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ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ И АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ТЕНДЕНЦИИ В ДЕТСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу исторического пути развития детской литературы от её истоков до современности. Цель исследования – выявить ключевые векторы эволюции жанра и охарактеризовать его современное состояние. В работе применяются историко-литературный и сравнительный методы. Материалом исследования послужили произведения русской, белорусской и зарубежной детской литературы различных периодов. В результате установлено, что детская литература прошла путь от дидактики и религиозного просвещения к преобладанию развлекательной и воспитательной функций с акцентом на инклюзивность и цифровизацию. Научная новизна заключается в сравнительном анализе национальных традиций на примере конкретных произведений. Основной вывод заключается в том, что, несмотря на национальную специфику, современная детская литература демонстрирует тенденцию к глобализации и решению универсальных задач формирования личности.

***Ключевые слова*:** детская литература, история литературы, сравнительный анализ, фольклор, религиозная литература, цифровизация

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Original article

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND CURRENT TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the historical path of development of children's literature from its origins to the present day. The aim of the study is to identify the key vectors of the genre's evolution and characterize its current state. The research uses historical-literary and comparative methods. The research material includes works of Russian, Belarusian and foreign children's literature from different periods. As a result, it was found that children's literature has evolved from didactics and religious education to the dominance of entertainment and educational functions with an emphasis on inclusivity and digitalization. The scientific novelty lies in the comparative analysis of national traditions using specific works as examples. The main conclusion is that, despite national specifics, modern children's literature demonstrates a tendency towards globalisation and solving universal problems of personality formation.

Key words: children's literature, history of literature, comparative analysis, folklore, religious literature, digitalisation

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Children's literature, as a multifaceted cultural and pedagogical phenomenon, has evolved significantly from its didactic and religious origins into a dynamic, globally resonant domain that reflects contemporary social values and technological realities. Its role extends beyond mere entertainment, encompassing cognitive, communicative, aesthetic, and, above all, formative functions that shape young readers' worldviews and moral compasses. This article examines the historical trajectory of children's literature, identifies pivotal developmental vectors, and offers a comparative analysis of national traditions – specifically Russian, Belarusian, and foreign – against the backdrop of modern global challenges such as digitalisation, inclusivity, and identity formation.

The genesis of children's literature is rooted in oral folklore and religious instruction (Luchkina 2011). During the Middle Ages, children were primarily exposed to adapted biblical narratives, hagiographies, and moral parables designed to instill ethical norms and spiritual awareness. The advent of print culture catalysed the emergence of specialized educational texts, exemplified by Jan Amos Comenius' Orbis Pictus (1658), which, while innovative in its visual approach, retained a fundamentally didactic orientation. A decisive shift occurred in the 18th century, during the Enlightenment, when the concept of childhood as a distinct developmental stage gained recognition, prompting the formation of children's literature as an autonomous literary genre (Teacher 1909). The 19th century – often hailed as the "golden age" – witnessed the flourishing of literary fairy tales by authors such as the Brothers Grimm, H. C. Andersen, and A. S. Pushkin, who blended fantasy with moral and psychological depth (Privalova 1964). The 20th century further diversified the genre, introducing science fiction, detective fiction, and realistic narratives centered on children's lived experiences. In the contemporary era (late 20th to early 21st centuries), children's literature has been marked by the ascendancy of fantasy, the institutionalization of young adult (YA) fiction, and a pronounced engagement with digital technologies and socially relevant themes.

Religious texts constituted an early form of children's reading. They served as both spiritual guides and moral textbooks. In the Russian Orthodox context, simplified retellings of biblical stories and the lives of saints were used to convey fundamental ethical principles

and religious literacy. Parallel processes took place in Europe, shaped by Catholic and Protestant doctrines. Works such as the Children's Bible conveyed theological concepts and introduced young readers to historical and cultural knowledge. After the 18th century, the dominance of didacticism weakened, but children's religious literature still exists today in adapted forms. Universal moral lessons come to the fore in these works. Christian books teach compassion, forgiveness, and redemption through stories about Noah, Moses, and the life of Christ. Islamic children's literature, such as Stories from the Quran for Children, highlights prophetic tales that underscore mercy, filial piety, and justice. Jewish texts connect Torah narratives – like the Creation and the Exodus – to ritual observances such as Passover, embedding ethical instruction within cultural memory. Similarly, Buddhist collections like the Jataka Tales for Children use stories of the Buddha's past lives to cultivate virtues such as kindness and selflessness.

A comparative perspective reveals both convergences and distinctions among national literary traditions. As summarised in Table 1, Russian children's literature is characterised by psychological depth, a strong socio-educational ethos, and continuity with the classical literary canon. Its thematic focus often centers on friendship, justice, collectivism, and moral dilemmas, as exemplified by Eduard Uspensky's Gena the Crocodile and His Friends (Uspenskiy 2018). Belarusian children's literature, by contrast, draws deeply from national folklore, mythology, and historical memory, with a pronounced emphasis on cultural preservation. Works such as Vladimir Korotkevich's The Wild Hunt of King Stakh (Korotkevich 2015) fuse historical narrative with supernatural elements derived from folk demonology, creating a uniquely national epic mode. Foreign (primarily Anglo-American and Western European) children's literature prioritises genre hybridity, individual heroism, and universal themes such as self-discovery, resilience, and global citizenship. Authors like Neil Gaiman – through Coraline and The Graveyard Book (Gaiman 2002) – merge fairy-tale structures with existential and philosophical inquiries, crafting narratives accessible to a global readership.

Table 1 – Comparative characteristics of national traditions in children's literature

Criterion	Russian literature	Belarusian literature	Foreign literature
Key features	The depth of psychological insight, strong educational and social components, connection to classical literary tradition	Deep connection to folklore, mythology, and national history, focus on preserving cultural identity	Genre diversity, emphasis on entertainment, global themes, individualism of the hero
Typical themes	Friendship, justice, collectivism, moral choice of the	The connection between man and nature, national history, folk legends, and demonology	Adventure, self-discovery, overcoming fears, global issues (ecology, tolerance)
Prominent representative	Eduard Uspensky ("Gena the Crocodile and His Friends") (Uspenskiy 2018)	Vladimir Korotkevich (The Wild Hunt of King Stakh (Korotkevich 2015)	Neil Gaiman (Coraline, The Graveyard Book) (Gaiman 2002)
Artistic originality	A recognizable everyday or conventional world, a combination of humor and didacticism, a focus on collective values	Combining historical novels with mystical folklore, creating epic works based on folk legends	Combining fairy tales with philosophical questions about growing up, universal images and plots for a global audience

Despite their distinct cultural inflections, all three traditions share a humanistic core centered on ethical development and the affirmation of enduring values. While Russian literature foregrounds communal responsibility, Belarusian writing anchors identity in historical and mythopoetic soil, and foreign literature champions individual agency within a globalised moral framework.

In the 21st century, children's literature has become increasingly transnational and technologically mediated. Digitalization–manifested in e-books, interactive apps, and augmented reality storytelling–has transformed reading practices and expanded access. Simultaneously, there is a growing commitment to inclusivity, reflected in the representation of diverse identities, neurodiversity, and complex emotional landscapes, including mental health and social justice. These developments attest to the genre's adaptive capacity: while its forms evolve, its foundational mission–to nurture empathetic, critically engaged, and ethically grounded individuals–remains constant. Thus, children's literature continues to serve not only as a mirror of societal change but also as a vital instrument in the holistic development of future generations.

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