm with their counterparts in adult fiction. A strong current of anti-technology and anti-urbanization ran through adult and children's literature in both decades. In the twenties it took the form of neo-primitivism; in the thirties it was the discovery of the proletarian. In both decades the rejection of urban life appeared in literature in increasing interest in folklore and storytelling, in the appearance of so-called primitive people, in the acceptance of the rural myth and in a nostalgia for simpler things.

Folklore and Storytelling

Frederick Hoffman explains the popularity of neo-primitivism in the twenties as a protest against the machine. "Primitive" indicated pure, pre-industrial life.¹ As a contrast to the complexities of modern, industrial life, neo-primitivism represented one avenue in the search for the causes of social distress.² Children's authors, as disturbed by the industrial age as many other intellectuals, embraced neo-primitivism.
Beginning in the twenties children's fiction showed an increase in the use of peasant motifs. This was, in part, a protest against industrialization, but it was also a celebration of the peasant virtues of hard work, family loyalty and simple pleasures.

Part of this enthusiasm revealed itself in the inclusion of folklore in children's fiction. In Gray's *Tilly-Tod* the narrative is broken several times to allow the twins' grandmother to tell family folklore or stories from American history. None of the stories have a direct bearing on the story line, but they do reveal the values inherent in the twins' upbringing. The stories also lend a homey touch to the book, strengthening the impression that there are many pleasures in a simpler life--including sharing stories.

Stories and folklore preserve heritage and tradition for young people. In Eric Kelly's *The Trumpeter of Krakow*, folklore provides the motivation for action. Joseph's father, Pan Andrew, tells him the tale of the trumpeter slain by the Tartars. Pan Andrew is himself a trumpeter, and fills the hours between offices by telling Joseph stories of brave men and women in Poland's past. The action of the story revolves around the tale of the Tarnov Crystal and its strange powers. All these legends build in Joseph and the reader a sense that the heroes of the past demand equal sacrifice and honor from the present. Krakus and the dragon, the Tarnov Crystal and alchemy combine to convince the reader that these were nobler times, when the line between science and magic was indistinct. Kelly, like other neo-primitivists, preferred magic to technology.

*Downright Dencey* and *Hitty* include sailors' lore. Constance Skinner included folklore and Indian legends in her books. Even in
Mehitable, storytelling interrupts the narrative. The secret boy regales Mehitable and her friends with family legends from the time of Marie Antoinette. These books represent the opening trickle in a flood of folk stories.

Not only was storytelling a popular device in children's fiction, it was a popular style of writing. Author's adopted a conversational tone which accommodated intervention by the author. It was not uncommon to find a story begin as if told by a storyteller beside the hearth. The author might interrupt the narrative as the Scotts do in *In the Endless Sands*, to ask the reader to predict the sequence of events: "So what do you think he did?"3 There are aside to tell the reader about guillotines or Arab child-rearing. Particularly in books about primitive people, the story-teller style dominates: "I am going to tell you about ..." and then the author does so. Sometimes a modern contrast is inserted to clarify a point. *Becky Landers* begins with a quantity of information and explanation before the narrative commences. The attempt to use folklore and to adopt the style of the storyteller sometimes led authors to write as if the story were told by primitive people. Carl and Grace Moon use pseudo-Indian talk: "Look how I have a hurt place ...."4 Though the Moons were writing for younger readers, the reduction of primitive people to dialect was strong in books intended for all age groups.

**The Image of Primitive People**

The most common symbol of neo-primitivism was the Black American. In a distortion of reality, the Negro came to symbolize untouched primitivism. He was perceived as immune to the threats of modern
industrial life, his "vital, primitive wisdom" remained intact. Translated into children's literature, the Black Primitive lost his individuality and remained embedded in the cement of stereotype. A Black servant here or there might lay claim to some humanity, but for the most part, racist images went unquestioned. The persistence with which Blacks were portrayed with eyes rolling and teeth gleaming proves the point. This portrayal is presented in every selection in which Black characters appear. In Hitty, the Black children gather around the white mistress, the "eyes rolled and the teeth gleamed white." Mammy Jinny and the "boys" in the Twins series also have eyes that roll and teeth that gleam. In Tilly-Tod the Black servant smiles "all over her round black face," and in Cricket the house servant proclaims herself "... just a wuthless ol' nigger...."

Superstition and simplicity akin to stupidity are assigned with amusement to Blacks. Rancor is not evident because these Blacks present no threat; they are amusingly quaint. Mammy Jinny hides her massive bulk under a small table when the white children pretend to be "haints." The dirty, pigtailed Black child who rescues Hitty never becomes a person like Hitty's other mistresses. Instead she is a groveling, simple child who is the recipient of her mistresses' charity. Another white child in Hitty begs God to let lightning spare her: "... take some of those nigger children...." Even in Cricket, which takes place at Fort Sill where Black soldiers were stationed, there is an underlying racism. Aunt Jane, whose husband is one of the "Buffalo Soldiers," is constantly the butt of jokes, yet she remains loyal and loving.
Blacks provide comic relief in most of the stories. Their speech, rendered in almost unintelligible dialect, proves their simplicity. "I is gwine to tell you ..." becomes ludicrous by repetition, though it must not have seemed so at the time. The devastating part of this description is that there was probably no conscious malicious intent. Forrestine Hooker ends her book with a homily about the brotherhood of the human race, regardless of skin color.

Malicious intent or ignorance, the stereotyped picture of Blacks reinforced the racial separation prevalent in America. Because white children were frequently unfamiliar with anything but literary stereotypes and local prejudice, they had no way of knowing that the characterizations in books were inaccurate. Black children, on the other hand, found their separation reinforced in the literature available to them. Outside of oral tradition, there were few positive images of Blacks.

Neo-primitivists also evinced interest in American Indians. The image of the Indian in children's literature was not as monolithic as that of the Black. Though often labeled "red men" there were fewer categorical attributes assigned to Indians. The memory of the "Noble Red Man," remained to compete with the neo-primitivist image of childishness.

_Cricket_, sympathetic to the plight of starving Indians, still represents the Indians as simple and childish. Cricket carries sugar in her pocket for the horses and "the Indian children and squaws who love sugar as civilized people like candy." The Indians are so ignorant that they can not manage to keep themselves alive on the reservation without
help. They are given rations which they trade for useless items at the trading post. "Indians, in those days, were much like children, who believe a bit of sparkling glass to be a valuable diamond." No mention is made of the adult Bureau of Indian Affairs Agent who stocked the worthless baubles. There is also no accusation of childishness against the soldier who turns all the Indian papooses upside down while the white officers and their wives shriek with laughter.

The assumption that non-whites lacked intelligence was common enough in the twenties to appear in children's literature. The Blacks and Indians were dominated by whites, making it easy to assume their inferiority. Sometimes white blood produced a superior primitive, such as the renegade Quannah. Hooker explains that Quannah's white blood endowed him with superior intelligence which made him more resourceful in evading capture. For the rest, there was not much hope of ending poverty and ignorance. "Educated Indians always go back to their tribes and fall into the old ways," Lieutenant Austin tells his family when an Indian girl leaves her white husband.

"'Molly was different,' insisted Cricket's mother. 'There must be some reason.'"

"'She's just a Cheyenne,' replied Lt. Austin. 'That's reason enough.'"

In Hooker's story, Indians are pitiful, and therefore deserving of sympathy. Constance Skinner prefers the Indians wild and free. She is not interested in pity. Skinner's is a voice for the nobility of the Indians. They may be childish and inferior to white men, but Indians are not stupid. According to Skinner, Indians love dancing and fighting,
are poor marksmen but excellent with the tomahawk, and are given to killing women and children. White men, she says, do not do this. Indians are also prone to capture and adopt "the right sort" of white men. They may plot for years to capture a likely man or boy. Like Blacks, they love magic and are frightened by superstitions. This gives whites an advantage, as Becky proves when she pretends to be a wolf in order to escape capture.  

Besides reservation Indians and noble red men, there are also those Indians who have been trapped by encroaching civilization. Lost to their own people and addicted to white vices, these Indians are also shunned by white society. Sick and often fearsome creatures, they appear in Downright Dencey and The Beckoning Road. Injun Jill, Jetsam's foster mother, is a strange woman who claims her Indian blood gives her magical powers. In this version of primitive life, the "native" maintains ties with elemental powers unavailable to civilized men. Injun Jill, Snedeker suggests, retains a racial memory of Indian ceremonies and devil exorcism. Her Indian heritage is decidedly evil.

The underlying assumption in these characterizations is that certain human behavior and nature can be predicted on the basis of race. Whites can be differentiated and the evil of one does not condemn them all, but this does not apply to primitive people. Neo-primitivism explains certain individuals by reference to their race. In children's literature the most common "primitives" were Blacks and American Indians. The thirties marked an abrupt change in this trend.
The Discovery of the Proletarian

When the Depression caused intellectuals to rediscover their social conscience they also discovered they had common cause with the common man. Intellectuals could no longer afford the arrogance of the twenties. For the comfort of intellectuals' awakening social consciences and their old egos, the lower classes were elevated and granted dignity as human beings. This implied criticism of the neoprimitivism of the twenties. It also directly affected children's fiction.

Artists like Rockwell Kent and Lynd Ward adopted a bold, direct style that lent itself well to romanticizing working people. A review in *Elementary English Review* described their illustrations for children's books as a "masculine approach to art."18 Kate Seredy adopted an equally impressive style in which sweeping lines and dramatic perspectives create tremendously powerful pictures. The naturalistic style of art, though hardly realistic, created a feeling of power and majesty about ordinary people. Seredy's Atilla the Hun strides out of her illustration, looking almost metallic in his power. The peasants in Atanas Katchamakoff's illustrations for *Dobry* are full of strength and assurance. The stories themselves reflect this powerful image of peasantry.

Enthusiasm for peasantry included enthusiasm for folklore. In the thirties the trickle begun in the previous decade became a flood. Kate Seredy explained that folklore provided an antidote to "Facts, Facts, Facts.... Those who want to hear the voice of pagan gods in wind and thunder, who want to see fairies dance in the moonlight, who can believe
that faith can move mountains, can follow the thread [of folklore]... It is a fragile thread; it cannot bear the weight of facts and dates." 19 For Seredy and others, folklore added beauty and mystery to life. It dignified history. People interested in children's fiction must have agreed, for in 1938 they awarded The White Stag the Newbery Medal, praising its poetic amalgam of history and legend. 20

Stories and folklore were included in all manner of books, confirming the proletarian nature of the characters. Literary characters also create their own folklore in children's books. Pa, in the Wilder books, tells stories in the evenings. They are compounded of real happenings and exaggeration. Pa's stories generally serve to point out a moral, even if it is only to carry a gun in the Big Woods. His stories also give his children a history, for they are the adventures of Grandpa or Pa or another family member. 21 Johnny Woodlawn and Great-Grandmother Eberhardt, respectively, tell the same kind of stories in Caddie Woodlawn and Thimble Summer. 22

Monica Shannon, Kate Seredy and Laura Armer include folktales and storytelling in each of their books. These frequently appear as entire chapters, separate from the story-line. Storytelling was obviously valued in children's fiction. Stories served to strengthen families and inspire moral living. Folklore also glorified nationalism. By giving nations a destiny and an exciting history, folklore elevated the nation's citizens.

The thirties' image of the peasant depicted an individual untouched by the civilized world, retaining deep, basic wisdom unavailable to the rest of humankind. The peasant had innate dignity and a system of
values that served in good and bad times. The peasant ideal was over-
simplified, but it gave evidence of areas in which some Americans felt
their own society to be lacking. The peasant became the model for a
life of dignity and worth.

Dobry's grandfather is the spokesman for peasant philosophy. He
tells Dobry, "Everything is different, each leaf if you really look.
There is no leaf exactly like that one in the whole world. Every stone
is different. No other stone exactly like it. That is it Dobry. God
loves variety."23 Like the leaf and stone, Grandfather is unique. He
is his own man, independent of everything but honor and the soil. As a
peasant he exists in children's literature as a healthy, husky human
specimen. Male and female alike, peasants are capable of strenuous
physical labor. They are dignified by their labor but also by their
existence as humans.

Untutored, the peasant artisan creates masterpieces. The shepherd
in The Good Master carves beautifully. "He's an artist.... He should
earn money and study in schools," Mr. Nagy says, but the shepherd,
Pista, disagrees. "What would a shepherd be doing with money, Mister
Nagy? I have everything here. I am happy.... Can money and schools
give me better things?"24

Peasants were not the only proletarians to appear in children's
fiction, though they were the most common. Indians and Blacks continued
to be topics of interest in the thirties. Books about the Black experi-
ence continued to appear in the thirties, but Black characters almost
disappeared from white fiction. A few slaves remained in historical
fiction, but they did not roll their eyes or display their teeth.
Elsewhere Black characters kept a low profile. A Black cook appeared now and then, but it was much less likely to find the stereotypes that had marked twenties' fiction. As more and more urban Northerners became aware of the conditions in which many urban Blacks lived, Blacks became less and less attractive as symbols of untouched primitivism. As a result, Indians, still rather distant, received more attention. Even in historical fiction there was a marked change in attitude towards Indians. Ma Ingalls is decidedly adverse to having Indians around. She does not like them and fears for her family's safety. Her husband respects the knowledge and skills of the Indians. He is willing to live in peace with them and share the land.  

In most of the selections of historical fiction, Indians are granted more respect and sympathy than had been the case. However, they are still described as dirty, smelly and fearsome, all of which may have been true from the settler's experience. Indians in thirties' fiction appear as friends to white settlers as well as potential enemies. The Calico Bush, Caddie Woodlawn and The Golden Horseshoe all contain sympathetic portraits of Indians. The Golden Horseshoe equates Indian and English aristocracy as the best of England and "wild nature."  

In Caddie Woodlawn the tension between whites and Indians is the result of white hysteria, and in a relationship between an Indian woman and a white man, the woman proves to be a better person. The assumption of white superiority is called into question, however gently. In this as in other ways, children's fiction began to widen the horizon of acceptable world-views. Prejudice was not gone, but it was attacked. Blatant stereotypes were less prevalent and sometimes reversed. In
Waterless Mountain, for instance, the Indian is elevated to a lofty position shared with eagles, perhaps, but not with white men.

The Rural Myth

Along with racial myths, neo-primitivism accepted the validity of the rural myth. According to this mythology, what was technological and urban represented evil and what was simple, pre-industrial and rural represented good. Part of the rural myth involved a contrast with urban life that can be outlined as follows:

Rural v. Urban

Genteel Poverty
Pastoral Beauty
Peaceful
Homespun Virtues
Family Strength

Grinding, demeaning poverty
Grimy, cold city
Nervous
Immorality
Uncaring, destructive city

There was more ambivalence in the feelings represented above than might appear at first. There were aspects of technology and city life that might have improved the rural idyll. For instance, the medical care, education and city services were needed by the rural New Hampshire of Meredith's Ann. Generally, however, the rural myth persisted in children's fiction. Even when characters craved the excitement of the city, they took with them the solid base established by rural life. Mehitable grows up in Cherryville, Vermont, before she is allowed to have the continental world of a French boarding school.

"Nothing thrilling could happen here," Mehitable's best friend says of Cherryville, and that is the point. There are no distractions to lead young people down the wrong path. Mehitable has had the advantage
of the no-nonsense rearing practiced by Aunt Comfort. Unlike the spoiled New Yorkers at her boarding school, Mehitable's values are not twisted by urban pretensions. She, like Hitty, is made of solid New England timber.

The celebration of the New England mind pervades Hitty. She constantly holds new experience up to the yardstick fashioned in her New England birthplace. City children are found to be spoiled and indulged. Hitty's experiences with several Philadelphia girls was such a shock "that I have not had quite the same faith in human nature since." 29 In the city true worth counts for little. Surface beauty counts for all. Unlike the idyllic countryside, where poverty is neither ugly nor degrading, poverty in the city is quite the opposite. Hitty discovers that urban poverty destroys human spirit.

The city is only for those who can afford it, these stories suggest. It takes money to buy comfort there, to eat well and to surround oneself with beauty. The country offers these things almost for free. This theme was a continuation of a literary tradition. In 1916 Understood Betsy 30 turned timid and incompetent in the city. Once sent to New England Betsy blossomed. Country air, country families and country schooling taught Betsy to work and be independent. Fictional children, like Betsy, paled in the city and were sent to revive in the country. Sometimes it was too late, as with Becky Landers' well-bred mother. Too long in the civilized East, Mrs. Landers never acquires the skills and temperament necessary for survival on the frontier. For others assistance comes in time. Elizabeth Janet Gray saved Tom Bradley from too much scholarship and bad eye-sight by sending him to New
Hampshire in Meredith's Ann. Ann, herself, had come to the country as a frightened orphan. Even the Bradley's doctor recommends several months in the country air and the company of good country people as a cure for Tom's unmanly demeanor.

Part of the urban-rural dichotomy centered on a middle-American fear of cities. Pool rooms full of shady characters were believed to line city streets. The air of sophistication associated with cities was also associated with a loss of manliness and vigor. The city led to dissipation. The city was too complex to be safe and country people were wary of becoming entangled in anything smacking of urban life. Even immigrants were better off if they were part of the displaced peasantry rather than the urban poor. Country people did not need to question the rightness of their lives. Life in the country had taught them "sincerity, kindness, courage, all that is in its best sense, American." There is an enviable certainty in the way country living is portrayed in children's fiction.

The country had truth, health and virtue on its side. As if in proof that it was especially blessed, the countryside also had beauty. Children's fiction describes the glories of the rural landscape:

[T]he scarlet of the swamp maples by every pond or bit of marshy land, the bright yellow of elms and birches and the flaming red of woodbine that made the fences look as if they had burst into flame. It was goldenrod and asters all the way to Portland.

New Hampshire mountains and the intervale where Meredith's Ann lives is "a heavenly place." Farm houses nestle in greenery. Fresh white curtains blow from kitchen windows and fresh milk flows from
pitchers. Children in such an environment cannot help but live better lives. Tom Bradley goes off trail-clearing and returns with "an air of awakened manliness.... His eyes, released from their encasing spectacles now that the close and ill-proportioned study was a thing of the past, were clear and very blue in the tan of his face. Most significant of all, the new Tom had the air of self-reliance and assurance that the old Tom had lacked." This robust good health is shared by the frontier children in Becky Landers who also swung an ax and learned self-confidence.

Symbol of tried and true virtues, of traditional religion and families, the country stood against technology, sophistication and doubt. It was a bulwark against post-war changes. Rural America promised the reassurance of a happy ending, and an optimistic view of human nature. The contrasting city environment stood as a warning against the lure of urban life.

The rural myth continued in the children's fiction of the nineteen-thirties, extending to include peasantry around the world. Two elements appeared in the rural mythology of the thirties often enough to assume an almost ritual nature: the harvest celebration and Christmas. To emphasize the dependence of peasant life on the soil, and the spiritual nature of that relationship, fiction in the thirties consistently referred to the harvest ritual. In these passages the same message is communicated: Each bite of food, each piece of clothing, is the result of hard work. Soil watered by the farmer's sweat sweetens the wheat for the harvest and makes the bread taste richer. In The Good Master, Kate watches her first harvest. "Now she saw that every bite of bread
meant... months of planning, worry, anxiety. Having had a small share in all this, every bite of bread was all the sweeter to her."39 Grandfather, in *Dobry*, speaks eloquently of planting, "You carry there under your arm a whole wheat field.... You are carrying all our next winter's bread."40 Of the first bread after harvest he says, "When we eat the good bread we are eating months of sunlight, weeks of rain and snow from the sky, richness out of the earth. We eat everything now, clouds, even. It all becomes a part of us, sun, clouds, rain, snow and the rich earth. We should be great, each of us radiant, full of music and full of stories. Able to run the way clouds do, able to dance like the snow and the rain."41

The Wymans, in *The Year of Jubilo*, harvest their first crop: "They had never known what it meant to bring in the bounty of the earth to offset winter's barrenness."42 Sawyer describes the food stored on the shelves and in the cellar, the crocks of salmon, the jellies and jams—even the cords of wood. All are lovingly catalogued. Elizabeth Enright does the same things in *Thimble Summer*: "... for now the garden was yielding its abundance. It was hard to keep up with it. When you had finished picking all the beans it was time to pick the yellow squashes ... And then you had to hurry, hurry and gather the bursting ripe tomatoes."43 The litany of abundance goes on with the devotion a starving man might bring to it. In the midst of Depression it was difficult not to dwell on the lushness of harvest.

The harvest celebrations in children's literature made it difficult to deny that a return to the "rich earth" would yield abundance to conscientious labor. That Dust Bowls and foreclosed farms testified
against this idea appears not to have mattered. This was fictional wish fulfillment, not reality. A look at the emaciated faces of America's Appalachian "peasants" denied the literary picture of robust good health accruing to peasantry.

Children's fiction responded to the Depression by providing a mythical agricultural world in which work was rewarded abundantly and life moved according to the rhythms of the seasons. Urbanization had failed to provide for people, and it was natural to think that a return to an agrarian economy might cure economic ills. The harvest celebration was an antidote to scarcity.

Children's fiction in the thirties provided further reassurance that life could be abundant even in times of scarcity by incorporating Christmas in a number of stories. The Christmas celebration is a familiar event to most children. Christmas is also a holiday with heavy emotional weighting for children as well as for adults. It is traditionally a time of abundance and extravagance. Children's fiction offered the reassurance that this holiday could be rich without being expensive. Story after story includes a Christmas in which the characters are not able to purchase expensive gifts or receive quantities of presents. Instead, fictional children make gifts out of what is at hand and receive gifts produced by the hands of others. Christmas is a joyful occasion in fiction even without a tree or a sumptuous feast. Lucinda Wyman, in The Year of Jubilo, enjoys Christmas snowed in in Maine better than all her Aunt Emily's elaborate rituals.

Christmas also served as a way of comparing cultures within the context of the story. Because so many readers would be familiar with
Christmas rituals, they could compare rituals around the world. Thus holiday customs are included which explain Eastern Orthodox ritual, the exchange of gifts and differing versions of Saint Nicholas. Christmas was another link bringing at least the Christian parts of the world together.

Nostalgia for Simpler Things

Part of the appeal of rural life was a longing for simpler things. Looking back, it appeared that a less complex world allowed people more inner peace. People concerned with children were especially fearful of the effects of an increasingly complex society on children. Unsure that children would be able to make wise decisions, no longer confident that the older generation could pass on sufficient wisdom to the young, people longed for the good old days. The passage of time aided selective memory, and a strong sense of nostalgia found its way into children's literature.

There was the popularity of historical fiction and rural themes, but it was more than that. In much of the fiction of the period there is loving emphasis on the details of simple living. Authors linger over descriptions of seasonal changes, and country cooking. Architectural details and little touches, like a preference for a quill pen, appear in stories. One gets a sense of peace and cleanliness in rural homes where the sloping kitchen floor is scrubbed clean, sunshine pours through the windows and someone stirs a bubbling pot of preserves. Even quilt patterns are carefully named.\(^44\)

There is also a nostalgia for old-time education. The children read Shakespeare and learn their letters from each other. They are diligent
scholars. Even the unregenerate Jetsam finally succumbs to the power of learning. Fictional children knew the value of education and the power of reading and ciphering. Only in books based on actual recollection did children misbehave in rural schools. Most of the rest discovered that time in a country school made better scholars of them.

Some of the authors must have remembered their own youth this way. Like Caroline Snedeker's perfect childhood, the children's authors' past glowed in memory. Several drew on their own childhoods and relied on memory for those details that give their stories authenticity. They also transmitted their own nostalgia for other times and places.
Footnotes


2 Ibid., p. 307, 308.


5 Hoffman, op. cit., p. 306.


11 Hooker, op. cit., p. 170.

12 Ibid., p. 63.

13 Ibid., p. 90.

14 Ibid., p. 94.

15 Ibid., p. 279.


20 Ibid., p. 8.


27 Brink, op. cit., p. 106.


29 Field, Hitty, op. cit., p. 102.


32 Ibid., p. 82.

33 Ibid., p. 110.

34 Ibid., p. 8.

35 Field, Hitty, op. cit., p. 32.
36Gray, Meredith's Ann, op. cit., p. 102.

37Ibid., pp. 20, 5, 102.

38Ibid., pp. 114, 209.


40Shannon, op. cit., p. 68.

41Ibid., p. 46.


43Enright, op. cit., p. 63.


45Misbehavior is mentioned in Brink, Caddie Woodlawn and in several of the Little House books. The value of education is a theme in all the selections by Snedeker, Skinner, Gray and Sawyer.
CHAPTER VII

RELIGION AND FAITH: THE CHRISTIAN ASSUMPTION

The author of children's fiction in the twenties wrote with a white, middle-class, Christian audience in mind. Children's fiction did not accept the possibility promulgated by some intellectuals that religion was one of America's biggest problems. Where the intellectual challenged the Christian demand for humility and self-sacrifice, children's authors accepted this as a guide and comfort. Where the intellectual excoriated traditional religion and Puritanism as destructive of individual liberty, children's authors looked at religion as the mainstay of human existence and the support of individual freedom. That Christianity was the one true religion, that all others were at least foreign, if not exactly heathen and that God worked actively in the world and could be appealed to, was a literary as well as religious presumption.

The Moral Imperative: Puritanism

One of the most used and abused words in the nineteen-twenties was "Puritan." No longer simply the name for a group of religious dissidents, it came to be a defamatory label. Puritan, as an epithet, was hurled at clergymen, politicians and ordinary citizens. They stood accused of narrow-mindedness; prudery, intolerance and dullness. Puritans were blamed for sexual and artistic repression, the work ethic, war and the unenlightened state of the American hinterland. In spite of this attack there was very little change in the Christian assumption basic to
children's literature. Most children's authors upheld a code that would have earned the disgust of a number of intellectuals.

The religious precepts present in children's fiction are rarely labeled by denomination. Instead, they are a set of "givens" so basic as to be unquestioned. These precepts fall into the general category of New England Calvinism—the rejected Puritanism of the Jazz Age. Literary patterns of thought and behavior responded to the Calvinist structure of rural religion. Sometimes the dour nature of Calvinism wars with a character's spirit. The reader may sympathize with Mehitable's feeling of suffocation in her Aunt Comfort's presence, but both the reader and Mehitable know those feelings are unworthy. "Aunt Comfort has given me my home ... she's so good. It's just that I'm a lazy, foolish girl. I only want the sunshiny things of life." Good Aunt Comfort agrees, warning in Puritan fashion, that life is a struggle rarely blessed with sunshine. Besides, one must not spend too much time on one's own desires. "Forget yourself and your petty troubles," Mehitable cautions herself, "Take care of your thoughts and your actions and your clothes will take care of themselves." Youth was to banish vanity.

The fear of being blindly happy occurs in Hitty, too. At one point Hitty explains "I felt very weel content, as is so often the case when we have the least reason to be." There is a powerful sense that letting down one's guard for any time at all will bring sure disaster. Hitty decides that people can tell very little about their futures, all are subject to forces beyond their control. The only salvation, then, is a strong faith in God. Mrs. Preble keeps the Sabbath, travels miles to attend Meeting even in the bitter, snowy winter and strives to
accept, as God's will, the things which happen to her. Mrs. Preble knows what other fictional characters discover: failure to live up to the code can result in personal, material pain. Tilly-Tod learn the cost when they choose not to give their twelve cents to suffering humanity. Their punishment is immediate and material. On an adult level, failure to obey religious strictures has serious consequences for Tilly-Tod's Uncle Samuel. He is read out of Meeting for becoming a soldier. The story does not explain the full consequences of that action, maintaining instead, the image of gentle Quakers.

Lucy Perkins is not so gentle. She lets children know that their every action is observed. "Remember," a grandmother warns, "God's eye is in every place and He wouldn't want to see you meddling."4 God is everywhere calling people to action. In Becky Landers it is asserted that God raised up Daniel Boone for the task of settling the frontier.5 Eric Kelly puts God on the side of Poland against the godless Tartars. In Downright Dencey the Inner Light sends Quakers out into the night to offer help where it is needed. God appoints adults to oversee children's lives as an extension of religious authority. Mehitable's Aunt Comfort takes this appointment seriously, striving to make Mehitable conform to the religious code. Even in parting, Aunt Comfort leaves a letter to remind Mehitable of her place in the world and the expectations laid on her:

Dear Mehitable:

As you know, I'm not given to talking very much and I think it will be better to write these words than to say them. You are going out into the world and you are going to find that it is not the remarkably pleasant place that you imagined it to be. You will find that you are not a very
important person after all.... You will often wish heartily that you were back again in plain old-fashioned Cherryville....

One thing more,--don't dream so much, Mehitable. You have your own way to make in the world. You cannot afford to idle your time away. Be grateful for this opportunity, and make the best of it. I am expecting a great deal from you. You are all I have left. Except for your grandparents, who died when I was only a girl, and your father, you are all I have ever had. I have tried to do the best I could for you, have punished you when my heart has cried out against it. You are very honest and, with all your fancies and carelessness, you are fairly sensible, so remember all that I have told you and come back to me the girl I long for you to be.

Your loving,
Aunt Comfort

This letter, full of inhibition and warning, is representative of the Christian assumption. The assumption demands humility and self-denial. It expects much and offers guilt for failure. Love is also proffered. The whole thing weaves a tight net, for to deny the expectations is to reject love. For Mehitable it produces the intended spasm of guilt. "What a careless, unseeing girl she had been not to have tried to understand her Aunt better.... Could it be Aunt Comfort who had written those loving words, 'You are all I have ever had!'"7

Eric Kelly's The Trumpeter of Krakow, celebrates Christianity as an heroic struggle against the forces of evil and intolerance. The main characters in his story are bound by religion and tradition. They accept much of the hardship of their lives as God's will. "God gives, man receives...."8 There is no way to change anything. Religion promotes fatalism in this case, a stoic acceptance of good or ill as God's will. The story also accepts the Christian explanation of the soul
going "up" to heaven and of God's creation of all the creatures in the world. 9 The man who chooses to move beyond the limits set for human-kind gambles with his immortal soul. 10 This is the evil that lies in the Tarnov Crystal, that it tempts men into foresaking God for the glorious lies reflected in the Crystal. The effects of this are evidenced in Elzbietka's uncle, the alchemist.

A student of alchemy, Tring, wants Professor Kreuntz to find the means for turning base metal into gold. Thinking that the Crystal is the legendary philosopher's stone, Tring demands that Kreuntz look deep into the Crystal and fathom its secrets. The alchemist resists, claiming he is more interested in things of the spirit. "I would learn if life is a matter of substance, if there is not the same difference between man and man that there is between metal and metal... God has given me a mind that searches ever for the light, and I feel that I am doing His will when I seek the truths that lie about us on every hand." 11 But Tring laughs at the old man's faith, demanding that Kreuntz search "'To the end that all men would reach. Gold!" 12 The alchemist accedes and thus begins his descent into madness.

Materialism and lust for gold and fame destroy Kruentz, drive Tring out of Krakow and bring destruction upon a segment of the city. Kelly argues against preoccupation with wealth, glamour and fame. He warns, like the prophets, of the coming debacle. Kelly ignores much in this one-sided display of Christian nationalism. He dismisses the Tartars as godless because they are not Christian. The assumption that there is no other religion blinds Kelly to the fact that the Tartars were far from godless. They were not Christian, however, and thus the Poles
could fight them in the name of both statehood and Christianity. Kelly also writes a good deal about the glory of the Christian fight against brutal and savage invaders. He writes less about the effect of that fight on the Jewish population of Poland.

The Black Village outside the walls of Krakow is the Jewish ghetto. When the Tartars swept towards Krakow in the eleventh century, the city opened its gates to refugees from the surrounding countryside. The only people refused entry were the Jews. They were left to be slaughtered and burned by the Tartars, a fact Kelly mentions only peripherally. Like the Tartars, the good Christians of Krakow "knew not mercy, nor pity, nor tenderness" in their dealings with the Jews.\textsuperscript{13} Tartars, Jews and Russians shared the enmity of the Christian Poles, and Kelly, determined that Poland fought for freedom against oppression, failed to note the contradiction.

Charles B. Hawes is an exception to the Puritan defense mounted in works of children's fiction. He, too, made the Christian assumption, but it was neither Puritan as in \textit{Mehitable} or \textit{Tilly-Tod} nor Roman Catholic as in \textit{Trumpeter}. The characters in \textit{The Dark Frigate} were Cavaliers or Roundheads, for the most part, and Hawes decidedly preferred the former. His main characters do not shudder under a heavy-handed God. They have been schooled in a world which accepts God and church as a fact of life, but not as oppressive one. Hawes builds a picture of the Puritans that a number of American intellectuals could have enjoyed. Hawes labels Puritans as "men of no blood and no flesh ... but with a streak of iron in their very souls."\textsuperscript{14} They eschew the elegance of dress characteristic of the Cavaliers and cut their hair so
it barely covers their ears. They are mercenary. "Didst ever see a Roundhead knave would brave the wild lions of America unless he thought there was gold in't?" a sailor asks. Philip Marsham would just as soon drive them into the king's kennels as let them loose in America, and the reader suspects that Philip speaks Hawes' mind.

There was at least some contradiction to the prevailing strength of Puritanism in children's fiction. The Dark Frigate was not the first to offer opposition. Cornelia Meigs' 1961 novel, Master Simon's Garden argued for the leaven of tolerance in a Puritan world and explained the main characters escape from New England as an escape from Puritanism. Other fiction skirted the issue of religious intolerance, keeping to moral precepts and general references to God and church. Social and moral strictures appeared in treatment of children, in the emphasis on Quakers and in the emphasis on conscience.

Downright Dencey, for instance, is strongly religious. The power of faith to conquer men is a major theme in the story. Goodness and virtue are motivating forces. When Sammy Jetsam realizes that Dencey has given freely what he would have won by threats, he discovers that "there is no heart-tug in the world so strong as this thought. Whole religions have been founded upon it and lasted through a thousand years." Swept clean of his ignorance, Jetsam is open to new discoveries, including love. He notices the purity of Lydia Coffyn's face, the strength of the faith that motivates her family. What he does not discover is the agony Dencey goes through because she does not feel the religious conviction required of Quakers. Dencey struggles with the responsibility placed upon her to find her own Inner Light. She feels tremendous guilt,
accentuated by the preachings of her Congregationalist grandfather who threatens hell-fire and damnation. His preachments frighten and haunt Dencey. Even her mother's assurance that forgiveness "is not with me, nor even with Grandfather. Thee knows--surely thee knows--forgiveness is with God.... Lay thy sin before the Lord..." does not help. Dencey can not do what her mother suggests, nor can she lie about her feelings. Guilt and hell-fire are so strong that she eventually risks her own life to save another soul.

Children of such demanding forms of Christianity knew the wages of sin and the harshness of religion. They were motivated as much by fear as faith, but the message remains that this testing strengthens the child and develops a good Christian adult. The Christian assumption is at the core of these stories because the authors and a substantial portion of the American public believed that the sense of responsibility, the work ethic and the moral power that grew from religion were the foundation of society. Without these things, born of guilt, faith or indoctrination, they believed that the decency of America would be threatened.

Children's books were purposely moral, because that was what adults believed was essential. They might admit that reading for pleasure was important, but they saw no reason that such reading could not also point children in the "right" direction. At its extreme, this sense that books must be moral is represented by Walter Taylor Field who insisted that no one truly appreciated the beneficial impact of a good book or the unfortunate influence of "vile and coarse books." Books should be moral because they could influence the child to be "brave, self-reliant,
manly, thoughtful of others and straightforward, with his face toward the light."

Others might have been more cautious in their rhetoric, but the general tenor of children's books indicates that children were still intended to find spiritual resources in the stories they read. The books presented role models of faith, thought and behavior. As such they tell us a good deal about what was considered appropriate in manners and morals.

**Manners and Morals in the Twenties**

The degree of repugance felt by some educators toward the Jazz Age can be gauged by reading some of Walter Field's comments. Where some conservatives simply worried about technology or the loosening of old restrictions, Field became impassioned. He accused modern popular fiction of indecency. He abhorred the practice of leaving such books on library tables or the shelves of "respectable homes," where children had access to them. It was bad enough, Field claimed, that some adults read this type of literature, but it was worse in the hands of children. The present looseness of morals and contempt for social convention was directly attributable to reading the "poisonous sort of fiction, and the blame of it should not be laid so much upon the young people themselves as upon the fathers and mothers who read and countenance the stuff, upon the publishers who print it, upon the reviewers who praise it for its 'frankness' and 'freedom' and finally upon the authors themselves, who make public their vile imaginings under the guise of an 'unfettered realism.'" Field credited juvenile crime to "vicious reading," and for those not given to crime, there was danger of losing their literary taste by exposure to children's literature which was untrue to
life, unduly exciting and foolishly sentimental. By the time Field had narrowed the field of children's literature to the acceptable few, there was little left by contemporary authors. Hugh Lofting survived, as did Lucy Perkins for her introduction to geography, and Hilda Conkling for poetry. The largest proportion of books were classics from John Bunyon to Anna Sewell.

Field's approach was about as far to the right as educators ventured. He called for a return to a classical education and one in which everything must work towards the improvement of the child as a potential adult. Perkins taught geography, Sewell, kindness to animals. Everything must round out and enculturate the child. Pleasure was of minimal concern. Towards the other end of the spectrum were the educators who were not worried about exposing children to bad books so long as there was a variety of other options. The child, they assured themselves, was an epicurean, feasting on new sensations and experiences. Children were thought to live between fact and fancy, with little consciousness of social phenomenon and less sense of responsibility. The child's acts and interests were supposed to be from the heart, not the mind. Educator Walter Barnes warned against carrying this philosophy too far. He felt that neither children's interests nor Field's criteria should be the sole determining factor in choosing books. Rather, teachers should discover interests and offer the best of that type of literature.

Chosen freely or strongly suggested, the books children read were not value free. Imbedded in each were the values that motivated action and reaction. Certain behaviors were acceptable, others not.
Association of behavior with particular characters strengthened that impression. A set of standards, implicit in each story, encouraged moral judgment of characters and situations on the part of the reader. Because there was a strong feeling that story characters should be worthy of emulation, there was also a tendency to simplify character. As a symbol of proper conduct, a hero or heroine generally had only minor character defects. Virtue and villainy were both closely allied with religious standards.

The children's books selected for analysis display consistency in the motivating moral code. There is usually the moral dichotomy between courage and cowardice which casts the coward into outer darkness. Thieves, pirates, villains and those with weak will are cowards at heart. On one level this is a reassuring belief. If one can depend on the basic cowardice of evil, then all one need do is discover how to make use of that to defeat evil. George R. Clark does so in *Becky Landers* when he takes over an entire outlaw encampment. The Colonial Twins employ this device in defeating the tobacco pirates, and it is the salvation of the Charnevsky family in *The Trumpeter of Kraskow*. In each story the outlaws are reduced to quaking cowards and goodness triumphs.

Courage is invariably the moral choice. With the exception of *The Dark Frigate*, it is rarely a difficult decision. Becky Landers pushes on through the cold and miserable swamp, inspiring the weary men to follow her. She charges on to the attack on Vincennes and the reader feels no fear in her. Daniel Boone gives himself up to the Indians, is taken to Detroit to the British, almost killed several times, escapes and makes his way through enemy territory to Boonesborough, and there
is no indication that he was ever afraid. Courage appears to exclude fear, and court danger. The reader is led to believe, in the context of this story, that there is something lacking in anyone who fears to face challenge. There is amusement and thinly veiled contempt for cowards. On this level, the cowardice-courage division is far less reassuring. Because it does not allow heroes to display fear, much less cowardice, it places an unattainable goal before children.

Dencey Coffyn is Lydia's hot-tempered, impulsive daughter. Throughout Downright Dencey Dencey struggles with moral issues that are not so easily resolved as those in Becky Landers. For Dencey, the issues are cloudy. She has wronged Jetsam and feels the need for forgiveness. That need leads her to commit herself to teaching him to read. She also knows that her mother would not approve of this arrangement. Dencey finds herself lying and stealing to help Jetsam. Her Quaker upbringing declares it wrong to do either, but right to help Jetsam. In addition, rumors have begun about Jetsam and Dencey that could tarnish the girl's reputation. Dencey is forbidden to speak to Jetsam. Jetsam's foster mother, Injun Jill, threatens to kill Dencey if she teaches the boy anymore. But Dencey has promised. She made a commitment to Jetsam that all her training tells her she cannot break. Dencey feels fear and panic. She runs away from Jetsam, then turns back again. She hides, trembling, from Injun Jill, yet runs out into a deadly blizzard to find Jetsam.

Jetsam is no courageous hero either. He is the island outcast, dirty, obnoxious and feisty. He forces Dencey to promise what he knows will bring her trouble. Yet he is also a sympathetic character. Jetsam
longs for what has never been his: affection and care. He tries to bind Dencey to him with threats and discovers that threats do not hold her, though conscience may. He treats her roughly, then saves her life almost at the cost of his own. Jetsam, the bad boy, finally reaches out to Lydia, for just a moment, and then begins the process of discovering real courage. He finds the courage to face Injun Jill and all she represents. Later, he and Dencey are again forced to decide whether courage lies in abiding by their own conscience or in the judgments of their elders.

Conscience and courage are also themes in The Dark Frigate. Philip Marsham is an unusual character in children's fiction. He is not the model youth, either in the style of Becky Landers or Dencey Coffyn. In Philip struggle good and evil, not just two goods. Philip does not always choose good, though he does choose life and excitement. He allows himself to become involved with pirates. He plays cruel jokes and laughs at the fears of Martin Barwick. "'And did you never see a man dance on air? 'Tis a sight to catch the breath in the throat and make an emptiness in a man's belly.'" 26 Philip thinks it all good sport. He stays with Barwick even though warned to be clear of him. Phil was "of no mind to be left now, since they had journeyed together thus far...." 27 He makes no moral judgment at all. In fact, his choice is incredibly stupid. Phil accepts his companion as fate's choice and does not resist until it is much too late.

Charles Hawes produced a character in Philip Marsham who was a rarity in the twenties. Lloyd Alexander, in his introduction to The Dark Frigate, explained that Hawes viewed the world as a hard place to
live in, an unpopular view in children's fiction. Alexander claims that The Dark Frigate made most of the twenties' children's fiction look like synthetic strawberry juice. Philip Marsham certainly participated in adventures generally unacceptable in children's fiction. He joins pirates to save his life and keeps silent in the face of "a spider's web of sordidness." Phil does have some virtue, however. He is a likeable lad, one with whom a reader could easily identify. There are few who could choose death over piracy, anyway, and it would be sad courage to die over the choice. Phil has physical courage, good nature and his own code of honor. He has adopted the Cavalier code, not Roundhead virtue. For the Cavalier, style, vigor, loyalty and honor determine a man's actions. Thus, Phil, having escaped the pirates and been captured as a spy, stands trial with them. Though he might escape hanging by turning informer, he does not do so. Phil refuses to incriminate anyone. "It was doubtless very wrong of him to reply thus ... since it is a man's duty to help enforce the laws by bringing criminals to justice. But he answered according to his own conscience.... Surely loyalty ranks high among the virtues and great credit is due to a keen sense of personal honor." Hawes' ranking of loyalty is close enough to the schoolyard code to win the hearts of children.

Books like Downright Dencey and The Beckoning Road defined courage in terms of conscience, a product of religion as well as individual nature. Becky Landers defined it in terms of the frontier code mixed with religion. Thus physical prowess was courageous only against a worthy opponent. Frontier scruples labeled attacking a weak or
defenseless opponent as cowardice. The Dark Frigate applied conscience, but it was not so much motivated by religion as by honor. A man would brave much to preserve honor, and this was a secular rather than religious heritage. Chivalry demanded pride where religion expected humility, and it allowed villains to be courageous. Even Mother Taylor, "wrinkled and bent by wickedness," behaves with honor. She is going to hang, and could save herself by testifying against the pirates. She refuses. "Say what you will of her sins, her courage and loyalty were worthy of a better cause."31

Courage, loyalty and conscience are valued in children's fiction. In In the Endless Sands the reader is informed that honesty is the safest policy, not so much for moral as for practical reasons. Fatma, accustomed to lying, finds she can trust no one else. The Scotts explain: "That's one of the penalties of being a fibber yourself--you are likely to think that other people are tricking you just as you are tricking them."32 The Scotts also give another cause for truth-telling in Jackie. The boy muddles truth and dreams so that he cannot explain his predicament to anyone. If he had honestly told his story the rescue and the end of the book would have come sooner.

Honesty was also demanded by religion. The epitome of this point of view is Quaker truth-telling, a factor in Tilly Tod, A Boy At Gettysburg, Downright Dencey and The Beckoning Road. Religion demands honesty towards God and one's neighbor, no matter the cost. "Lay thy sin before the Lord" was not an easy admonition to follow if one believed
that God listened and judged harshly. If fear of God did not suffice, there was still hell-fire.

Friend Brinton in *A Boy at Gettysburg*, and Carl's grandfather adhere to the letter of honesty, if not its spirit. Both have arranged their underground activities to allow them never to lie or to give away the truth. Grandfather never actually sees the fugitive slaves, so he can honestly say that he has seen no slaves on his property. This allowed him to honor two contradictory beliefs: one must always tell the truth and yet there is a moral obligation to oppose slavery, even in illegal ways.

Dencey Coffyn does not find such convenient ways to evade the contradictions in her experience. She chooses to sacrifice honesty to compassion. Readers understand that it is, for Dencey, a sacrifice, but one made in the service of a higher good. In this case honesty and New England responsibility produce a human being whose conscience is always a force in her life. *Downright Dencey* probably comes as close to being an expression of American middle-class morality as any piece of fiction. *Dencey* is the other side of *Main Street*: what Babbit could have been if the original "soul-freshening vision" had not soured. Dencey represents the potential for good in Protestantism, Babbit was its perversion. Children's fiction valued the good and gave scant attention to the abuses so abhorrent to American intellectuals.

An example of this contrast is the fictional treatment of the work ethic. Intellectuals complained that Americans had taken the Puritan emphasis on good works too much to heart. Anything but work was equated with sin. Relaxation, pleasure and beauty were anathema, and all-
consuming work the duty of those who would enter heaven. Children's fiction ignored these negatives and emphasized honest work as the moral duty of everyone in society. No work, so long as it was honest, was too humble. Work means not being on charity and suffering that dishonor. Far, far better to give than to receive charity.

The fictional work ethic assigns therapeutic as well as moral value to labor. In Becky Landers work takes the community's mind off its misery by redirecting thought and energy. Work calms the mind, or numbs it, as in the case of Lydia Coffyn. For Jetsam, work provides an outlet for anger. It is both reward and punishment for children's behavior. Good behavior merits more pleasant occupations such as berry picking or going hunting or delivering special packages. Bad behavior warrants the drudgery of carding wool or soap making or some other odious task. In the end, though, work is life, entitling one to the most basic fruit of labor, survival.

There is also the implication that work will bring reward beyond survival. The work ethic includes the belief that hard work and diligence will bring material reward. The opposite is also understood, that dependence on charity is generally the result of careless work or improper management. The Quakers, notoriously hard and faithful workers, give charity and are blessed with material success. In these stories work is rewarded by comfortable living. The poor are pitied, but not respected. Even the Quakers have their classes, and wealth is a determining factor.

In fiction, children in the twenties were acquainted with a moral code in keeping with Protestantism and middle-class values. Even for
non-Protestants, much of the value system was familiar enough. The work ethic left little room, however, for children trapped in poverty to scrape together self-respect. The books presented two options for the poor: go west or work harder. By the 1920's when jobs were not always available and inflation was a major concern, fictional success stories were often unrealistic. With the exception of Meredith's Ann none of the selected books recognized poverty or unemployment as barriers to success.

Moral codes prescribed behavior to a degree, particularly the behavior of fictional characters, but they also marked the boundaries of conventional taste. Thus children's fiction reflected what was acceptable in the way of language, decorum, sex and violence. Authors and publishers were expected to recall their audience and the potential influence of their publications. Fictional characters were to be worthy role models. Most recommended fiction accepted this without letting the restrictions destroy their story. Some books, popular with a number of readers, fit Lloyd Alexander's description of synthetic strawberry juice. Especially among books designated as girls' fiction, there was an abundance of saintly children who moved like sleep-walkers through sentimental tales. Interest inventories indicated that girls preferred something more exciting and less moralistic, but publication and sales continued.\(^{34}\)

The sample of fiction included in this study attempts to avoid Alexander's charge, though the books generally honor the conventions of the twenties. The major exception in the twenties is Charles Hawes' The Dark Frigate, which could as easily have appeared on the adult lists.
Hawes broke with convention by including more graphic violence than was usual. The pirate takeover of the *Rose of Devon* is particularly vivid:

"... the fellow lay with bloody froth at his lips and with fingers that twitched a little and then were still." 35 Captain Candle's death absorbs two more paragraphs. "Dark blood from a severed vein streamed out over Captain Candle's collar and his gay waist. He coughed and his eyes grew dull. He let go his sword, which remained stuck through the body of the man who had first struck at him, clapped his hand to his neck, and went down in a heap." 36 The scrape of blade on bone, the yells of dying men and quantities of blood spill across the ship's deck, proving that violence is foul and terrifying. It also sets the scene for Phil's choice of piracy over death. He has seen that death is not always noble.

None of the other selections in the twenties allow children to look upon violence so clearly. Even when Becky Landers finds the scalped settler, it is not nearly as vivid as Hawes would have made it. Nor is violence the only unconventional note in *The Dark Frigate*. In none of the selections other than *The Dark Frigate* is a character allowed to express any but chaste thoughts about the opposite sex. Philip Marsham and the men of the *Rose of Devon* are not so delicate. The Old One, pirate captain of the *Rose*, promises his crew Spanish ladies of particular delicacy. Philip, himself, falls in love with a tavern wench, Nell Entick. He promises to return for her in a scene that would have worried Walter Field. Upon Phil's return, Nell has married Phil's old enemy, Jamie Barwick, but "over Barwick's shoulder she cast Phil such a glance that he knew, maid or matron, she would philander still." 37
Most stories confined themselves to more acceptable behaviors. Where violence occurred it was distant or softened in its impact. Even the Battle of Gettysburg is not very bloody as seen by Carl. The author was more concerned with the everyday life of characters than with sex and bloodshed.

A common theme, unselfishness, appears more often than any scenes of violence. Characters are frequently reminded to forget themselves and think of others. They are enjoined to behave in ways that will make their elders proud. The young madame admonishes Mehitable for a display of temper. In spite of the fact that Mehitable is justly angry, the code requires that she not be rude to an adult. "...because of loving you so much, it hurt me to hear you speak as you did...," the young madame explains, and Mehitable repents. "I've been so selfish.... I am sorry."38 Young girls are reminded to speak softly as a further act of self-effacement. In *Hitty* John Greenleaf Whittier tells a girl "Thee has a sweet voice, my dear ... may thee never have cause to raise it in protest."39

To think of self above others in this context is a cardinal sin. Time after time characters are reminded that being considerate of others, thinking of others first, is the most important thing to remember. The happiness of others becomes one's first concern. This meant that one did not speak in anger, remembered always to be polite to guests, gave sacrificially to those less fortunate and cared for the sick or weak. Such unselfishness was noble.

Unselfishness was to be matched by bravery. Children were not to whimper or feel sorry for themselves, even in private. God saw what
humans missed. Children were on their honor before adults and before God. Loyalty, honor, courage and unselfishness were to grow from religious conscience as a sign of faith, and in fear of God's judgment.

**Spirituality and the Depression**

By the nineteen-thirties, conflict between religion and science was not nearly as interesting as cultural survival. There were times in the thirties when it looked like American society would not survive the Depression without massive and fundamental cultural changes. Churches lost membership during the Depression and congregations could not support clergy or church buildings. Increasingly unable to aid their parishioners in the traditional ways, clergy found themselves drawn once again to the social gospel and the movement against capitalism. Roman Catholic labor priests had been heard to call capitalism as godless as communism. The Depression shocked many religious leaders into looking at society instead of individual souls. What they found moved some to the political and social left. In moving left, the clergy found the ground largely occupied by communists. For middle-class conservatives this shift was unwelcome. The church was no longer the bulwark of the Puritan ethic, in which godliness and work were equated with material success. The church, as seen by conservatives, had become one more reform agency.

Children's fiction still tended to be middle-class and strongly religious. The Christian assumption still operated. Ruth Sawyer, writing of books and children, advocated daily Bible readings with school children. It was "too long since the Christian world took the Bible to its heart to read, to revere, to draw from it solace in times of trouble,
to build more firmly the good standards of living from its wisdom and precepts." While the Puritan ethic, in its most severe form, did diminish in children's fiction in the thirties, Sawyer need not fear that religion would disappear altogether. Religious influence remained strong, shifting emphasis from Calvinism to a more mystical form of faith. Since Protestantism rarely provided mysticism, it receded in prominence. Instead, an increasing number of books combined the appeal of mysticism and the popularity of the peasant. This meant that readers were more likely to encounter Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy or animism.

Although folklore had appeared in the twenties in children's fiction, it had not been in a religious context. In the thirties folklore was joined by myth and legend to create a sense of the spiritual power of a people. An example of this trend is Kate Seredy's *The White Stag*.

*The White Stag* is a mythical history of the founding of Hungary. The story is a compound of history, myth and fiction. The white stag sent by the god Hadur, leads the Hun-Magyar people from the barren mountains of Asia, across hostile country to the promised land between the rivers. Both Hun and Magyar are motivated by powerful spiritual forces. The story itself is very similar to Old Testament chronicles of the forty years wandering of the Israelites. In this case, though, the Magyars drop back, and the Huns, led by Atilla, push forward, leaving a trail of slaughter and destruction. The people are led along this bloody path by "faith that can move mountains." In her illustrations, Seredy compliments the narrative with pictures that preserve a sense of the epic nature of the story.
The White Stag has none of the cold, deadening Puritan spirit. Instead, the spirituality of The White Stag embraces towering anger, monumental prophecies and human frailties. The story has peasant fire rather than Protestant intellectualizing. Tragedy is epic tragedy and joy takes on heroic proportions as well. The richness and romance of religion and faith found in The White Stag also occur in The Good Master and Dobry. Peasant religion has room for mysticism and laughter. The peasant assumed that God enjoyed what he had created and expected His people to do the same. Grandfather in Dobry, is so vital that a neighbor boy, Asa looks at him "with the questioning wonder everybody feels when he sees a really living person who warms other people with that spark of God he always keeps burning in himself." 43

Wonder and warmth are the key to spirituality in children's fiction. Wonder makes the harvest a spiritual experience and elevates Dobry's art into a miracle. Wonder and warmth free the mind and heart for spiritual experiences. They also create spiritual events out of mundane occurrences: baking bread, 44 sharing jam with the bees, 45 or planting seeds to create a garden. 46 The peasant also accepts as part of his spiritual heritage, the legacy of his pagan ancestors. Jancsi is as willing to believe the stories Pista the shepherd tells as the Christmas story of Mikulas. 47 The forces of nature have spiritual power whether in Christian or pagan belief.

The immediacy of what amounts to nature worship in children's fiction accounts for some of its appeal. The effects of natural phenomena are immediately visible. The river floods and carries off the new husband of Younger Brother's cousin. He can see the force of water and believe
it to be purposeful. Younger Brother is also willing to believe that the patterns of the world can be made clear by a pack rat, or the talismen collected from eagles, bees or men.

The desire to understand "secrets deep in the heart of things" also accounts for the appeal of this type of literature. It is akin to fantasy and magic, appealing to the sense of wonder already mentioned. The desire to understand is powerful and can be fulfilled by magic or religion as well as scholarship. Mysticism promised an understanding more profound than could be had from science. It also was more given to the trappings of beauty than Calvinism. In that sense, the peasant religion portrayed in children's fiction might be accounted for as a delayed reaction to the anti-Puritanism of the twenties.

Spirituality and mysticism were not the only religious experiences present in children's fiction. There was strong, positive presentation of Protestantism. In most stories of this type no religious conflicts surface. Most of the characters appear to share a common faith or at least a common agreement to be tolerant. The exception to the general portrayal of religious tolerance is The Calico Bush. In this story, a French girl bound to an American family is forced to hide her religion. "I'll thank you to keep your Popishness to yourself. We may be in too God-forsaken a spot for a meetin' house, but that's no reason to put ideas in the children's heads," Maggie is told. She is not allowed to keep her rosary or to cross herself after prayer. Sometimes she longs for the quiet of the convent, were she could move to the ringing of a chapel bell.
Rachel Field compares the effect religion has on Maggie and on the American settlers. Field does not excuse or support either, but she does make it clear that these antagonisms existed. This was unusual in a time when the tendency was to ignore religious dissension in favor of world brotherhood. The real world might not be very tolerant, but in children's fiction intolerance was either ignored or assigned to unlikeable characters. There were few like Rachel Field who attempted to document, not judge.

Children's fiction retained other vestiges of the twenties. Quakers continued to appear as a religious and social conscience. Mabel Leigh Hunt used Quakers in several of her stories, though the emphasis was more on Quaker conscience than faith. The Quakers in Hunt's books are not set apart, except in dress and speech. Coatsworth's Quaker in The Golden Horseshoe is an old-fashioned Quaker who feels a "concern" to free a slave.50

In the fiction based on reminiscence, religion is less an inspiration to noble deeds and more a remembered part of daily life. Both Caddie Woodlawn and the Wilder books mention the appearance of circuit preachers and the rarity of real church services. Most of the time they were more aware of Sabbath restrictions and the moral strictures taught by their parents.

Manners and Morals in the Thirties

Children's fiction struck a middle ground in response to the emphasis on social conscience and cooperation during the Depression. The children's book world was concerned about the effects of the Depression as well as anxious to understand how they could help in the present
crisis. _Horn Book_ published a series of articles by economist Joseph L. Snider entitled "Can We Solve Our Problems?" which was surprising in its liberal economic interpretations. Dr. Snider recommended reading Stuart Chase and George Soule and suggested a solution lay in more cooperation and less competition.51

Fiction had always expected cooperation of children, as had society in general. Children were expected to cooperate with adults, but this was not the kind of cooperation Snider and other intellectuals of the thirties had in mind. Cooperation in the thirties frequently referred to a much grander rethinking of society, and an implied criticism of the competition expected under capitalism.

Cooperation in children's fiction included neighbors getting together to raise a house or barn or to aid a neighbor in temporary distress. Especially in rural settings, the community of friends and neighbors gathers often to share labor, fun and sorrow. In _The Year of Jubilo_, the neighbors fix up the Wyman's house and supply them with food. There is a sense in all these stories of a hand constantly stretched out offering neighborly assistance. Being a good neighbor is bound by certain rules, protecting all concerned. One must not be too nosy, or offend anyone's dignity. There must be no appearance of charity. Ma Ingalls says what was typical of most: "I don't want to be beholden...."52

Neighborliness occurs between equals so that one need not suspect charity. When Vermonters gather to help a widow who is in serious trouble, they share from their own meagre supplies. Enough is contributed to tide her over until spring when she can get back on her feet. At
no point is there a suggestion that what the widow suffers is unjust or that there might be some social solution to her problem. Vermont is a hard place to live, Ethan Allen explains, and it requires a spirit of adventure and fortitude. Not everyone can make it. Allen is proud of the fact that Vermonters have to be hardy enough—or lucky enough—to make it on their own. The same is true of the families in The Calico Bush. They must be willing to risk everything and can only count on the help of distant neighbors when the weather permits travel. No one expects that life should be easy. Cooperation occurs, but in the end it is individual effort that determines success or failure. Neighbors may regret a failure, but there is no sense that individual failure reflects on the group.

Only one social group expects to provide that sort of caring: the family. In the thirties the family is one of the most significant entities in children's fiction. No longer quite so willing to free children of the safety and security of parents, children's authors wrote about the love and security of families. Families provided emotional security in an insecure and hostile world. To some extent families also provided authors with their stories. Instead of sending fictional children to test their courage against various challenges, the tendency was towards stories about families. These might lack the build-up of suspense or the excitement of high adventure, but they provided a very attractive alternative.

Caddie Woodlawn is a notable example of a family story. Based on the childhood of the author's grandmother, Caddie Woodlawn has the appeal of real life recalled with humor and understanding. More than
simple reminiscences, Caddie is also an exposition of an ideal. To begin with, the Woodlawns are hard workers. "I want no lands and honors which I have not won by my own good sense and industry," Johnny Woodlawn says. He and his wife, Harriet, know their priorities, and family always comes first. Both parents share the child-rearing functions. Mr. Woodlawn is involved enough to insist that Caddie be allowed to run wild with her brothers. Though Mrs. Woodlawn murmurs protests now and then, she shares most of her husband's beliefs and values. When either parent makes a decision the children accept it as final. "There was very little teasing for favors in a large pioneer family," Carol Brink says. The children knew that they were not to interrupt adults, or to join in adult conversations. They were allowed a certain degree of freedom, but were expected to be reliable and to take care of themselves in emergencies.

Though the Woodlawns are better off than most of their neighbors, they are not wealthy. They cannot afford the latest fashions or luxuries that city dwellers might enjoy. The Woodlawns are not even close enough to socialize much with their neighbors. Instead "the Woodlawns made their own society, nor wanted any better." The emphasis is not on communal support but on a family which encloses and provides for itself. The parents are the hub of the family, providing warmth, comfort and peace. Encouraged by security in the home, children go out to face the rest of the world with loving and generous spirits.

If Caddie Woodlawn was the only example of this type of story it would be interesting, though not necessarily significant. But Caddie
is not unique. Her family is similar to that in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books. Similar themes are also represented in *Away Goes Sally*, *Dobry*, *The Good Master*, *Thimble Summer*, *The Year of Jubilo* and *The Little Girl With Seven Names*. There is obvious agreement that society is best served by families in which virtue and industry are taught by loving, decent parents. Only in *Thimble Summer* is there any suggestion that families might require government assistance.

The pattern suggested by the selected books is that ultimate responsibility lies with the family. The family struggles to preserve civilization, even in a covered wagon. Ms. Ingalls never lets up in her efforts to stay civilized. She may be living on the frontier, but her home and her family will be an outpost of decency. Thus she warns her daughters to go protected from the sun, lest they look like savages. She establishes each day's proper work and teaches their order to her daughters:

- Wash on Monday
- Iron on Tuesday
- Mend on Wednesday
- Churn on Thursday
- Clean on Friday
- Bake on Saturday
- Rest on Sunday

Ma Ingalls insists on proper grammar and proper manners. "You must never interrupt, you must share, you must not do anything on Sunday," and most important, "you must do exactly as I tell you." Life was ordered by system, duty and discipline.

There was at least one protest against system, duty and discipline. Ruth Sawyer's *Roller Skates* argues that one of the finest things a parent can do for a child is to free him of all that, at least for a while.
Where the popular interpretation of the work ethic declared with Coppersmith Tang in Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze, that "the superior man finds pleasure in doing what is uncongenial,"66 Roller Skates argues that people should be able to earn their livings pleasurably.67 When the popular wisdom applauded children who spoke only when spoken to, Lucinda Wyman spoke often, and with vigor. When her Aunt Emily scolds her for poor sewing, Lucinda heartily wishes herself in heaven and her Aunt Emily far, far away in hell.68 Even Lucinda's family argues against tradition. Lucinda's parents may be loving, but they drive her to distraction. Within the confines of her home, Lucinda is given to tantrums. Released to the custody of the Misses Peters, Lucinda blossoms. She wanders freely through the city and develops one of the few literary social consciences available in children's fiction in the thirties. Lucinda tries to get a job for Tony because she discovers that he is being crowded out of his family's apartment. She involves the police in stopping the attacks of a gang of boys on a local fruitstand. She teaches English to an Oriental woman, feeds the child of a poor neighbor and even runs through toy shops liberating Jack-in-the-boxes.69 Her solutions may not have satisfied those who urged mightier social reorganization but they contributed to the popularity of Roller Skates.

Children's fiction in the Depression years continued to offer refuge. Stories pictured life that was free of the kind of misery associated with the Depression. The nuclear and extended family was celebrated in children's fiction as security against misery. The family gave its blessing to cooperative effort for specific goals, while maintaining individual
sovereignty and the power of the work ethic. A consistent standard was set for manners and morals, and readers were assured that bad times could be weathered. Still heavily rural in emphasis, children's fiction relied on rural values as a standard for all American society. Part of the standard involved attitudes toward children, childhood and parenthood.
Footnotes


2 Ibid., p. 136.

3 Rachel Field, Hitty, Her First Hundred Years (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 84.


6 Adams, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

7 Ibid., p. 51.


9 Ibid., pp. 64-68.

10 Ibid., p. 152.

11 Ibid., p. 90.

12 Ibid., p. 92.

13 Ibid., pp. 3, 5.


15 Ibid., p. 126.

16 Ibid., p. 238.


19 Ibid., pp. 94-95.

20 Ibid., p. 19.


22 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

23 Ibid., pp. 9-10.


26 Hawes, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

27 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

28 Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

29 Ibid., p. 235.


31 Ibid., p. 227.


33 Snedeker, *op. cit.*, p. 182.


36 Ibid., p. 112.

37 Ibid., p. 235.
39 Field, Hitty, op. cit., p. 127.


44 Ibid., p. 70.


49 Ibid., p. 199.


55 Ibid., p. 32.

56 Ibid., p. 50.
57 Ibid., p. 74.

58 Ibid., p. 84.

59 Ibid., p. 113.

60 Ibid., p. 163.


62 Enright, op. cit., p. 29.


64 Ibid., pp. 106, 77, 23, 79, 80, 179, 157, 167, 183, 217.


68 Ibid., p. 52.

69 Ibid., p. 110.
CHAPTER VIII

THE GENERATION OF THE CHILD

The Twenties

The American family, traditionally looked upon as the bulwark of society, was under attack in the twenties. Popular journals featured articles on the future of the family, on parenthood, even on "better babies."\(^1\) There was a general belief that the family, as Americans knew it, was in danger of collapse, taking American society with it. Three reactions ensued. There were those who outlined the extent of disaster and its causes, others who suggested ways in which family life might be strengthened to prevent collapse, and finally, outside the mainstream, there were those who applauded the demise of an institution they considered insufferable.

As early as 1922 articles warning of the perils of the modern age began to appear. Sometimes the argument proceeded on the basis of the social need for the family. Mary Vida Clark, writing for The North American Review, took a different tack, however. She titled her article, "The Rights of Children."\(^2\) Clark argued that the time had come for children, as the last unfranchised class of human beings, to gain their rights. Women, Clark said, had solved the problems of feminism. Now children must have their day. The rights Clark demanded for children illuminate the problems facing traditional understanding of the family.

First, children were entitled to life. Clark feared that contemporary concern with birth control denied unborn children life. This, she
claimed, was the supreme example of exalting egoism over altruism, and was a dangerous trend. If the married could go childless, what was to prevent the unmarried from bearing children? This led to denial of the second right of children: the "fundamental right of a child to have a father."³

Once provided with parents, a child was entitled to siblings. A minimum of one brother or sister was an essential protection against the only-child syndrome, a moral hazard to be carefully avoided. Clark interpreted Freudian psychology as condemning the only child to adulthood in an insane asylum.⁴ Parents had an obligation to prevent this by providing siblings--the more the better.

In addition to family and decent treatment, children were entitled to conform. Clark wished to save the child from unconventional parents "given to erratic ideas about dress reform, or a tendency to refrain from regular church attendance, or to indulge in public speaking, divorce or other aberrations of conduct." Parents involved in any of these activities "should be arrested and prosecuted for being instigators of the indecent exposure of the young and corrupters of public morals."⁵

Later, articles added several other factors leading to the decline of family influence. In 1926, Florence Finch Kelly listed the threats to the family as she understood them. First was communism. Under the umbrella of communism, Kelly included any state aid to mothers, child-care institutions, insurance and pension systems and two-income families. These all eliminated the necessity for parents to plan and provide for the future of their offspring. Social welfare work unwittingly contributed to the communist effort to supplant family with state. Social
welfare sometimes worked to remove children to outside care centers, or eliminated the necessity for work. The impact, Kelly argued, was to increase the tendency to shirk duty, responsibility and the natural restrictions on self-expression and self-direction that are part of family life.

Families were meant to tame the ego, Kelly wrote, but the modern tendency stressed the individual, not the family. Even architecture worked against families, cooping people up in apartments where the natural desire was to flee, not stay. Movies, automobiles and other "urban allurements" combined with economic causes, to shake the family.

America was on the old Roman road to ruin, according to critics such as Kelly. Working mothers, juvenile gangs, sexual freedom, birth control and divorce would destroy America just as the weight of internal corruption had caused the fall of Rome. Nor were these prophecies confined to popular journals. The American Journal of Sociology and the proceedings of The National Conference on Social Work considered the question of crisis in the family as a major social problem. Sociologist Ernest Groves argued that two of the most conspicuous social influences on family life were the changing role of women and increased choice in parenthood. Childless homes, he suggested, ran the risk of stressing sex and becoming "an arrested type of family experience." In addition, schools increased risks for family survival by choosing teachers who were "ascetics with weak motherhood cravings...." Combined with greater leisure and the ability to purchase more material goods, this ate away at a family structure predicated on limited leisure and a lack of material
surplus. The result was a class of "socially retarded" citizens who became the concern of science.

Groves suggested that the problems of the family had been aggravated by science, but they could respond to science in more positive ways. Socially retarded citizens could be saved by the scientific discoveries of sociology and psychology. Groves was not alone in his faith in these relatively new "sciences." In an age so fond of technological jargon that advertisements warned of the dangers of "auto-intoxication," pseudo-Freudian mumbo-jumbo was especially appealing. It could explain why "only children" had mental problems or confirm the folklore that women suffered from a more sensitive nervous system than men. And sociology could tell people how to scientifically get along with others -- thus the popularity if such articles as "a Father's Relations to His Children," or "The Hundred Per Cent Father."

Fathers were reminded of their familial obligations, including providing support and discipline. Fathers, it was claimed, could prevent the "spoiled child" and "spoiled mother" that one article said "we are accustomed to speak of." Article after article advised parents on scientific health care, sanitation and child-rearing. The whole process of child-care and home economics appeared as a complicated profession, thanks to advances in technology. In popular journals, uniformed nurses and "117 Home Economics Instructors" advised mothers to fatten their children up with cream cheese, or build their bones with cod liver oil, or regulate them with laxatives. Babies' rooms were stripped down and antiseptic. Arch preservers were recommended so that mothers would not tire while taking baby for his daily stroll.
In the face of more women entering the job market and combining child care, homemaking and employment, the popular journals advanced the notion that child-care and homemaking were highly complicated, time-consuming occupations requiring much of women. Psychology and sociology threatened working mothers with being the cause of juvenile crime and the destruction of the family. If women were childless, they arrested the development of their family; if they had only one child, they condemned that offspring to neuroses, at least. It was no wonder that people sometimes longed for the "good old days."

There were other people, however, who longed for nothing of the kind. They had only scorn for the "typical" American family and were amused by fearful talk of its destruction. The young intellectuals equated the family with the Babbittry they found so oppressive in America. If they wrote for The American Mercury, authors lampooned Babbitt and his family. Even advertisements for the Mercury poked fun at Babbitt:

Mr. Babbitt--
He knows everything, but nothing he knows is true. What he needs is better reading matter. Here it is in The American Mercury. Let him read it for six months, and he will begin to forget the sublime principles of Kiwanis and The Mystic Shrine.
Business is business. You have to listen to him every day. Here is your chance to improve his conversation.19

Some critics even went so far as to try to tell Americans what they might substitute for Babbitt and his family. F. Scott Fitzgerald published an article in The Ladies Home Journal on "Imagination--And A Few Mothers."20 The editors noted that this article was included as an example of the thinking of the avant-garde, not as the Journal's opinion. In his short
piece, Fitzgerald attacked mothers who were concerned only with their children, making themselves hysterical martyrs. Instead, he suggested the situation in the ideal home, as opposed to the average home, "a horribly dull place ... fails chiefly in imagination--an attitude toward life." In the ideal home, the mother keeps young for herself. She treats her children as if they were grown. If they are boring, she tells them so and leaves their company. She does not pretend interest in activities which bore her nor does she include children in her activities unless she truly wants to do so. According to Fitzgerald, children are happier by themselves. "Perhaps someday we'll leave our children alone ... and spend time on ourselves." When the children are grown they are much better companions for having been reared thus.

With such diametrically opposed views on children and family life represented in the twenties, children's fiction provides an interesting middle-view. The fictional family remains a strong unit in the traditional sense: it provides a warm and comforting base from which characters venture forth to challenge the world. At the same time, the fictional family is restrictive. In the twenties, characters in children's fiction demonstrate an interesting trend. In order to free child characters from the restrictions the family might impose on action, parents are often removed from the scene. Sometimes the children are sent away to recover from an illness, or to build up strength. More often the death of one or both parents sets the child free. Philip Marsham is an orphan, as are Ann (Meredith's Ann), Jetsam (Downright Dencey), Mehitable and Carl (A Boy at Gettysburg). Becky Landers becomes a "warrior" because both her father and brother are gone.
This separation from natural parents allows greater freedom without violating prevalent notions of the responsibility of parents. It also indicates that adventure might lie just beyond the sound of parents' voices. Being orphaned also meant that a child could feel emotions toward foster parents or guardians that would not be acceptable directed toward parents.

In the families depicted in the selected books, all are traditional in their make-up. The father works, is sometimes a bit distant, but loving, and provides a vitality the mother lacks. The mother's main occupation is child-care and homemaking, though she may occasionally be a teacher. Siblings have relationships free of much hostility. There are several only children, only one of whom is a potential asylum inmate. Relations between children and parents are rarely strained. Children's fiction argued against the Fitzgeralds, Clarks and Kellys, and affirmed the existence of strong, healthy families. In doing so, fiction also presented beliefs about the nature of families and human behavior.

**Cricket: A Little Girl of the Old West**

Cricket's family is structured in the traditional mode. Her father is head of the family; bigger, smarter, stronger and braver than other family members. Lieutenant Austin appears to be much more important than Mrs. Austin in Cricket's life. It is he who cries over her sick bed, and he whom Cricket imitates in her play. Cricket practices being a soldier, not a wife or mother. She has daily evidence of her father's glamour, but of her mother she is aware only of a plump, rather lazy woman who would prefer never to walk where she could ride.
Lieutenant Austin commands men, fights Indians and wears a uniform that not only looks glamorous, but allows him to move freely. Mrs. Austin never appears to do much of anything. She visits with the other officers' wives, shops at the trading post and sometimes watches Cricket. Aunt Jane, the Black maid, does all the cleaning and cooking and a considerable amount of the child-care. This leaves Cricket free to roam. It also leaves the story almost entirely free of Mrs. Austin. She is a foil for her husband and child, and once in awhile a bit of a comic relief. F. Scott Fitzgerald would have approved of her vague notions of the world outside her immediate interests, though he probably would not have approved the amount of attention accorded Cricket.

The Trumpeter of Krakow

The Trumpeter of Krakow is quite similar to Cricket in family structure. Mrs. Charnevsky follows her husband wherever he goes. She is a quiet woman whose few lines are generally directed towards the well-being of her son or Elzbietka. Her function in the story is to provide mothering for the orphaned girl and to keep the home secure while her husband and son are out dealing with the world. She is not expected to do anything more. Nothing depends on her bravery or intelligence. The family revolves around the husband. He protects the family from danger, and as much worry as possible.

Penrod Jashbur

In spite of its contemporary setting, Penrod's family is quite similar to both Cricket's and Joseph Charnevsky's. Penrod's father is the authority figure. His schedule sets everyone else's time-table. His wife defers to his authority, even when he chooses to inflict a bag
of asafetida on Penrod. Penrod's mother protests weakly, but is ignored. She remains an insubstantial figure in the story, reacting to Penrod's escapades and seeing to it that the maid runs everything according to the dictated schedule. Her inability to control Penrod allows him a good deal of freedom.

These three stories are closer to expected family behavior in the twenties than one would suspect after reading the essays on the demise of the family. Despite suffrage and the "new woman," the general impression gained from looking at popular journals and fiction is that the ideal man and woman of the twenties would have been comfortable in the fictional families of children's literature. Men were supposed to be bigger, braver, and smarter and it was still fashionable for women to languish about, to be a bit frivolous and not too bright. Illustrations for stories and articles meant for women present an image of a woman who could have been the mother of Cricket, Penrod or Joseph. The older, more motherly woman was pictured as a source of solid good sense for her family while the younger woman was easily frazzled.24

The image preserved in the twenties of the typical wife and mother did not apply to fictional characterizations of New England or Quaker women. They were a breed apart, living by different rules. Though the family was still the core of life in these stories, the interaction among family members was different. Anne C. Moore described the New England woman as "prim and gentle, yet ungiven to whimsical questionings or cautious side-steppings."25 The following selections serve as examples of this alternative to the traditional family structure.
Tilly-Tod

Tilly-Tod has surface similarities to the traditional strong father/soft mother family structure. The mother is described as tiny and pretty with eyes "big and soft and dark, like the black pansies in the garden." Father is tall, calm and generally too busy to bother much with little girls. Neither parent is presented as fluttery, blustering or simple. They maintain separate roles in the traditional manner, but their Quaker speech and beliefs require equal dignity and respect. Unlike the soft, rather ineffectual mothers in Cricket or Penrod, Tilly-Tod's mother is a strong-minded woman who speaks her mind, is active in the rearing of her children and interested in her community for more than tea parties.

Within this family structure each member has a place. Conduct is rule-governed and each person expects to abide by those rules. In this sense, the family is the main socializing agency. Children learn before they go to school or Meeting how one is to behave in order not to be an embarrassment. Family also includes a community of relatives, all of whom have some say in the behavior of individual members. As pictured in Tilly-Tod, this is a warm encounter. The children love family visits, and are loved and supported by other faculty members.

Hitty, Her First Hundred Years

"The Preble family are as thoroughly New England in their mental processes as they are in speech and attitude," Anne C. Moore said. Unlike some other fictional families there is no flighty character in all the Preble household. Captain Preble, a whaling ship captain, is often gone for long periods of time. He cannot afford the luxury of a wife
like Mrs. Austin, who must have a maid and is too breathless to walk over ten steps. Captain Preble needs a partner as strong-minded and competent as himself, and Mrs. Preble is that. All her New England training has led her to believe in no-nonsense, strength and responsibility. She has neither time nor interest in acting flustered and incompetent. Mrs. Preble's dictums determine the family structure. She decides how the Sabbath shall be kept, how the family will survive the Maine winter and how her husband's ship will be named. In Mrs. Preble, Rachel Field has created an image of female strength, courage and skill. Mrs. Preble is not an ornament as upper class women were supposed to be. As a result, her children's activities are more carefully monitored. Children within New England families rarely had the luxury of an absent-minded mother. The New England responsibility described by Caroline Snedeker precluded any excuse for irresponsibility. Attention to detail and responsibility for everything were the hallmark of the New England family. New England families are largely a phenomenon of historical fiction, rarely surviving the Victorian period.

Downright Dencey

Both Quaker and New Englander, Dencey Coffyn received a double dose of nineteenth-century family life. By religion and region, the Coffyns maintained a family peculiar to nineteenth-century Nantucket. Isolated and dependent on whaling and shipping, Nantucket Islanders were forced to modify some of the customs of the mainland. Nantucket men were gone most of the time. Their women were left to carry on the work of survival. Women opened shops on Petticoat Lane, ran businesses, reared children and kept house. They were notoriously unconventional in the freedom
they experienced, both in work and in speech. Part of this was economic necessity occasioned by their husband's absence, partly it was the result of Quaker doctrine. Male or female, Quakers were expected to speak when the spirit called. No Quaker was to keep silent when moved to speak.

Dencey's parents lived in this milieu. Tom Coffyn, lovable and gentle, went off to sea, leaving his wife, Lydia, to keep everything going at home. As a result, the family was built around work with a minimum of leisure. Even the youngest child, just able to toddle about, was given tasks to perform. No one is too young to learn kindness, Lydia tells her daughter as she sends one child off to help in a sickroom.28 The strength credited to this family structure can be seen in Snedeker's explanation for Dencey's moral conduct. "It was because of her home..." Snedeker says, that Dency was able to go to Jetsam and help him.29 Family values exempted no one from serving. There were no excuses; one simply went and helped.

Families such as Dencey's were the ideal held up by those who feared that schools, social welfare or the state would usurp the prerogatives of the family. And there is appeal in the picture: strong people working together for a common goal, committed to tendering service to others. On the other hand, advocates of this ideal failed to look at what was expected of children and childhood.

Dencey's father was gone for a year or more at a time. When he came home he brought "a happy, magic time," of joy, love and freedom.30 He and Dencey walked together for no reason but the pleasure of each other's company. Tom Coffyn taught his daughter how to swim in defiance of
local custom. His time at home was special and his daughter learned to love him in a way she could not love her mother. And then her father went away. Dencey is left with her joyless mother. Neither understands the other. Lydia considers Dencey to be heartless and frivolous--the ultimate New England insult. Dencey thinks her mother cold and sombre. The reverse of New England responsibility, that even children are denied frivolity, indicated that Lydia and her fellow Quakers expected a great deal from their children.

Children were expected to understand religion. They were admonished early to "Follow the Light, Enter into the Silence." If a child seemed less than spiritual it was a matter of grave concern. When Dencey rebels against a faith she does not fully understand, her mother grieves for her. Children such as Dencey were subjected to constant questioning as to the state of their souls. They were expected to act altruistically from infancy. When Tilly and Tod's mother expects her daughters to give up what they can see temptingly before them for an unseen "good," she is acting well within this tradition of responsibility. Even Dencey's small brother is not exempt. He is sent to help care for a strange sick boy. Little thought for the age or feelings of the child are expended in assigning tasks. In Tilly-Tod the children live up to the expectations. Their rebellions are minor and quickly regretted. Dencey, however, is aware of conflict, and suffers under this method of child-rearing.

Caroline Snedeker recognized that children do not always behave according to expectation. In one such instance, Dencey responds to Jetsam's insults in a totally unacceptable manner. Jetsam has called Dencey "nigger-face," and "Portugee girl." If Dencey had been true to
her family's expectations, she would have turned the other cheek. Instead, she chases Jetsam and strikes him with a stone. The boy falls and his attackers gather about him. "They were a little afraid of what they had done, and this made them more cruel."34 Without reference to psychological jargon, Snedeker captures feelings that are more child-like than many authors managed.

Stories such as *In the Endless Sands* tried to be much more modern than other family stories. The Scotts were unable to accomplish what Snedeker managed in the portrayal of childhood. *In the Endless Sands* bogs down in dream sequences and in talk that pretends to be child-like but succeeds only in being childish. Though the attempt to interpret the world as perceived by a child is not successful, it does mark the beginning of awareness that children understand things differently than do adults. Jackie, Penrod, Dencey and Cricket are signs of changing perceptions of childhood. Penrod carries on the late nineteenth century style of lovable bad boy, but he is joined by others who are less like charactures. Authors began to create children who were neither Satan nor saint, but simply youthful. Their concerns and misunderstandings were less adult and more child-like.

Children could more easily find characters with whom to identify in the twenties. There was still a touch of the awful warning story, but misbehavior was punished by disappointment rather than death or mutilation. Miniature adults still appeared, but they were less likely to win critical approval. Stories were still expected to be moral, but moralizing was rapidly losing favor. In the selected books it is rare for an author to tell the readers, as the Scott's do, that lying is unprofitable.
Other stories might convince the reader that such was the case, but they would do so through the action of the story, not in a moralizing aside.

Though fictional children in the twenties moved closer to approximating real children, their actions still reflected prevailing notions of what childhood should be. Whatever complex feelings and relationships real children had, fictional children still had to live up to certain standards. Sibling relationships went remarkably well in children's fiction. Even Tilly and Tod, opposites in all but looks, never argue and scarcely ever disagree. They have learned to cheerfully help those younger than themselves, no matter how unpleasant the task.35 The same is true of Becky Landers and Meredith's Ann.

Becky is solicitous of her younger brother and sister, always taking time to help them or play with them. She deals with them as if she were an adult, which role she has adopted. Her younger brother Ted has learned proper sibling affection, too. When his youngest sister wants a turkey feather to play Indian, "Ted, like a good brother, gave her his quill and pulled out another for himself."36 No squabbling occurs to mar the story.

The children in Meredith's Ann manage to take care of themselves, keep up the cabin, divide the chores and play without indulging in any quarrels, either. They happily wash dishes, sew curtains and clean house. Instead of fighting, the three Bradleys discover how much they like each other.

Penrod Jashbur is a healthy belly-laugh among all the loving, good-natured characters. He and his sister are natural enemies. Penrod
devises ways to spy on her. He interrupts her visits with boyfriends and makes a complete nuisance of himself. Penrod is the prototype of the little brother boyfriends bribe with movie money. He is also the exception to the rule that obedience to one's parents is a virtue not lightly disregarded. In fact, Penrod is more than an exception. He is one representative of a change in attitude toward childhood.

One critic described the change thus: "The old Puritan rule of the nursery, a repressive rule based on the idea of original sin, is not to be applied to 'a small apple-eating urchin, fond of climbing trees.'"37 Dencey, Cricket and Penrod represent a move toward children fond of climbing trees and away from original sin. Changing attitudes allowed children to be unique individuals with their own personalities in a way never encouraged before.38 Educators and psychologists had discovered childhood and were convinced that their new, scientific knowledge profoundly separated them from previous generations. Suddenly people were expected to "understand" children. Previously children were expected to understand the adult world as rapidly as possible. In the twenties the expectations began to reverse in favor of allowing children time to engage in the varied experiences unique to childhood. Walter Barnes suggested that it was only by being "an effective, happy child" that one became an effective, happy adult.39

In some instances, this change in attitude led to the assumption that childlike experiences meant simplified experiences, and that certain topics were "adult" and therefore forbidden. As miniature adults children were not protected from most adult realities. As apple-cheeked urchins, they appeared more in need of protection. Books kept death at
a distance along with other events evoking strong emotional response. One librarian explained that books should "teach the child to look outward, not in; teach her to realize the world around her, to see, hear and feel, to lose nothing of the joy of living in this beautiful world ... a child's life should be as beautiful, carefree and joyous as that ... not a care in the world." Introspection was too adult an activity for children, especially if it revealed the unlovely side of life. Introspection was also considered dangerous because it might cost the child his innocence.

Fictional children were credited with an ability to see through sham to the hidden truth. The child's ability to do so was a function of his innocence. Thus the children are the first to see what desire for fame is doing to Professor Kreuntz in The Trumpeter of Krakow. Children, Eric Kelly says, love the truth, not fame. Dencey Coffyn has the same clear vision. She sees in Jetsam what no one else even looks for. In her innocence, she teaches her pious mother about faith. Unfortunately, innocence does not shelter Dencey from all problems. She is given intimations that the world contains cruelties as yet unknown to her. The potential for tragedy is hinted at in Mehitable as well, but no substance is given. Childhood remains a refuge in which all is bravery and glory.

There is advantage to the reader in the view that childhood should be enjoyed for itself, even though reality was often censored. For the first time a large body of literature for children appeared that was intended to give pleasure. These were books to enjoy, and therefore, educators, publishers and authors were interested in what children liked and how to
make reading more pleasurable. An attempt was made to keep books within the range of children's abilities. Though the majority appear, from the perspective of the seventies, to have been rather difficult reading, they were more accessible than much of what had come before. Some had controlled vocabulary, others attempted to explain vocabulary in the context of the story. In either case, the emphasis was on matching child and book rather than on forcing the child to conform to the literature.

The desire to supply fiction that would interest children and a new fear of pushing children too fast, helped create a market for children's fiction. Young readers were not as likely to be forced into the classics or burdened with the old didactic books. There was interest, too, in urban children, a group of particular concern to educators. Many educators feared that city life was unhealthy for children. They sought to offer compensation through literature. Books could provide a "safety valve in the literature of escape," for city children would gravitate naturally to stories which drugged feelings. The serenity and repose offered in literature, it was claimed, was better for children than encouraging literature which might add to the complexity of life.43

The expanding market for children's books did not include room for realistic fiction that went beyond home and school to tackle real social problems. Changing ideas of children's needs and interests mitigated against such literature while promoting stories of adventure, history and home. In the books selected for analysis, troublesome social questions are carefully avoided. There may be brief allusions to war or
poverty or crime, but generally individual solutions are found that involve neither changes in the social order nor changes in the level of social consciousness of the protagonists.

There were several reasons for this emphasis on individual solutions. Though dependence on individual effort was within the social philosophy of the twenties, it also reflected literary and educational ideas. From a literary perspective, it is easier to identify with an individual rather than a social class, and individual heroism can be more exciting than group solutions. From the educational perspective, children's interests were not thought to include complex social issues. Education was to start where the child was, with his interests. It was easy to translate this into starting quite literally where the child was--at home. Finally, childhood was expected to be a protected time. Within the refuge of childhood, young people would build a foundation of sound principles, good health and spirit. By sheltering youth, it was expected that children would grow strong enough to face adulthood. Perhaps, too, adults frustrated with a complex world sought to postpone similar frustration for children as long as possible.

Children's fiction assumed a protective stance in regard to childhood, but the length and complexity of the selected books indicate two other assumptions. First, upper elementary children were expected to be able to read fairly difficult books. Dialect, long descriptive passages and vocabulary increased reading levels, though they do not appear to have interfered with the popularity of these books. Second, the books' length indicates that children were expected to have time they were willing to spend reading. Though educators frequently complained of
competition from radio, movies and the automobile, children listed their favorite books without regard to length, and several selections ran well over two-hundred pages. 44

Childhood, as depicted in children's literature, responded to the changing culture. Fiction reflected new interest in childhood brought about by work in psychology, sociology and medicine. Literature generally reflected the view that childhood should be a protected time, free of the stress associated with adulthood. No longer viewed as miniature adults, children were freed of the burden of the Puritan belief in original sin. Moral preaching diminished, and apple-cheeked urchins increased. Individuals rather than group effort was rewarded in fiction, and social problems responded to individual rather than social solutions.

Concern for children's interests, new theories of learning and the principle of protection encouraged increased publication of children's books. School use of children's literature rather than emphasis on the classics reflected the new view of childhood. There was also an audience for literary criticism of children's books.

In one other area, children's fiction reflected the concerns of the larger world. The changing status of women in the twenties produced mixed feelings in the public. Traditional roles appeared to be changing and some people objected to the change. Others assumed that women had gained equality along with the vote. 45 William Chafe argues that there was more sound than substance to much of what was claimed for the new woman, and that role expectations remained largely what they had been
Before. Since literature was supposed, in the twenties, to present role models, it is interesting to see what was considered worthy of emulation.

**The Tomboy and the Saint**

Until Jo March appeared in the nineteenth century, the most popular heroine in children's fiction was a saint. She lived a short, holy life, and died in a scene calculated to produce tears. Even Louisa May Alcott could not entirely avoid her, for Beth March is as saintly as anyone could wish. But Alcott also introduced an anomaly: Jo March. Jo broke all the rules of ladylike conduct, indulged in unsaintly anger and strong language, and finally refused a proposal of marriage in favor of a career. Jo must have driven to distraction the pious ladies who wrote only of saints. For those who wanted an acceptable way to give a female character spunk and a wider range of action, Jo was the model girl. Her unsaintly ways paved the way for a host to tomboys.

Throughout the twenties, tomboys and saints coexisted. They represented the role conflict of society as interpreted in children's fiction. The saint symbolized the traditional view of woman as guardian of virtue and keeper of civilization. Her sphere was separate from that of man. The saint was particularly popular in so-called girls' books. Even physical description gives her away. Mehitable does not like her own looks, but the author tells the reader that "She did not know that there was a charm about her very wide-open gray eyes, a wistfulness...." If Mehitable had known, she would have been no saint. Her charm, goodness and modesty draw others to her and make it possible for her to overcome the handicap of poor clothes and a country background.
The popularity of the saint, particularly the sickly saint, can be seen in popular journals as well as children's fiction. In fact, the saint is more common in adult magazine fiction than in children's books. Story illustrations feature wan, sickly ladies draping themselves over couches and chairs, fluttering their hands or holding one hand to the heart. Advertisements explain how various products can relieve that "born tired" feeling, but no arch-preserver could change the ubiquitous image of female debility.48

The tomboy represented a break with the weak female character. By rebelling, at least while she was young, the tomboy was free to live an active life. People might shake their heads and mutter about "unlady-like" behavior, but the tomboy did not care. "When will you grow up..." You're such a tomboy!"49 The message was strong that this was an interlude reserved for childhood. Grown-up, girls were not allowed to be tomboys. As a result, tomboys protest growing up. Mickey, in Meredith's Ann dreams of being a boy.50 Cricket dresses up as a soldier.51 The Virginia twins discuss the advantages of being a boy.52 Even Elzbietka questions the medieval restrictions on women attending a University. Authors were obviously aware of the role restrictions, and that girls and women sometimes chaffed at them, but they offered little hope of escape. Instead, fictional characters warned that the freedom of girlhood was transient, and should be thoroughly enjoyed before one was forced to become a lady. Tomboys had adventures before they became ladies. They chased pirates and climbed trees and learned how to swim. It is interesting that the tomboy's support for these activities comes,
not from mothers who remember their own childhood, but from fathers who encourage their daughter's rebellious spirit.

Lest the tomboy forget that she is not a boy, stories remind her of what is expected of her. Girls are restricted. Some activities are strictly male, and it is rare for any girl to participate. In *Tilly-Tod*, possum hunting is forbidden to girls. Ladies, their mother tells them, do not go hunting.53 The pronouncement comes as moral law. Ladies do not climb trees. "'What's thee doing up there anyway? That ain't no place for a girl.'"54 Girls are supposed to like tea-parties and playing house. Even girls' language is different. "Dainty,""dear" and "delicate" appear regularly in girls' books,55 as do lengthy descriptions of clothing and food. "The supper was a triumph: cold chicken, creamed peas...."56 Critics complained that girls would be better off with adventure stories, but the convention was too powerful yet to provide girls with much inspiration beyond the tomboy. High adventure remained for boys like Philip Marsham. Boys could look forward to a lifetime of adventure. Girls saw women confined to home, protected and weak. Only a few escaped and found adventure, and one of these was a small, wooden doll. The general picture was still that of girlhood and some freedom, giving way to the confines of womanhood. If one wanted to write high adventure one used male characters, because it was more reasonable that they would have the necessary freedom.

In spite of feminist gains in the twenties, girls led more restricted lives, even in fiction, than did boys. Authors were aware of the changes and there is a sense of frustration felt in the constant cry of the tomboy against the limitations forced on her sex. This is a new note, and
one that increases in the thirties. The saint loses ground to the tomboy fairly steadily. There is no question but that Dencey Coffyn is meant to be a thoroughly likeable child and to represent what childhood and girlhood ought to be, and she was no saint. By the end of the twenties saints are secondary characters and the tomboy moves into the thirties.

The Thirties

In the nineteen-twenties alarmists had feared that the family would collapse under the weight of social change. Before the thirties had reached their midpoint, it appeared that what the Jazz Age had not accomplished, economic depression would. The effect of the Depression on family life was more pervasive, and probably more frightening than anything the twenties had to offer. The twenties had seen the fear of excess. In the thirties, Americans discovered what Caroline Bird has called the limited life.57

The limited life of the thirties meant that people no longer saved "up" for a better house or a new coat. They saved as a hedge against disaster, and they saved everything. Tiny bits of left-over food, string, clothes—everything. Advertisements for Chipso soap pictured a mother and her family wearing freshly laundered clothes. Each outfit was labeled: "Joan has worn this dress for two years," or "John wore this for three years before Sammy wore it."58 People saved for marriage, waiting until they could afford to set up housekeeping. They also saved for children, holding off child-bearing to the point that magazine articles began encouraging child-bearing. Demographers predicted that
if conditions persisted and couples continued to forego having children, the birthrate would decline.59

One father sought to reassure prospective parents in an article titled "Shall We Have a Baby?" That he even assumed there was a choice was a comment on social changes, for his article appeared in the same year that dissemination of birth-control information by doctors became legal. It is significant, too, for what the article suggests about changing attitudes toward children. Lawrence McCann, the author, explains his own reluctance to have children. McCann feared a life of debt once his child was born. The problem was not so much that he could not afford the hospital costs, as the "upkeep." Neither McCann nor his wife saw any way of being able to afford a child. They saw no hope of an upswing in their own fortunes. In fact, a child would hamper McCann's earning potential. As a salesman he was expected to entertain, and he thought children would make that impossible. In addition, McCann had fears for his wife's life. 6.5 out of every 1,000 women died in childbirth and he did not like the odds.60

Mr. and Mrs. McCann changed their minds, but only after they found the "right" way to plan for babies. A gynecologist explained that the first baby should come within a year of marriage, and others should be two years apart. Three or four children, he told the McCanns, are ideal, but two can be "nice."61 With proper care, childbirth need not be too great a risk, the doctor told them, and the McCanns concurred, having three children, carefully spaced. It was worth having children, McCann concludes, because "we'll never miss freedom and money" as much as children.62 The McCanns were convinced that having children required
substantial sacrifice, and they were not alone. The thirties represents a significant change in attitude toward children. It marks the point at which there is a strong recognition of children as a responsibility and an economic liability. Even in the twenties, when children were accused of inhibiting adult freedom, there was not this overwhelming sense of the burden of parenthood.

Before the thirties few magazines would have seen fit to publish articles such as "I Do Not Like My Children," or "No Children for Me." Even in the thirties there was dismay at such feelings. When The American Mercury published "I Do Not Like My Children" the author chose to remain anonymous. Judging by the letters in response in subsequent issues, it was a wise choice. One respondent volunteered to hold the author under a tub and chloroform her. He had done the same to his cat when she ate her own babies, and saw little difference between the cat's cannibalism and the feelings expressed in the article.

The woman who disliked her children claimed no regret in having had them: "I know the experience ... is the ultimate experience for any woman." What she found herself resenting was the sacrifice of herself and the few financial resources she and her husband had acquired, to ungrateful progeny. Though an extreme statement, the article serves to show the depth of the sense that marriage and family strangled the economic life out of people.

The second article, also published in American Mercury, gives political and social reasons for not bearing children. Also anonymous, the article indicates the kind of bitterness and sense of hopelessness engendered by the Depression. The author's anonymity suggests that what
she wanted to say was still not socially acceptable. One might feel as she did, but it was still more acceptable to remain silent.

The essence of "No Children for Me," is that life is not worth handing on. In a lengthy treatise on the post-war generation, the author explains that the world is no longer a decent place for children. There are no values and beliefs worth holding. There is no future that can be depended upon. To produce a child is to produce cannon-fodder. If the child is spared that, there are no decent occupational choices for his future. The author's despair is palpable. She is victim of the American belief that a parent's worth is contingent on the ability to pass on the American patrimony: a chance at a decent future, the probability of a secure childhood. The Depression robbed Americans of this worth and reduced parenthood to the bearing of children who could legitimately question the value of existence.

Though not all Americans agreed with the pessimism expressed in "No Children for Me," there was enough concern to affect marriage and birth rates. Pessimism also contributed to another problem of childhood in the thirties: runaways. By 1936 the problem of child runaways had reached into enough middle-class homes to provoke an article in Parents' Magazine. In attempting to explain "Why Children Run Away," it was suggested that children became convinced that they were a burden on the family. They constantly heard of the cares and worries involved in financing a family. For a sensitive child, who knew he could not help lighten the financial load in any other way, running off appeared to be the only decent solution. Even young girls disappeared, often hoping for domestic work in the city or perhaps a chance for the fortune
movies promised.69 These children were the human residue of Depression, a burden on their parents, a burden on a society which offered them no future. The superfluous children sought escape from childhood.

Children were not the only runaways. In her investigations of runaways, Eva Hasl discovered an increasing proportion of older people who felt as the children did, that they were useless to society and a burden on their families.70 They, too, ran away. Society shed the old and young, and still could not manage to pull itself out of the Depression. Americans tried pretending nothing was wrong. A survey of periodicals indicates little change in format or intended audience. Unless one looks carefully it might seem that there was no Depression at all. The articles continued to extol the joys of family life and to give advice on the proper care and feeding of babies. Bridal fashions and romantic fiction continued to appear as if nothing had changed. Parents were told to test their children's "fund of acquired knowledge" each month71 or to write for government pamphlets on infant and child-care.72 Periodicals gave the appearance of normality in the face of powerful threats to traditional values concerning children and family.

Children's fiction also strove for a sense of values. The twenties' emphasis on the family continued, and strengthened. Literature built a picture of what families could accomplish, even in limited economic circumstances. A growing body of literature based on recollections offered evidence that Americans had cause for optimism. They could survive the limited life.
Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze

Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze is an example of a family rising above dreadful poverty and the possibility of starvation. Young Fu's family is not traditional in either the American or Chinese sense. Fu Be Be and her son come to Chungking after the father dies. Young Fu is to be apprenticed, and his mother hopes to find enough work to pay for rice and water. During the course of the story, Fu Be Be tries to maintain the standards and customs of her upbringing, but conditions work against her. A family without a father cannot exact the same behavior from its members as a family headed by a father. Young Fu realizes that the freedom he possesses is due in large measure to his being fatherless.

Fu Be Be and Young Fu are poor. There is no man in their house to provide for them and order their lives, however, they triumph as a family. Young Fu gradually assumes leadership in the family, slowly building his self-confidence. Time and again he makes mistakes, and disappoints his mother. Fu Be Be is a patient woman, and allows Young Fu to correct his mistakes. She worries and sometimes scolds, but she is a strong woman. Like other peasants in thirties literature, she has an accepting nature. At one point she finds herself worrying and reminds herself that she must accept calmly what life brings of good or ill.\textsuperscript{73} Fu Be Be also has a peasant faith in her gods. Convinced that only the good will of Kwan Yin can save her son from the consequences of his folly, she gives the goddess offerings from her meagre savings.

Fu Be Be and Young Fu fail to rebel against the conditions in which they find themselves. For Young Fu it is a chance for a future away from
grueling farm work. For Fu Be Be it is a chance at a life for herself and her son. Neither has any sympathy for the communist speech-makers in Chungking. Lewis' portrayal of nationalists and communists indicates that the nationalists were creating some semblance of order which the communists were trying to destroy. She obviously did not see communism as the solution to the social problems of Chungking. Instead, she advocates hard work and craftsmanship as the best way to success.

According to Lewis, the secret of family success lies in the following:

1. Love and respect between family members
2. Strong faith, especially on the part of parents
3. Each member's sense of responsibility for the family
4. Willingness to work
5. Dignity

In some ways this is the rural myth resurfacing to suggest that children learn responsibility by working for the family. It is also, however, a reaffirmation of children. Young Fu does many of the things which drove the author of "I Do Not Like My Children," to write her article. He is sometimes irresponsible. He gambles and loses money entrusted to his keeping. He wastes his master's time, and sometimes appears to be interested only in himself. This, Lewis suggests, is part of childhood. It is a necessary step towards independent judgment and responsibility. In the end, Young Fu is no longer a burden on his mother. As a journeyman, Young Fu can move his mother into larger quarters.
Waterless Mountain

As with Young Fu, family triumphs over poverty in Waterless Mountain. Faith and dignity also operate in this story, but there is a more fundamental message about families and children in Waterless Mountain. The Navajos have learned to follow the "trail of beauty" in all things. Each person is thought to have a song in his heart that will lead him in beauty, and connect him with the larger pattern of life. Children, old people, rich and poor, all are part of the pattern. Therefore, respect and dignity should be accorded everyone. Children are especially desired. As babies, their mothers never scold them, developing them in security and love. Later, there will be work for each child, but as a baby, the child is enjoyed for his part in the beauty of the world. Once it is time for the child to work, his work will be important to the whole family.

A sense of dignity and security is developed in children by their work, the sure knowledge of their family's love and by religious faith. The child knows he is needed and so learns to be responsible. He knows he is loved and so learns to love. He finds religious faith and so affirms the goodness of the world. Contrary to the reaction of some Americans to the Depression, Waterless Mountain affirms life regardless of economics. The Navajos pass on the songs they sing and the beauty they create. They, like the peasants in Dobry and The Good Master, find that the greatest gift life has to offer is other people, especially members of one's family.

The strong family persists in books based on reminiscence and recollection. Because these books are remembered childhoods, they speak
strongly to the image of historical childhood. These are examples of the "good old days" when spirit triumphed over hardship.

Caddie Woodlawn

Caddie's family is essentially traditional. Her mother was a Boston lady with all the values that went with that. She held strong opinions about what it meant to be a lady, as well as what behavior was appropriate among well-bred children. Both Mrs. Woodlawn and her husband agreed on the division of labor in their home, though Mr. Woodlawn is rather more involved with his children than had been typical in the twenties. In those few areas of disagreement, Mr. Woodlawn's will prevailed.

As in other family stories, Mrs. Woodlawn is the protector of civilization while Mr. Woodlawn shows a more understanding nature, at least to his daughters. When Caddie is punished by her mother, her father comes and comforts her and explains why her mother was so upset. Mr. Woodlawn does not excuse Caddie or accuse his wife. He simply offers comfort and a way for Caddie to retain her dignity.

In other areas Caddie Woodlawn represents a departure from the fictional families of the twenties. Her parents may be quite similar to those in Downright Dencey or Tilly-Tod, but the sibling relationships represent a break with the past. Caddie and her brothers and sisters are much more apt to argue, tease and play jokes on each other than were children in twenties' fiction. Hetty Woodlawn is a tattle-tale and tag-along who constantly gets her older siblings in trouble. They, in turn, leave her out of their adventures. All the Woodlawn children are more complex in their relationships than was common in the twenties.
Recognition that children were subject to complex motivations marked the demise of the saint in children's literature. When she reappeared, it was as a minor, generally pitiful creature. Major child characters were apt to be more lively in the thirties. They came with flaws, fears and mischief without being considered evil. The tomboy had come into her own as the ideal childhood character for a girl.

The Little House Books

There are a number of similarities between Laura Ingalls Wilder's books and Caddie Woodlawn. Their parents are quite similar, especially in the way the parents relate to the girls. Caddie's story, however, is much more the tale of her own, personal growing up. The Wilder books are more closely tied to the family's history. The number of Wilder books also allows for the inclusion of a quantity of details relating to child-rearing.

As in Caddie, family provides security, love and entertainment to the Ingalls children. Laura feels sure that nothing can hurt her so long as Pa and her dog, Jack, are near. She knows that Pa and Ma can be depended upon and that she, in return, must be dependable. From experience, the children have learned that their behavior can mean the difference between life and death to the family. Obedience is important. So is cooperation. Each child has work she is expected to do, and it would be unthinkable not to do it.

Wilder includes an object lesson in the value of cooperation in Cousin Charlie. Charlie is spoiled. Unlike Pa who has worked in the fields from the age of eleven, Charlie is allowed to stay home playing. When he is forced to work, Charlie causes trouble so often that when he
is really in trouble, no one pays any attention to him. Laura is shocked by his behavior. She has been naughty, but never like Charlie. He had not worked to save the oats, he had not minded his father quickly and he had bothered Pa and Uncle Henry. The line between acceptable mischief and serious misbehavior is clearly drawn.

In all the selected books containing a rural setting, the family is the chief socializing agent. The family sets the standards for behavior in all things, and is the yardstick for judging others. In each book the family is a positive force in the development of the child. The children themselves are welcome, necessary parts of the family. There is a definite sense that to be without children would be to lack a future. This is especially true of those stories based on family reminiscences. Each book is an argument for children who will remember with such loving kindness the lives of parents and grandparents. The books express optimism for the future. The major exception to this optimistic view of the family in its relationship to children is Ruth Sawyer's *Roller Skates*. The story is positive about children, but it has reservations about the all-consuming family. Sawyer frees Lucinda of her family. She has a doctor explain that if more parents left their children alone he would have fewer patients.

Sawyer's interest is in showing the world through the child's eye. In this case, the child is intelligent and innocent in a new sense. Previous descriptions of childhood innocence had wrapped children in intellectual cotton-batting and assumed they needed protection from almost everything. Lucinda's innocence is the naïveté of inexperience.
She understands things differently because no one has pre-interpreted anything for her.

What Sawyer has accomplished is unusual in the thirties. She managed to capture the differences between the child's and adult's world in such a way that both could understand and enjoy. Roller Skates is a remarkable book, the forerunner of much later trends. Roller Skates allowed the admission that even the most loving parents could make mistakes, and that children had to protect themselves from those mistakes, somehow. There is no condemnation of either child or parent. The story does suggest that children need the opportunity to find some adult who can give them what a parent cannot. Roller Skates is one of the few examples in thirties children's fiction of traditional family functions being assumed by an outsider.

The Demise of the Saint

Saintly girls were not alone in moving from the center stage of fiction for children in the thirties. The slightly bemused mother gave way before the robust, competent peasant mother. Mrs. Wyman, in The Year of Jubilo was one of the few dainty, helpless mothers who passed into the thirties. In the thirties, women were expected to be stronger and healthier, in order to provide the kind of protection their family needed in the modern world. Otherwise there was little change in the content of women's roles. Young girls were presented as tomboys on the one hand, and then women settled comfortably into domesticity on the other. The transitional period was awkward.

In historical fiction it was still common for girls to express reluctance to grow up and become ladies. Tamar, in The Golden Horseshoe,
watches the men ride off hunting. "A girl never does as she wishes," Tamar thinks. Instead she learns the duties of housekeeping and plans for at least one adventure before she grows up. Kate, in *The Good Master*, also longs to ride with the men. An enterprising girl, she slashes her long skirt up the middle and mounts like a boy. Soon she is "almost as good as a boy" Jancsi says. Tomboys all wished to be boys at some point. Each tomboy says so, but Lucinda says it best. "You just don't know how terrible it gets at times to be a girl and have boy longings." When she was younger Lucinda imagined never growing up, and as a teen-ager, she still insists "I am no lady...!"

Tomboys are threatened with womanhood constantly. The circuit preacher asks Mrs. Woodlawn when she will make Caddie become a lady. Lucinda's brothers suggest she think more of being a girl, and refuse to let her accompany them on the boat because "It isn't girls' work ... give signs of being more fastidious ... the hallmarks of being a lady." Someone is always willing to tell tomboys what girls can and cannot do. They can sew, they can cook, but they cannot build things, become sailors or yell like a cowboy. Other women tell tomboys about the restrictions of their own youth. And finally, there is the constant evidence that women's work is not as exciting as men's. No boys watch enviously as their mothers churn butter or stitch a fine seam. The only boys who even come close are Caddie's brothers who learn domestic skills along with Caddie. In spite of the fact that most of the books were written by females and have more female than male main characters, the fictional world is still male. Particularly in books with peasant themes, there is description of the rights of passage whereby a boy
becomes a man. Boys avidly follow men, learning to be like them, to
ride like them, tell stories like them or hunt like them. None of the
girls long to assume the adult roles in this way. Instead, girls run
off in pursuit of male activities whenever they can.

The male role in children's fiction is still the traditional one in
the thirties. Men were not supposed to cry, they were supposed to enjoy
physical labor. Men were to be strong, healthy and, most of all, wise.
They were allowed a bit of scorn for women while they were young and
with the assumption that they would outgrow it. Male or female,
children's fiction in the twenties did not offer much hope of escaping
predetermined roles. The tomboy would grow up and lose her freedom.
The boy would continue his adventures. In the thirties there is evi-
dence that tomboys may not have to surrender everything. Caddie agrees
to learn the housekeeping skills she will need later, but she remains
Caddie, followed by her brothers, even into the kitchen. Lucinda grows
up to be a writer and storyteller, and even Cousin Kate is only slightly
subdued in The Singing Tree sequel to The Good Master.
Footnotes

1The "Better Babies" column was a regular feature of Woman's Home Companion.


3Ibid., pp. 405-406.

4Ibid., pp. 407-408.

5Ibid., p. 407.


7Ibid., p. 622.

8Ibid., pp. 622-623.

9Ibid., pp. 623-625.


12Ibid., p. 227.

13Ibid., p. 232.

14Ibid., p. 238.

15"Auto-Intoxication" was the term developed by Bristol-Myers Co., as part of an advertising campaign to promote Sal Hepatica. For example, see, "Why Some Women Look Old Before Their Time," Woman's Home Companion, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January, 1927), p. 83.


18Advertisements for all the products mentioned appeared in numbers of Woman's Home Companion, Vol. 54 (1927) and in The Ladies' Home Journal, Vol. 40 (1923).


21Ibid., p. 21.

22Ibid., pp. 80-81.

23Ibid., p. 81.

24See, for example, the illustrations for fiction in Woman's Home Companion, Vol. 54 (1927).


27Moore, op. cit., p. 8.


29Ibid., p. 241.

30Ibid., p. 70.

31Ibid., p. 22.

32Ibid., p. 19.

33Ibid., p. 7.

34Ibid., p. 10.
35Gray, Tilly-Tod, op. cit., p. 77.


38Ibid.


42Snedeker, op. cit., p. 39.

43Lowe, op. cit., p. 128.


49Adams, op. cit., p. 147.


Among the selected books, this terminology is common to *Mehitable, Meredith's Ann, Tilly-Tod, Hitty* and *Becky Landers*, all previously cited.

Adams, op. cit., p. 6.


Chipso advertisements appeared in *Woman's Home Companion* and *Parents' Magazine* throughout the thirties.


Ibid., p. 62.

Ibid., p. 61.


Ibid., p. 414.


Ibid., p. 19.
70Ibid.


72McCann, op. cit., p. 62.


79Ibid., p. 151.


85Brink, op. cit., p. 251.

CHAPTER IX
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When a child picks up a work of fiction and reads it, cover to cover, he does so because the experience is pleasurable. The child's primary purpose in reading has little to do with social history. History may appeal to him, but literary pleasure generally holds him. The story comes first, carrying a hidden cargo of ideas concerning values, morals and behavior. In addition, fiction can convey information about historical events and social attitudes. The fact that these are secondary characteristics of children's literature does not mean they are unimportant. Though less obvious than other parts of the story, these characteristics can be influential. As a result, it is a matter of concern that the historical and social information be accurate, and that those who deal with children and books understand the hidden content of children's books. As a remnant of social history, children's fiction can illuminate some of the social and psychological pressures placed on children. The selection of books can also illustrate trends in what was considered appropriate for children and in the status of childhood in society.

Because this study confines itself to a limited range of fiction, conclusions drawn have certain limitations. First, the number of children reached by recommended books is less than might be found with cheaper, and more popular books. The selections in this study represent a literary elite in the same sense as did Dos Passos or Faulkner.
Second, there is a white, middle-class bias to the selection. All of
the selected books were written by white, generally middle-class
authors. There were books written by non-white authors between 1920-
1940, but in the context of this study, conclusions apply to the
majority literature, which was predominantly white and middle-class.
The work of non-white authors during the twenties and thirties deserves
separate consideration. Third, no single book can be assumed to
determine the social and psychological development of any child.
Innumerable factors affect children's development. Literature is one
factor, and a single book but a minuscule part of the whole. One book,
joined by a whole body of literature tending to reflect similar
generalizations can have impact, however. With these limitations in
mind, it is possible to draw some conclusions from the analysis of
selected children's fiction written between 1920 and 1940 for children
from nine to twelve years of age. Conclusions are categorized as
follows:

1. Literature as Refuse
2. Literature as Reflection
3. Literature as Social Studies

**Literature as Refuge**

Throughout the twenties and thirties there is evidence of a prevalent
belief that children should be protected from certain realities. The
assumption was made that because children could not understand topics
such as death or sex on an adult level, they could not be expected to
understand them on any level. Children's fiction, with rare exceptions,
avoided such sensitive areas. There was also a sense that adult life
came soon enough, and there was no need to involve children too early. The belief held, especially in the twenties, that refuge in childhood strengthened the child for the future, providing a kind of moral armor against harsh reality.

Literature, particularly fiction, was perceived as one way in which to arm youth against the world. Fiction would provide heroes and heroines worthy of emulation. Writers and educators believed that the influence of these models would lead children to be brave, good and true. There is little wonder, then, that throughout the twenties fictional children were impossibly brave and noble. A child complex enough to be capable of both good and bad was a rarity in these selections.

The thirties saw an increase in realistic portrayals of children's psychological make-up. Both Caddie Woodlawn and Laura Ingalls are mischievous and sometimes disobedient. They can be angry and ungrateful while remaining likeable. By the thirties, children were understood to be naughty sometimes. They should be expected to need time to learn proper conduct by observing appropriate role models. This left adults in the position of maintaining almost super-human decorum. Particularly among selections in historical fiction, adult characters have an unreal quality. Ethan Allen, Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark never falter and never make mistakes. Even fictional characters with less status display sterling qualities. Fictional parents in these selections never quarrel, and rarely even disagree. Children were presented with an impossible model of behavior. There were some books that offered more
human example. In stories such as *Downright Dencey* or *Roller Skates*, parents and children are allowed flaws. The majority of books, however, picture characters of seductive virtue. They are good so easily and so steadfastly that their actions are rarely challenged.

While virtue might not suffer many challenges in the selected books, the stories did not lack for action. In the twenties, fictional children lived in a world where adventure lay just outside parental authority. Children were frequently freed of their parents and placed in position to challenge the world. The reverse appeared in the selections from the thirties. Refuge in the thirties is provided by an insular family group. Parents are more likely to stay with the children and protect them. In the twenties, literature promised safety in the world. In the thirties, the insular family provided safety from the world.

Depression literature demonstrates a decided tendency toward refuge. The notable books of the period consistently present an alternative to historical reality. The elevation of peasant life to the status of a modern day Eden in books like *Dobry*, *The Good Master* and *Waterless Mountain*, exhibit this tendency. The ideal for childish emulation is the simple life, in which family is self-sufficient: The peasant grows his own food, makes his own clothes and provides his own entertainment. Only in *Roller Skates* and *The Calico Bush* is there suggestion of the harsher realities, and both books are historical fiction.

Providing refuge in the past was particularly prevalent in the twenties. Authors hostile to the Jazz Age did not find contemporary settings appropriate for the values they wanted to present. Instead, they reached into the past for examples of basic virtue and belief. The
historical past was appealing for a number of reasons, including its connection with a rural, agrarian economy. The ultimate refuge from an increasingly technological age was escape to a country farm. A large proportion of the selections concerns the beneficial effects of rural life. A stay in the country was a cure for bad eyes, timidity, irresponsibility and reading problems. The most popular country-side in the selected books was New England, particularly Maine. Since several authors sought personal refuge in that part of the country, it is not unusual to find their preference reflected in their work. Wisconsin runs a close second, as the setting for Caddie Woodlawn, Thimble Summer and part of the Little House series.

Children's fiction between 1920 and 1940 sought to provide children with alternatives to modern life. The rural myth was the most popular because it appeared to offer the clearest choice: rural life was aesthetically pleasing and healthy. "Homespun" virtues and religious faith were equated with rural life. Families worked together on a farm, children assumed responsibility and participated in the work required to put food on the table. Close to nature, rural life was thought to keep human beings in touch with what Laura Armer called "the deep heart of things." The fact that Americans were increasingly urbanized appears to have spurred rather than retarded the growth of the rural myth.

An American child growing up between 1920 and 1940 in an urban or suburban setting was not likely to find himself in the selected books. Only two of the selections have an urban setting. Both Roller Skates and The Trumpeter of Krakow are historical fiction. The rural myth persisted and strengthened from the twenties into the thirties in spite
of the fact that fewer and fewer children lived in rural areas. The selected fiction offered refuge from urban life as it offered refuge from adult problems. In this sense it was not meant to reflect life as it was but to project an ideal of how it should be.

**Literature as Reflection**

In spite of a tendency to glorify the past and to protect children from the present, children's fiction as represented in the selected books, was representative of the era. The children's book world did react to intellectual currents, though never moving to the extremes found in the adult literary world. Nor did children's books reflect the extreme conservative elements in American life. A middle-ground was struck, reflective of the social and intellectual backgrounds of authors, publishers and critics. The selections reinforce the existing culture of their time. Perhaps it could not be otherwise if the books were to find publishers.

In the twenties, conservative elements instigated anti-immigration and anti-communist movements. The Klan surged in popularity. Liberal groups called for the end of the middle-American. In the midst of social controversy, children's fiction reflected the neo-primitivism of the era that was neither Klan racism nor real tolerance. Instead, child-like characteristics were assigned to so-called primitive groups. The superiority of whites was assumed, but so was a naïve "appreciation" of primitive people. Primitiyes, including Blacks and Native Americans, were tolerated, in their place.

The movement to encourage world friendliness was equally reflective of a moderate stance. Children's fiction, as represented in these
selections, tended to categorize foreigners by national characteristics. Thus, all Irish were glib and fiesty, Scots dour and thrifty and so forth. These assumptions went unquestioned. Americans were curious about the rest of the world, and in their inexperience and arrogance, they reduced non-Americans to stereotype. This allowed the Americans to feel safe and superior while satisfying their curiosity. Throughout the twenties, books about other lands were descriptions by outsiders of quaint custom and strange geography. Not until the thirties discovery of poverty and the resulting search for a rallying symbol, did change occur.

In the thirties, the stereotyped Blacks with rolling eyes and white-toothed grins disappeared from the selections. Few Black characters of any kind appeared in fiction written by whites. The discovery of social injustice led to recognition of Blacks as an oppressed class, but not to enough understanding of Black culture to use it in these selections. Articles appeared suggesting that words such as "nigger" and "pickaninny" were offensive, but there was still not much recognition of the offensiveness of the white assumption of superiority. Blatant stereotypes disappeared, but not prejudice.

Social conscience also elevated Native Americans and peasant people around the world to a peculiar status. Suddenly the simple, primitive people of the twenties offered escape from the kind of life which led to Depression. Stories no longer spoke of them as interesting curiosities. Instead, they were the heroes and heroines of stories that promoted a favorable view of foreign countries, custom and wisdom. Books with such
foreign settings far outnumbered those with contemporary American settings.

Although contemporary American stories were rare among the selected books, historical fiction continued to be popular throughout both decades. Changes did occur in historical fiction, especially in the emphasis placed on the historical background of the story. In the twenties, historical fiction revolved around an exciting historical incident, period or hero. Daniel Boone and the bloody Indian raids in Kentucky provided background and excitement to *Becky Landers*; the Civil War and slavery provided focus for other selections. In the thirties, these stories still existed, but they were joined by a new type of story. New historical fiction did not depend on political history or famous historical characters. It was based on the memories and family reminiscences of authors and depended on the details of daily living in times past. Details built a sense of the historical era as it was lived by ordinary people, most of whom were not likely to be rescued by Daniel Boone or spoken to by Ethan Allen.

Change in children's fiction was not confined to historical fiction or attitudes toward race and ethnic background. The selections considered in this study reflect changing attitudes toward sex roles. The basic unit of the family remained traditional, reflecting an ideal rather than real interpretation of society. There was no mention of divorce, though parents were frequently sent off by death or travel. Mothers rarely worked, stepping aside to allow husbands to head the family and deal with major concern. Yet there were changes. Adults remained much the same, but their children began to reflect changing
social attitudes. Particularly for girls, this meant a move toward stories with tomboy heroines. A fictional girl in the twenties learned the joys of being a lady, or at least gave in with relative grace. By the thirties she held more stubbornly to her freedom. She might still learn to be a lady, but she retained more latitude of action than had been the case. In 1940 a tomboy heroine declares that she will have it all: career, marriage and children. Her friend tells her that no one can do all that, but the conversation is a sign of change. A girl can dream of doing it all. It is no longer certain that becoming a lady terminates all her dreams.

The selections of children's fiction reflect changes in religion as well as sex roles. In the twenties, children's fiction represented a Protestant, and usually Calvinistic, faith. The work ethic, New England responsibility and Quaker conscience appeared with regularity. Examples were constantly given of people whose lives were guided by religious faith and duty. Religion in the twenties was exacting, harsh and unadorned. But with the thirties emphasis on peasantry, a shift occurred. Religion was extended to include Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and animists. Faith took on a more spiritual and mystical appearance. Religious observance became more joyous and aesthetically pleasing. The harsh Puritan code receded, making room for religion that brought joy to life. The greater acceptance of a gentler religion and more tolerance of non-Protestant faiths may have been a reaction to the severity of the Depression. Life may have appeared to need a lift out of severity. Whatever the cause, change occurred. Religion remained an important factor in children's fiction as represented in these
selections, but by the thirties it was a more tolerant faith with strong ties to nature worship.

**Literature as Social Studies**

Literature provides social data to the reader. As the child reads he accumulates data on the material culture, the institutions, organizations and paraphernalia of daily life. The reader also is exposed to data on the non-material culture, values, beliefs and customs. The presence of social data in literature does not guarantee that it will be transmitted to the reader, but the accumulation of data from reading a number of books can aid in the process of social study as defined at the beginning of this study.

Child readers in the nineteen-twenties and thirties were exposed to the collection of social data already discussed. In total, this data produces a general world view containing information on religion, family life, sex roles, race and ethnic groups, appropriate behavior and dress, history, foreign countries, customs, morals and values. The world represented in these selections is an ideal world, largely devoid of death and horror. Neither the rich nor the urban poor are given much consideration. In addition, social and political philosophy was fairly consistent. Children were unlikely to discover that any real alternatives to the philosophy prevalent in these selections existed. They were not even likely to find mention of the Depression, an event that must surely have effected American children.

The ideal world as it appeared in children's fiction in these selections was Christian, rural and based on the work ethic. Work was assumed to be good for children, teaching them "System, Duty and Discipline."
They were also expected to give their primary allegiance to the family, while showing outsiders courtesy and aid as needed. It was best to offer aid rather than receive it in order to avoid ever being "beholding." In the ideal world outsiders were to be tolerated no matter what their race or nationality, but tolerance did not assume equality. White superiority was understood.

So little was written about contemporary American life that one is left to assume that the ideal world is either in the past or in some remote peasant village on the other side of the world. The selections of children's fiction, by virtue of the social data they present, offered a critique of modern society. Nor is there much hope given for the future in the alternatives offered to the present. The critique is by implication. Only by comparing the literary with the real world could the selections be considered as proposing an alternative to contemporary life. Internally, very few books provided data for a critical examination of the fictional world. Instead, several unexamined assumptions governed the stories. The first and most powerful, was the rural myth. As has been mentioned, the rural myth was pervasive throughout both decades. Rural and agrarian living were promoted as inherently better than urban life. In only one selection is there any suggestion that the rural life might not be as romantic as it generally appeared. In *Thimble Summer* the boy, Jay, swears he will never be a farmer and worry his life away. The rest of the story cancels his objections, but it is the only example of any objection at all. In other selections, even in areas of intense hardship, country living compensates.
The second unexamined assumption involves the work ethic. According to this tenet of children's literature, all work is honorable, so long as it is honest. Poverty is not a disgrace so long as one can continue to work. Diligent work will eventually bring material reward, but even if that fails to occur, the worker maintains dignity by virtue of his work. The converse also applies. Not to work is dishonorable, and not to work well is a disgrace. Accepting charity is a sign that one has not worked well and thus has lost independence. Charity implies obligation to another. Obligation limits independence. As a result, the third assumption is violated: the individual is ultimately responsible for himself. Debt takes away that responsibility and places it in someone else's hands.

With such strong feelings regarding obligation to another, even neighborliness must be considered with caution. Aid is neighborliness only so long as it does not hint of charity. Each neighbor must be able to reciprocate equally. This mitigates against the kind of social solutions being advocated during the thirties, involving government charity or the appearance of charity.

The final unexamined factor in the selected children's fiction was the Christian assumption. Whatever alternatives to Christianity might have been available, only one appeared in the selections analyzed here. Native religion forms the basis of Waterless Mountain. Other non-Christian religions remain as isolated examples of people who are set aside, and different. The choice of accepting these or of rejecting all religion is never even considered. Religion is so fundamental an
assumption that it is the rationale for the entire moral code and value system of the selected children's fiction.

In one other area little critical examination was encouraged. American history was interpreted from a whig perspective: the history of America was a history of upward progress. All the past, including hardships and mistakes, worked for future good. Historic characters were made heroic, and with few exceptions, there was no hint of any mistakes or misjudgments on their part. The need to preserve the hero myth was so great that authors of historical fiction were sometimes given to rearranging incidents in order to create a "better story."

Part of social studies involves interpreting social data. This is one area in which literature makes a unique contribution. By its very nature, fiction is an interpretation of social data. The author chooses what to include and exclude. She decides what the data mean on an individual level. The author's philosophy moves behind fictional choices, interpreting continuously. By virtue of her skill as a writer, the author brings the emotional weight of narrative to philosophy. The combination has the aspect of truth. In order for a reader to enter the story, he must believe, at least for the duration of the story, that the story is true. This belief extends to the interpretation of data as well as the story line. To find out later that the story one believed so thoroughly was based on a false account of the data can be frustrating. Data imparted via an emotionally loaded story can also be difficult to challenge. Because it has been accepted as truth it may not yield easily to critical examination.
Social studies requires the "suppleness of mind" that permits the examination of alien individual and cultural forms. Literature can make the alien more familiar, providing the basis for careful examination and sympathetic understanding. Literature can also perpetuate an ethnocentric view of the world. In the twenties and thirties, children's fiction did both. Children could encounter the narrow perspective of the twenties in which non-western cultures appeared as curiosities best viewed from a distance or they could explore a country from the inside through the more sympathetic perspective of the thirties. In the twenties, American culture was the norm and deviation indicated bad judgment. The Depression shook American arrogance. Americans began to accept the idea that the rest of the world might have something to offer them. An emphasis on brotherhood replaced the anthropological curiosity of the twenties.

The reader's absorption of social data along with narrative suggests several considerations for social studies:

1. Presently there is no way of knowing what the reader takes away from any given book. Literature cannot, therefore, be the only source of social data available to children, particularly in the classroom.

2. If literature is used as a source of social data in the classroom, teachers and children need to recognize bias and emotional loading in narrative material.

3. Teachers have an obligation to check the accuracy of books they recommend in the capacity of social data. They should provide opportunities for children to do the same. A child fascinated by a piece of
historical fiction is likely to be interested in knowing more about characters and events. That interest can be encouraged and challenged by critical examination of information.

4. Teachers should see that good books representing a variety of experiences are available. A poorly written book which fails to hold a child's interest is not likely to interest him in the social data it contains.

5. Teachers would be well served to read any books they suggest to children. If the teacher is concerned with literature as social studies, she must be concerned with more than title and comments on the fly-cover. The teacher must be familiar with the point of view of the author and the quality of the story.

6. The story has more immediate effect than the social data. Therefore, the first consideration in choosing literature should be literary quality. This includes considering the reader in relation to the book. Will this story be likely to hold a particular reader?

7. Geography or history books masquerading as fiction are not likely to have the power of well-written fiction. Using them does an injustice to literature and social studies. Information books are more useful for learning the kind of geography or history contained in pseudo-fiction.

8. Literature can add emotional impact to the social studies. Effective discussion and extension can capitalize on that impact, but there is no need to deal with every piece of fiction as a social document. To do so would be an injustice to literature and to other sources of social data. Educators need to be aware, though, that children do acquire
social data from literature. Thirty-one years ago, Dorothy Canfield Fisher wrote that "It is now an axiom that the way the children of any generation are treated deeply colors the life of the next generation." Books are part of the way children are treated. They are also part of the message the adult world gives children concerning "the actions of people as they arrange to live together in groups."  

Suggestions for Further Research

1. There is a need for careful, critical examination of contemporary literature for children as it relates to social history. Concern over trends which push "adult" themes into adolescent and juvenile fiction need to be studied in relation to the social data they supply about contemporary life.

2. There is a need for more research on the way children learn social studies. Some literature suggests that the narrative mode is most effective with elementary children. If that is so, we need to know how, exactly, narrative operates as a teaching medium, and how teachers can best use it.

3. Literature as social history offers tremendous areas in need of research. Other time periods, broader coverage of particular types of literature, and research on the extent of literary influence are all open to investigation.

4. One of the areas that has provoked controversy in the nineteen-seventies has been the image of women and girls in children's literature. This study suggests that some of that criticism has been ahistorical. There is need for further research in this area if we are to understand the changing status of women.
Footnotes


APPENDIX A

Selection of Books Analyzed in This Study

The books chosen as representative of historical and realistic fiction in the twenties and thirties were not chosen as examples of what was most popular, but as examples of books recommended by leaders in the field of children's literature or as fiction intended to promote interest in contemporary or historical life. Individual books are analyzed throughout the text as they relate to particular topics. A general review of each of the selections is included at this point to provide background and reference. Criteria for selection accompany each annotation.

Selected Children's Fiction: 1920-1929


   Selection

   Mehitable was so popular that it was reissued regularly until 1941. It was reviewed by Mahoney and Whitney,¹ and listed with positive reviews in *Book Review Digest*.² The *New York Times* called *Mehitable* "singularly pleasing."³ The book is also listed as a popular girls' book of romantic atmosphere in *A Critical History of Children's Literature*.⁴

   In addition to critical favor, *Mehitable* appears in this study as an example of:

   2. A book with a realistic setting.
   3. One of the few books placed at the opening of World War One.
Summary

An adolescent girl, Mehitable, orphaned and raised by her spinster Aunt Comfort in Cherryville, Vermont, is given the chance to attend boarding school in Paris, France. Dressed in made-over clothes provided by her aunt and the local seamstress, Mehitable appears at the exclusive girls' school and proceeds to win over the richer, better-dressed girls. The book chronicles Mehitable's growing friendships, her adventures in Paris and the discovery of a mysterious boy who lives in the forbidden half of the chateau. Mehitable also emerges as a talented writer, earning a bit of money with the publication of one of her poems.

In Paris, Mehitable discovers the thrilling outside world she longed for in Vermont. She also finds a mother-substitute who nurtures the creative impulses Aunt Comfort ignored. There is no reference to anything outside Mehitable's immediate experiences until the end of the book. At the term's end, Mehitable and her friend go to Brussels, Belgium, where they barely escape the German invasion and the beginning of World War One. The scene is set for a sequel.

Other Books

Katharine Adams wrote a number of popular girls' books based on her own experiences in France, Sweden, Ireland and England.


Midwinter (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925).


The Silver Tarn (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924). This was a sequel to Mehitable.

Selection

The Dark Frigate won the Newbery Medal for outstanding children's fiction in 1923. Mahoney and Whitney called it an "excellent sea tale ..."\(^5\) It is listed as one of the notable books of the twenties by Dora Smith\(^6\) and A Critical History of Children's Literature.\(^7\) Horn Book and Elementary English Review published biographical and critical information about Hawes and his work, an indication of praise.\(^8\)

In addition, The Dark Frigate was selected as an example of:
1. Historical fiction.
3. An atypical book in regard to style, freedom of language and content.

Summary

Philip Marsham, orphan, discharges a gun and is forced to run for his life, leaving behind his meagre inheritance. He sets out, with the innocence of a sailor, to become a farmer, but soon realizes that this is not the life for him. Instead, he joins up with a particularly offensive old sailor and heads for a harbor noted for pirates. Philip, raised as a seaman, signs himself on the Rose of Devon and rises quickly to boatswain. It seems he has found his place at last, until the Rose is captured by pirates. Philip is given his choice: death or piracy. He chooses the latter. His choice involves Philip in a series of murky adventures that force him, finally, to desert the ship. He has seen murder and mayhem as well as the torture and death of his friend, Will Canty. But escape does not save Philip. He is taken for a pirate spy,
and returned to England for trial. It appears that Philip Marsham will end his life on the gibbet, hung for piracy.

Other Books

Hawes wrote only three books before his untimely death:

The Dark Frigate, already cited.


Selection

Eisie Singmaster was a popular author of short stories about the Pennsylvania Dutch, appearing regularly in such periodicals as The Ladies' Home Journal. When she turned to children's books, Singmaster continued to write about historical Pennsylvania, especially Gettysburg. Her books appeared on lists for boys and girls throughout the twenties and thirties and were generally praised for their quality.

In addition, Singmaster's book is an example of:

1. A Civil War story.
2. A story unusual in its historiographic approach.
3. The use of historical persons, in this case Abraham Lincoln.

Summary

In the days before the outbreak of the Civil War, the orphan, Carl, was left to live with his grandfather at the older man's mill in Gettysburg. Carl and his grandfather, a rabid abolitionist, help runaway slaves as part of the Underground Railroad. Carl is sometimes helped by the son of a wealthy lawyer in Gettysburg. Both boys aspire to be lawyers and
share a desire to see the most important lawyer of their day, Abraham Lincoln.

The war comes and Philip Scofield, Carl's friend, enlists. Carl is too young and must wait at home. Just before his birthday, Carl finds his grandfather seriously ill. He cannot be left alone and Carl cannot convince any of his relatives to care for the grandfather while Carl goes to war. Before long, the war comes to Carl. During the Battle of Gettysburg, Carl is shot in the foot while aiding a wounded soldier. The townsfolk believe he has shot himself to get out of service and Carl is left scorned, crippled and alone. Even Phil, his only true friend, is gone, killed in battle. Whatever chance Carl might have had to become a lawyer seems as dead as everything else around Gettysburg.

There is much in this book about the affects of war on the civilian population of Gettysburg and the hostilities that exist among non-combatants. It is also one of the few examples of unabashed sympathy for the Union cause. In addition, the story depends on character development more than action for its strength.

Other Books


**Selection**

*Cricket* was recommended by Mahoney and Whitney and *Elementary English Review* as a vivid tale.\(^{11}\) Mahoney mentioned that the story was written from the author's own experiences and family stories. As such, the book is part of a trend in the decades under consideration. *Cricket* is also mentioned in this category in *A Critical History of Children's Literature*.\(^{12}\)

In addition, *Cricket* serves as an example of:

1. Historical fiction.
2. A sympathetic portrayal of Blacks and Native Americans.
3. A tomboy heroine.

**Summary**

*Cricket* is an infant when her story opens and only about six at the end of the book. Though written for older children, the main character is rather young compared to the usual heroine in books in the nine to twelve age category. The story is not really *Cricket*'s except in the sense that she ties it together by providing humanity and humor to an otherwise grim story.

The real story, and the message, has to do with Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and the Indian uprisings that took place there in the years after the Civil War. It is also about the "Buffalo Soldiers" assigned to keep the peace. In this, the book is a rare attempt at depicting the experiences of Black soldiers and dealing sympathetically with the plight of reservation Indians.
Cricket's father is sent to serve as a lieutenant with the Black troops at Fort Sill. (Officers are white.) It is the military's job to keep the Indians peaceful, but serious uprisings and the jailing of two Indian leaders cause considerable tension. Then the Bureau of Indian Affairs agent is replaced by an unscrupulous man who cheats the Indians and reduces them to starvation. A major rebellion appears imminent. At the last minute the government steps in and calls for a conference with the disgruntled Indians. Talk of a massacre grows as Indians arrive at the undermanned fort. In the midst of all this Cricket disappears--kidnapped.

Other Books


Selection

The Scott's book is recommended as an example of a trend toward realistic fiction about foreign lands. Mahoney and Whitney recommend the vivid desert descriptions. A Critical History of Children's Literature declares the publication of the book significant in recognizing "the child's right to strange, new experiences in his books."
In addition it is chosen as an example of:

1. Contemporary, realistic fiction.
2. An unusual locale for realistic fiction.
3. A book suggested for both boys and girls.

Summary

Two children, an Arab girl and an American boy, lose themselves in the Sahara Desert. Unable to communicate except in sign language, they spend the few days before Christmas eluding their rescuers, killing a lion, being attacked by a gang of Arab desert dwellers, an Arab doctor and all manner of other cruel and unhelpful Arabs. Though much of this sounds unbelievable, the authors claim that all the things in the story did happen, though not to the same boy.

Upon being rescued, the boy insists that his parents rescue Fatma, his companion, and purchase the lion's skin from a midget who speaks with a Brooklyn accent and used to work for Ringling Brothers. The parents accede to both requests. Fatma's brother, who appears as if raised from the dead, is paid off. Fatma is adopted and the lion's skin decorates Jackie's room. At this point the family exits to celebrate Christmas.

Other Books

Evelyn Scott wrote:


Together they also wrote:


**Selection**

*Tommy Tucker* is included as an example of an informational book disguised as fiction, a common form in the twenties. It is also included as a work for younger children in the age range under consideration in this study.

**Summary**

*Tommy Tucker* lives on a plantation and takes the reader along through his days of horse-back riding, schooling and dealing with the slave population. The narrative is slim. The point of the story is not to involve the child in *Tommy Tucker’s* life, but to teach about plantation life.

**Other Books**

*Annetje and Her Family*. Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co., 1926.


**Selection**

Constance Skinner’s work was important enough to warrant biographical interest. The *Horn Book* published her autobiography and a critical essay on her frontier histories. Dora Smith and *A Critical History of Children’s Literature* mentioned Skinner’s work as a significant contribution to children’s historical fiction. Mahoney and Whitney mention *Becky Landers* as one of Skinner’s better books. The *Saturday Review of Literature* spent 220 words in praise of a girl "American through and through ... fascinating reading."
Becky Landers is also an example of:

1. The tomboy heroine.
2. Historical fiction.
3. Inclusion of historical figures, in this case, Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton and George Rogers Clark.

Summary

Becky Landers and her family came overland to Kentucky. On the way her father is killed by Indians, then her older brother, the man of the family, is captured in an Indian raid. Mrs. Landers is a gently reared Virginia lady. There is no one but Becky to provide for and protect the family. Becky Landers becomes a frontier warrior, adept at shooting and hunting as well as sewing. She also plots to rescue her imprisoned brother.

Becky is swept up in the conflict between the British and Indians on one side and the Kentucky settlers on the other. Historical figures from Simon Kenton and Daniel Boone to George Rogers Clark appear in the narrative, but the crux of the story is the strange relationship between Becky and DeQuindre, a Frenchman in the pay of the British. DeQuindre becomes Becky's wolf and she, DeQuindre's "belle petite Mademoiselle Mercy."
The two respect each other and help under circumstances that have a humanizing effect on DeQuindre.

Other Books


10. Caroline Dale Snedeker. Downright Dencey. Garden City, New York:
Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1943, (Originally, Doubleday, Page
and Co., 1927).

Selection

Downright Dencey was such a popular book that The Horn Book had
Caroline Snedeker write a series of autobiographical articles to intro-
duce the author to the journal's readers. The book remained in print
for some time, and only recently began to disappear from library shelves.
Dencey's sequel, The Beckoning Road, needed only to be introduced as the
further adventures of Dencey.18 Mahoney and Whitney described Dencey as
"that classic of Quaker life on Nantucket ... a delightful piece of
creative writing and one of the finest junior books in years."19 A
Critical History of Children's Literature praised Dencey as the most
memorable of all Snedeker's characters.20

In addition, Downright Dencey is an example of:

1. Historical fiction.
2. A tomboy heroine.

Summary

Dionis (Dencey) Coffyn was her father's daughter from her dark,
"Portuguese" coloring to her impulsive nature. She was not a proper Quaker
lady like her cousin Hopestill. Instead, Dencey climbed fences and trees,
swam in the sea, and generally caused her mother to doubt that Dencey
would ever settle down and find the Inner Light. Dencey's unQuakerlike
manner finally causes her serious trouble. Dencey joins in stoning the island's outcast child, Sammy Jetsam, and draws blood. In remorse, Dencey seeks Jetsam's forgiveness and finds herself involved in reforming him. Dencey's concern for forgiveness turns into a Quaker concern for the boy which almost kills them both.

The story says much of Quaker and Nantucket life and the strength of faith. It is also a very human account of two young people who grow to care for each other in spite of all manner of obstacles.

Other Books

Caroline Snedeker published several books about ancient Greece before Downright Dencey


A sequel to Dencey, The Beckoning Road was published in 1929.


Selection

Two of Elizabeth Gray's books are included in the selection of books for the twenties. Meredith's Ann received favorable mention in Mahoney and Whitney and appeared on several suggested lists of books for girls. It is included here as an example of:

1. A first book by an author who later won the Newbery Medal.

2. Realistic fiction.

3. A tomboy heroine and a "saint."

4. A book which makes mention of World War One.
Summary

The Ann of the title is not the main character in this New England story. The main character is Mickey whose "real, and detested, name was Martha," a girl who dreams of being a boy. She and her sister and brother are sent to the New Hampshire mountains in an effort to change the brother from a soft, studious "sissy" into a hardy outdoor boy. While at their cabin they adventure with Meredith's Ann, a neighbor's foster child.

There is a mysterious lumberjack, veteran of World War One, who follows the youngsters about. There is an attempt to cheat the Meredith's of their beloved forest land, a night spent lost in the mountains, plenty of hiking and good scenery. There are also fires to fight and a reunion with a long lost brother.

Because Meredith's Ann lost her brother in the war and some of the lumberjacks are veterans, this story does deal with that conflict, and with the problems of returned veterans. In this it is an unusual story.

Other Books

Gray wrote a number of books from the twenties on. Meredith's Ann was her first publication. In 1943 Gray received the Newbery Medal for Adam of the Road.


Selection

Cornelia Meigs had already won critical acclaim for her books, from the first decade of the twentieth century into the nineteen-twenties. The Trade Wind is chosen as an example of her work in the twenties
because it is a sea tale, a favorite Meigs topic, and because it was chosen as an outstanding book, winner of the Beacon Hill Bookshelf prize, in 1927. 22

The Trade Wind is also an example of:

1. Historical fiction.
2. Philosophy of tolerance.

Summary

David Dennison begins his adventures shortly after his father has died on a strange mission. David finds out what mission it was that took his father to sea once again, and decides to attempt to finish what his father left incomplete. David goes to sea in a specially rigged ship in an attempt to purchase guns in England that would otherwise be used to put down the coming rebellion in the colonies. A series of misadventures involve David and his companions in trading with ships along the coast of Africa, in a pirate attack, and finally, an injury that leaves David to recover in France. It looks like the venture will again fail, when a chance encounter with two sinking ships turns David's mission into a success. He and his ship sail back to the colonies in time for the opening shots of the Revolution.

Other Books

By 1928 Meigs had published ten books, including:


**Selection**

*The Trumpeter of Krakow* was selected as the Newbery recipient in 1929. It was well reviewed by Anne C. Moore, but only briefly noted by Mahoney and Whitney. Later reviewers commented on the idealism of Kelly's book. Trumpeter received praise as "a unique contribution to children's literature."

**Summary**

A young boy and his family escape death by fleeing to Krakow, hoping to stay with a relative. They carry with them a burdensome relic hidden inside a pumpkin. There is trouble in Krakow, too. The relative with whom they seek refuge has been slain, and Pan Charnevsky is warned to take his family and flee again. Instead, they are befriended by an alchemist and a young girl. After name changes and counsel with Jan Kanty, the Charnevskys settle in the university section of Krakow.

Pan Andrew Charnevsky becomes trumpeter of Panna Marya Church. His son, Joseph helps him. They are soon embroiled in alchemy and hypnotism as well as attempts on their lives. The struggle to return the relic, the Tarnov Crystal, goes poorly, and the Crystal is stolen. The dangerous jewel causes madness and indirectly leads to a fire that wipes out a whole section of Krakow. It is finally thrown into the river where tradition holds the Crystal remains.

**Other Books**


**Selection**

Hitty was chosen as the Newbery recipient in 1930. Its publication in 1929 was hailed with a full page review in Anne C. Moore's column in *The New York Herald Tribune.* In addition, *Hitty* was favorably reviewed in *Booklist, Bookman, Nation,* and *Outlook.* Hitty was hailed as "the only true juvenile classic written in America in a generation." As a Newbery, *Hitty* has remained in print and is still available to young readers.

In addition, *Hitty* is an example of:

1. A period adventure story.
2. An American view of the world.

The story is written as if told by Hitty, a wooden doll, but the story is much more than a doll fantasy. It is more truly history and world commentary. To omit it would be to omit a significant piece of literature which is germane to this study.

**Summary**

Rachel Field has written a book of courage. Hitty is the story of New England grit carrying on, maintaining dignity, weathered and sturdy as the mountain ash from which Hitty was carved. In another sense, this is a travelogue of a peculiar type. The reader sees the world and experiences it as Hitty did. The world is viewed through the eyes of prim and proper New England, an ethnocentrism that perceives the world outside of Maine as savage in varying degrees. Hitty, of course, would not be Hitty if she did not have this mind-set. She would have been made of willow, instead. But Hitty cannot bend much at all. She
travels and comments about the beauties of autumn in Maine, about South
Sea pagans and whaling ships, of fire and shipwreck, missionaries and
spoiled little rich girls. Hitty's language is as proper as she though
she is not one to withhold pungent comment on the world as she sees it.

This book is a peek into the New England mind as well as into the
nineteenth century. It is particularly significant in any study of
children's literature and the social history of the twenties and
thirties.

Other Books

Rachel Field was a prolific author of children's fiction and poetry.
Among those works published in the twenties were:

The White Cat and Other Old French Fairy Tales. New York: Doubleday,
Page and Co., 1928.


and Co., 1929.

Selection

Penrod and his adventures remained popular for several decades.
They were noted by Mahoney and Whitney and all appear on book lists for
boys.

In addition, Penrod Jashbur is an example of:

1. Realistic fiction.
2. A mischievous boy.
3. Contemporary American setting.
Summary

Penrod decides to become Jashbur the detective. He enlists his neighborhood friends and proceeds to "tail" various people. Penrod finally chooses his sister's latest beau as the object of his detective work. Penrod is so thorough that he scares the young man out of town. Along with his detective work Penrod and his friend Sam train dogs and get themselves into and out of several scrapes.

There is much in the book about expectations for boys and the courting practices of American young people. In general, though, one must wade through rather ridiculous dialect to get at a story which is a bit like an "Our Gang" comedy.

Other Books


Selection

Another of Gray's early books, Tilly-Tod is intended for a younger audience than is Meredith's Ann. It is also historical fiction, set at the end of the Civil War. Tilly-Tod, like several other books in the twenties, is based on the life of a relative of the author. The book was described as "charming" by May Massee. It was Gray's first attempt at historical fiction and as such is interesting. Tilly-Tod is also a Quaker story.
Summary

Twins Tilly and Tod live in Western New Jersey at the end of the Civil War. Like so many of the reminiscence-based stories, this is rather episodic. Incidents are strung together along light story lines: the desire for a flag, an Aunt's marriage and the distant war. For the most part there is little excitement in the story. It is a gentle, nostalgic unfolding of events in the lives of two Quaker children.


Selection

Lucy Perkins' twin series was a purposeful attempt to teach children about the world and their own history. There were twenty-four books in the series, from stories for young readers to those for pre-adolescents. They were so popular that many children would have been familiar with them. In addition, they received praise not generally accorded to series books. They are included in this study because they attempt to present contemporary stories about foreign lands as well as historical work about America.

Mahoney and Whitney recommended the series as "notable for the careful study of environmental and national traits which characterize them all...."29 A Critical History of Children's Literature describes the series as "favorites of generations of ... children...."30

Summary

There are actually two series of twins books, one for older children in the nine to twelve age category, the other for younger readers. Each story has a pair of identical twins as the main characters. The twins
are invariably so alike that one can not tell boy from girl. There is a formula quality too, to certain events and descriptive phrases. One or the other of the twins is likely to eat something so hot it "burned all the way down to his stomach." This line occurs with the frequency of a cliche. Girls are generally tomboys, allowing them to flaunt some of the cultural restrictions of time and place.

The stories tend to be episodic, not building to a climax, but reading as if intended to be serialized or excerpted. Perkins ranged from Dutch twins to cave twins to Colonial twins in this manner. Only those written in the twenties are used in the selections of books.

Other Books


Books referred to in this study:

Children's Fiction: 1930-1940


Selection

Waterless Mountain, Armer's first book, was favorably reviewed from its publication. Its selection as a Newbery Medal winner assured it a place on library shelves. In addition to critical acclaim, the book appears as an example of:
1. The trend toward a poetic literary style.


3. A contemporary setting.

Summary

Dawn Boy, a Navajo, is the main character in Waterless Mountain. He sings new songs for his uncle to whom he is apprenticed in the medicine and religious arts of the Navajos. The book follows Dawn Boy's maturation on several levels. There is his spiritual oneness with his people and the natural world. Dawn Boy's sense of wonder, his ability to "walk in beauty," present Navajo mysticism and faith in a positive light. Dawn Boy's growth from young boy to adolescent provides additional insight into the Navajo culture. Finally, Dawn Boy grows as a thinking, caring person. He develops independence, but he also assumes responsibility.

The story was written by one who had intimate experience with the life and thought patterns of the Navajo, as well as appreciation for them as individuals. The resulting story is probably more likely to be appreciated by adults than by the majority of young readers. Though Waterless Mountain is similar in many ways to The White Stag and Dobry, it is probably not as accessible to the reader as these later books.

Other Books


**Selection**

Rachel Field had already won the Newbery for *Hitty*, but unlike other award winners, she continued to write books that were critically successful. *The Calico Bush* was so well received that both Anne C. Moore and M.L. Becker considered it worth lengthy discussions. It was a starred book in both reviews.31

In addition, *The Calico Bush* serves as an example of:

1. Historical fiction.
3. The increasing realism of children's fiction in the thirties.

**Summary**

Marguerite Ledoux (Maggie) grows up in France, is educated in a convent and begins her story as a bond-servant to the Sargeant family, bound for Maine. Because of their distaste for anything French, Marguerite must submerge her Frenchness. Her songs are sung only to the babies and her native tongue whispered only to the stars. The family to whom she is bound have purchased a claim to a home in Maine on a spit of land near Ft. Desert Island. They need Maggie to help in settling the homestead.

On the way to Maine the Sargeants lose most of their possessions in a storm. Maggie helps save a few of the livestock, but their meagre remaining supplies bode ill for the coming winter. Once at the homesite they find that Indians have burned them out, that their piece of land is of religious significance to the Indians. Other settlers warn them to settle elsewhere, but the Sargeants refuse to leave.
The rest of the story chronicles the first year of bare survival, the death of an infant daughter by fire, and finally, the confrontation with the Indians. Maggie is the heroine in each of these trials, and so is offered her freedom. Her choice does not suggest a happy-ever-after ending.

Other Books


Selection

Books called Young Fu the "best story about a Chinese child that has ever been written in English for English speaking children."32 The Boston Transcript described it as the "children's Good Earth."33 The book also won the Newbery Medal for 1933.

In addition, Young Fu serves as an example of:

1. The popularity of books with foreign settings.
2. A more sympathetic view of foreign people.
3. Realistic, contemporary fiction.

Summary

Young Fu and his widowed mother move from a village farm to Chungking. Young Fu is to be apprenticed to the coppersmith, Tang, and his mother will find some livelihood for herself. The story traces Fu's rise to journeyman in the midst of the political strife of China during the Nationalist Period.

Aside from the surface political turmoil, there is a deeper conflict in the tension between old and new China. The conflict is evident
in the relationship between Young Fu and his mother, both of whom must make their way in a city that challenges them at every level.

Other Books


Selection

These three of the Little House series were chosen as examples of the popular series. Their present popularity as well as their success during the thirties were considered in the selection. In addition, they were chosen as examples of:

1. Autobiographical fiction.
2. Historical fiction.
3. A philosophical response to the Depression.

Summary

Each of the books chronicles the experiences of the Ingalls family as they move back and forth across the Wisconsin, and Dakota frontier. The stories are autobiographical and so tend to be about a family of great strength, love and affection. As a family the Ingalls build a life, first in Wisconsin, then on the prairie and then back in Wisconsin.
During their travels they encounter prairie fires and blizzards as well as Indians who steal their scanty supplies. Before the Ingalls move to Silver Lake, their eldest daughter, Mary, has gone blind and the family is hard-pressed, financially. Silver Lake represents a chance to start over again.

Other Books

The entire series of Wilder books has been reissued by Harper and Row in 1971. The Harper series contains nine books.


Selection

Elizabeth Coatsworth was one of the most prolific authors of the thirties, and for some time thereafter. Her books were popular and well reviewed. These two represent some of her better fiction for older children. The *Horn Book* described *Sally* as the best book of the year.34 M.L. Becker, in *Booklist*, wrote that "altogether *Sally* is a book of beauty."35 *Books, The Boston Transcript* and *The Horn Book* all called the book charming.36

*Away Goes Sally* is also an example of:

1. Historical fiction.

2. A book with appeal for younger readers in the nine to twelve range.

3. An example of the trend to more poetic narrative.

*The Golden Horseshoe* also received positive reviews. *The Horn Book, Commonweal* and *Booklist* all praised it.37 It serves also as an example of:
1. Historical fiction.
2. An American setting in the thirties.
3. A change in attitude toward Native Americans.
4. The trend toward poetic narrative.

Summary

Away Goes Sally is the story of a Massachusetts family who migrate to Maine. Sally, her aunts and uncles, have been living happily in Massachusetts when a letter comes telling Uncle Jonathan that rich, abundant land is his for the asking in Maine. Everyone but Aunt Nanny agrees to pack up and go. Nanny swears she will never leave her own hearth or sleep in a strange bed.

Uncle Jonathan contrives a way to give Nanny what she wants and still go to Maine. One snowy day he drives a little house on runners to Nanny's front door. Delighted with her miniature hearth and bed, Nanny accompanies them all to Maine.

The Golden Horseshoe is not charming in the sense that Away Goes Sally is. Both are historical fiction, but The Golden Horseshoe depends on history for part of its storyline, while Sally could have been any time before easy transportation. In The Golden Horseshoe, Tamar, the half-Indian daughter of a Virginia Colonel, wagers that she will accompany an expedition to the unexplored Shenandoah Valley. She disguises herself as an Indian boy and exchanges the pampered life of the aristocracy for the outdoor life of her Indian cousins. Both Tamar and her brother, Roger, learn to respect their Indian and English heritage.
Other Books


Selection

Dobry was chosen because it was a Newbery Medal winner and well reviewed, but also as an example of:

1. A foreign setting.
2. A poetic narrative style.
3. The celebration of the peasantry.

Summary

Many of the incidents and stories in Dobry are based on the life of illustrator Atanas Katchamakoff. Katchamakoff was a peasant boy in Bulgaria who wanted, like Dobry, to be an artist. His work illustrates Shannon's book.

Dobry is a peasant boy who discovers a talent for art. This upsets his mother for whom farming is one of the few worthwhile occupations. Dobry's grandfather, the source of wisdom in the story, sees that Dobry must be what he was meant to be: an artist. Grandfather sees to it that Dobry gets a chance to go to Sophia to study.

Throughout Dobry's story is woven the beauty of his homeland and the joy of the peasant life there. Customs, religion, folklore and farming become poetic experiences in Dobry.
Other Books


Selection

Another Newbery winner, Caddie Woodlawn was praised for its "true homespun quality." As with the Wilder books, Caddie Woodlawn is based on true frontier experiences. Recently, Caddie Woodlawn has been criticized for being sexist.

Caddie Woodlawn also serves as an example of:

1. Fiction based on reminiscences.
2. A tomboy heroine.
3. Historical fiction.

Summary

Caddie Woodlawn was a sickly child when her family first settled in Wisconsin. Her younger sister died, and Johnny Woodlawn, hoping to save Caddie, convinced his wife to let Caddy "run wild." The book is about the adventures Caddie and her brothers have during a little more than one year. Caddie grows and matures, learning about herself, her neighbors and the Indians who live across the river.

Caddie's adventures are based on the experiences of the author's grandmother. The book does not build suspense so much as involve the reader in the day to day life of a character, Caddie. As a result the
story is a better indication of what life was like for ordinary people than stories like Becky Landers.

**Other Books**


**Lad With a Whistle.** New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941.


**Selection**

Both books represent a style in art unique to the thirties, and spectacular in their effect on the format of the books. They were both extremely well reviewed and have stayed on library shelves longer than most other books from the thirties. The *White Stag* received the Newbery Medal in 1938.

In addition, they are examples of:

**The Good Master**

1. Contemporary fiction.
2. A celebration of peasantry.
3. A foreign setting.

**The White Stag**

1. Historical fiction and myth, combined.
2. A trend toward poetic narrative.
3. A foreign setting.
Summary

Jancsi and his parents live on a farm on the Hungarian plains. Jancsi longs for a playmate, but is unprepared for the one he gets. Cousin Kate is a trials even for a good master. Obstreperous, spoiled Kate eventually becomes a delightful, spunky girl, but in the meantime she leads everyone on quite a chase.

Folktales are sprinkled throughout the book, and readers are given ample opportunity to enjoy the colorful peasant life of Hungary. The story also offers an appreciation of rural life as a cure for the ills resulting from living in the city.

The White Stag is a mixture of history and myth as they relate to the origins of Hungary. The White Stag leads the Magyars and Huns to the promised valley that is Hungary. The path to the promised land includes the historical activities of Atilla the Hun, but it also explains much of the factual material with reference to myth.

Other Books

The Open Gate. New York: The Viking Press, 1943.
A Tree for Peter. New York: The Viking Press, 1941.
The Year of Jubilo. New York: The Viking Press, 1940.

Selection

Both books are autobiographical. Roller Skates won the Newbery in 1937. The Year of Jubilo is a sequel to Roller Skates, and is really
for children a bit older than those who read *Roller Skates*. *Roller Skates* was remarkably well reviewed in numerous publications including *Atlantic*, *Booklist*, *The Horn Book* and *The New York Times*. There was some controversy about the treatment of death and murder in *Roller Skates*.

In addition, the books are selected as examples of:

1. A unique treatment of controversial themes.
2. A poetic narrative style.
3. A tomboy heroine.

**Summary**

Lucinda Wyman becomes a temporary orphan when her parents depart for Italy and leave Lucinda in the care of the Misses Peters. Lucinda's year of freedom is also one of adventure and growth. As her Uncle Earle says, the year innoculates Lucinda against snobbishness. It also lets her learn about people, to give and receive love and to be vulnerable.

*Roller Skates* is a unique story in many ways, dealing with subjects normally considered outside the purvue of children's literature. The story is also written in a style that fits a rather precocious ten-year-old, full of Shakespeare and dictionaries.

*The Year of Jubilo* takes place several years after *Roller Skates*. Mr. Wyman has died, leaving his family in limited circumstances. Their Manhattan properties must be sold and the servants dismissed. The only thing left is a summer home in Maine. The fractious Wymans spend a year living off the land and sea, while Lucinda tries to make herself an easier person to have around. The story does not retain the light touch
of Roller Skates, bogging down too often in melodrama, but it is interesting as a sequel.

Other Books


Selection

Mabel Leigh Hunt began a lengthy career in the thirties, by writing about her own Quaker heritage. Library Journal praised Little Girl With Seven Names as having grace and humor. The story was, the reviewer said, expressive and vital. Lucinda was also considered a strong book.

In addition, the books are examples of:

1. Books for younger children within the nine to twelve range.
2. The continuation of themes prominent in the twenties.
3. Historical fiction.

Summary

A little Quaker girl was born to parents with many loving relatives. As a result, she was given seven names and commonly called Melissa Louisa. Seven names can easily become a handicap. It is awkward to try giving away superfluous names, especially when they also belong to
special relatives. Melissa Louisa solves her problem by giving two names away to her new twin sister.

Lucinda is very much a girl's story. It begins with two little girls playing dolls and contemplating the arrival of Lucinda's friend Abbie. The story is as gentle as its Quaker background, with mild crises on the order of Lucinda's wish to sing though forbidden to do so by her religion.

Other Books


Selection

The Covered Bridge serves as an example of the work of Cornelia Meigs, one of the most prominent authors of the period. Though not the critical success that Invincible Louisa was, The Covered Bridge was reviewed by The Horn Book as "a completely satisfying reading experience..."44 It was so satisfying, in fact, that Ann Eaton spent over five-hundred words praising it in The New York Times.45

In addition, The Covered Bridge serves as an example of:

1. Historical fiction.

2. The rural/urban myth.

3. The inclusions of historical persons, in this case, Ethan Allen.

Summary

Connie has been sent to stay with relatives while her parents are at sea. A sudden call to the South causes the relatives to allow Connie
to go to Vermont with Sarah Macomber, the cook. Connie, Sarah and Sarah's grandson, Peter, set about keeping a mountain farm operating over the long New England winter.

In the process of surviving the winter, Ethan Allen shows up several times. He knows Sarah personally, and so visits her, to the delight and awe of Connie and Peter. Ethan Allen is the hero of the story as she provides an example of the rugged, individualistic Vermonter.

Connie's story is about the healthy effect of farm life on children. Connie learns responsibility and time consciousness. She even does better in school. When her parents reclaim her, it is obvious that a winter on a Vermont farm has transformed a timid and not very conscientious child into an industrious New Englander.


Selection

Thimble Summer won the Newbery in 1939. It was not given much attention in the reviews, except as a mildly pleasant girl's book. As a result the award was a shock to some.46 It is, however, one of the few books that makes even oblique reference to the Depression.

Thimble Summer is also an example of:

1. Contemporary fiction.
2. Realistic fiction.
3. The rural myth.
Summary

Garnet's discovery of a silver thimble in the river-bed marks the beginning of her magic thimble summer. The magic is not supernatural. It is rather pedestrian: the drought ends, a boy wanders into their lives, Garnet's pig wins a prize. The summer is only magic in the way so many remembered summers from childhood are magic. Garnet is a bit more rebellious and more adventurous than in the past, but there is no suspense or mystery to the story. As with so many books with female leading characters, Thimble Summer moves slowly, and maintains a homely, country atmosphere.

Other Books


Selection

Stephen Meader was an author whose work was not awarded and rarely offered unmixxed reviews, but they were solid, well-written stories. A Critical History of Children's Literature lists A Boy With A Pack as one of Meader's best books. They found him a consistently strong writer of historical fiction.47

The book is selected as an example of:
1. Historical fiction.
2. A male main character and author.
Summary

New Hampshire has little to offer a boy like Bill, except a job sweeping at the mill. Instead, Bill gathers a pack of items to peddle and heads west to Ohio. This device allows the author to involve Bill with canal boats, the Underground Railroad, slave-owners, Quakers, and horse thieves, as well as the girl who gives him a place to come home to.

Other Books

Footnotes


3Ibid.


5Mahoney and Whitney, op. cit., p. 476.


7Meigs, et.al., op. cit., p. 492.


12Meigs, et.al., op. cit., p. 525.


14Meigs, et.al., p. 550.

16Mahoney and Whitney, Realms of Gold, op. cit., pp. 399, 403.


19Mahoney and Whitney, Realms of Gold, op. cit., p. 630.

20Meigs, et.al., op. cit., pp. 399, 525.


27Meigs, et.al., op. cit., p. 513.


30Meigs, et.al., op. cit., p. 355.


35 Ibid.


37 Meigs, et al., op. cit., p. 552.

38 Miller and Field, op. cit., p. 136.


41 Miller and Whitney, op. cit., p. 156.


47 Meigs, et al., op. cit., pp. 403, 519, 585.
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