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**Children's Literature and Education: A Sociological
Perspective.**

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Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved mother and sisters, whose steadfast inspiration and unwavering support have been the basis of my diligence. Even in moments of deep self-doubt, their encouragement never wavered, inspiring me forward to finish this journey.

To myself for undergoing the academic pressures that often felt overwhelming, for rising on days when enthusiasm was scarce, and for choosing determination over surrender. I am proud of the commitment I sustained, even in the face of hardship and difficulty.

Raihana

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“ The journey wasn’t easy, but storms don’t last forever.”

Ranim

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Abstract

This study examines the role of children's literature in the moral, social, and emotional upbringing of children from a sociological perspective. The study aims to investigate how stories written for young readers contribute to constructing and transmitting social values, ethical guidance, traditions, and cultural behaviours within different cultural contexts. Anchored in a sociological background, the study employs close textual analysis of selected children books, concentrating on themes such as cooperation, compassion, respect, integrity, and honesty. The results demonstrate that children's literature functions as a formative apparatus in constructing children's perception of the world, emphasizing the familial and social beliefs, and fostering reflective thinking about societal values and responsibilities. Thus, the research concludes that children's literature is not simply a means of enjoyment but also a foundational instrument in upbringing. The study recommends that parents, teachers, and policy makers integrate socially inspiring and age-appropriate literature in both formal and informal educational settings to encourage well-adjusted child growth.

Key words: Children's literature, Educational settings, Sociological perspective, Values, Upbringing.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	II
Acknowledgment.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
Table of Contents.....	V
General Introduction.....	8

Chapter One: The Intersection Between Literature and Sociology

Introduction.....	15
1.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Literature and Society.....	16
1.1.1 The Marxist Perspective.....	16
1.1.2 A Functionalist Perspective.....	18
1.1.3 Cultural Perspective.....	19
1.2. Mirror or Molder? The Dual Role of Literature in Society.....	20
1.2.1 Literature as a Mirror: Reflecting Social Realities.....	21
1.2.2 Literature as agent of Change: Shaping Thought and Society.....	22
1.2.2.1 Literature as a Tool for Shaping Social Values.....	26
1.3. Children's Literature as a Micro-Society.....	27
Conclusion.....	30

Chapter Two: Analysis of Children's Literature and its Impact on Socialization

Introduction.....	32
2.1. The Role of Children's Literature in Socialization.....	32
2.1.1 Children's Literature and Promoting Family Values.....	34

2.2. The role of children's literature in shaping social identity	36
2.2.1 The role of storytelling in identity formation	37
2.2.2 Developing a sense of identity through Children's Literature	38
2.2.3 Promoting cultural awareness	40
2.2.4. Gender roles in children’s literature	40
2.3. Children's literature as tool for social change	41
Conclusion	43

Chapter Three:

Bridging Cultures: Exploring Arabic and Western Children's Literature

Introduction	46
3.1. Narratives of Childhood: The Role of Children's Literature in Arab Cultural Identity	46
3.1.1 Themes and Values in Arab Children’s Literature	47
3.1.1.1 Family Structures and Respect for Elders	48
3.1.1.2 Religious Devotion and Spiritual Education	48
3.1.1.3 Social Values: hospitality, generosity, and ethical behavior	49
3.1.2 Reflection of Cultural and Religious Norms	50
3.1.2.1 Gender Roles and Expectations within Family and Society	50
3.1.2.2 Influence of Islamic Teachings	51
3.1.2.3 Impact on Children’s Perceptions	51
3.2 Comparison Between Arabic Literature and Western Literature	53
3.2.1 Western children’s literature history and evaluation	55
3.2.2 Arabic history and evaluation	57
3.3 Presentation of Social Values in Arabic and Western Children's Literature	58
3.4 Similarities between Arabic and Western Literature	63
3.5 Differences between Arabic literature and western literature	65
Conclusion	68

General Conclusion	70
References	72
الملخص	77

General Introduction

Background of the Study

Children's literature has emerged from the 18th century; it was seen as a distinct literary genre. Children used to read traditional stories like fairy tales or simplified versions of adult literature. Children's literature has been shaped by religious sources, such as Puritan traditions, or by philosophical and scientific viewpoints influenced by Charles Darwin and John Locke (Lerer,2008). Later, many classic children's books were published in the late 18th and early 20th centuries, and it was known as "the Golden age" of children literature.

Children's literature has played a significant role in shaping young minds. Despite its positive impact, it has been criticized, particularly around controversies related to its content and characters of prominent children's books (Arteage,2011). Critical analysis of children's literature commonly emerged through children's literary journals and published collections of essays contributed by scholars and divers literary critics such as Peter Hunt.

One of the widely discussed and debated topics is the presence of racial stereotypes. Scholars argue that publishers should add information to guide parents in discussing problematic stereotypes with their children, rather than removing outdated content (Rao, 2009). Some see racist narratives as cultural artifacts that should be preserved (Duncan, 2009). In *Children's Cultural Reader*, Henry Jenkins suggests that parents and educators should trust children to think critically and make responsible judgments (Jenkins, 1998. p, 32).

From this standpoint, children's literature can be viewed through sociological lens, focusing on how it reflects social norms and shapes children's identity, values, and social development.

Thus, literature is not only a form of entertainment, but also a socializing tool that influences young readers' worldview and helps to form their personalities that drive social change and promote social awareness.

Statement of the Problem

While literature has widely been known as a reflection of society, its role in actively shaping social understanding, particularly through children's literature is not well understood in contexts of comparative culture. Most existing studies focus on western perspectives, often overlooking how Arabic children's literature functions in transmitting or challenging values such as family, religion, and gender roles. Our understanding of how literature contributes to children's social development and identity formation is limited by this lack of across-cultural investigation. Thus, this study seeks to examine how literature across different cultures, particularly Western and Arab, influences children's perception of social norms and values from an early age.

Research Questions

The current study raises three main questions:

1. How does literature act as both a reflection of and a force for social change within different cultural contexts?
2. In what way does children's literature play a role in shaping children's social, moral development, and understanding of social norms from an early age?
3. How do Arabic and Western children's stories differ in their representation of social values, and how do these differences reflect the cultural and social beliefs of each community?

Aims of the Study

The primary objective of this dissertation is to examine children's literature from a sociological perspective by analyzing how stories reflect and enhance important social values. This study aims to prove that children's stories are not only a source for enjoyment but also a powerful tool for shaping children's social identity, cultural understanding, and ethical development from an early age.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it focuses on how children's literature teaches social values such as family loyalty, gender roles, and respect for societal structure as it also impacts children's perception of society, guides their moral development, and prepares them to become active and responsible members of their communities. In addition to its role in shaping the next generation's social behaviour and identity.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach embedded in sociological criticism to explore selected works of children's literature. This research primarily utilizes secondary sources, including scholarly articles and critical essays, to explore the themes and context of children's literature. Qualitative content analysis allows close reading of textual elements through the lens of sociological criticism, to focus on how texts reflect and shape society.

Literature Review

For many years, Children's Literature has been a topic of interest for wide range of studies, especially in literature, education, and sociology. Scholars have explored its powerful role as an instrument to educate and shape young readers' perceptions, and not only as source for entertainment. In recent decades, Researchers have shifted their focus on understanding how children's books reflect society and help them to understand their surroundings. From this sociological perspective, children's literature serves as crucial tool for socialization. This study is part of this ongoing sociological study, aiming to investigate how children's literature functions as both a mirror of society and a medium of socialization.

To understand the sociological impact of children's literature, it is essential to look for past academic research that explored this genre through various lenses. Numerous doctoral studies have examined how children's books play a key role in shaping identities, social roles, and ideologies. These studies show how literature deals with issues such as gender representation, nationalism, and reader interpretation. By analyzing their findings and identifying their limitations, this review highlights the need for further exploration within this sociological framework.

In *Nationalism, Genre and Childhood in Colonial Indian Children Literature*, Sreemoyee Dasgupta (2021) focuses on how Bengali children's literature during the colonial period played a role in the formation of nationalist ideas and the social construction of childhood. She examines how stories published in juvenile magazines express political messages and help children to shape national identity comprehension.

In 2024, Rebecca Elton's *Masculinities in British and French Children's Fiction 1940-1970*, explores how children's literature in Britain and France depicted masculinity during significant historical events such as World War II and decolonization from the 20th century. Elton's examines how narrative shapes boys' social identities and expectations by analyzing how stories in children's books both reinforced and contradict prevailing gender stereotypes.

In her influential study titled *Heroes and Heroines or just Like us? Young People's view on Childhood in Children's book*, Susan Elsley (2009) examines how young readers view childhood as depicted in literature. The research highlights the positive role of children in interpreting texts, and studies how media and everyday real-life situations influence children's engagement with literature through interviews and interactive techniques.

In *Using Children's Education in Western Canada* (2023). Jing Jin investigates how literature helps bilingual development and a sense of cultural identity among young learners. The study analyzes how parents and teachers choose to use literature as a tool for language acquisition and cultural representation. He demonstrates the sociocultural function of children's books in shaping bilingual experience by looking into school procedures and community engagement.

In fact, the aforementioned studies provide insightful information about how children's literature related to themes such as gender, nationalism, identity, and bilingualism. These researches tend to approach the topic from historical, educational, or psychological angles rather than directly exploring children's literature through a sociological lens, even while they emphasize important aspects of how literature reflects or interacts with society issues. Their focus often limited to settings such as colonial India, post-war Europe, or bilingual schools, and they do not thoroughly investigate the ways in which literature actively shape values, ideologies, and norms in a larger societal context.

This gap creates the need for research that integrates children's literature into sociological Examination. Especially on its impact on children's understanding of community, identity, and their roles within society.

Structure of the Study

This study is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter focuses on literature and its significant role in shaping and reflecting society. This is mainly achieved through three selected theoretical perspectives and the insights of key scholars, highlighting how literature influence values and social awareness. In addition to particular focus on children's literature as micro-society.

The second chapter discusses the crucial role of children's literature in shaping young minds, identities, and behaviors. It explores how literature serves both as a source of entertainment and as a powerful tool for social change.

The third chapter introduces comparative discussion between Arabic and Western children's literature. With specific focus on Arabic culture, then a thoughtful discussion of differences and similarities between the two cultures. It also highlights how each tradition approaches social values, diversity, and the development of young minds.

Chapter One

The Intersection between Literature and Sociology

Introduction

From a sociological point of view, literature plays a crucial role in reflecting and shaping society, influencing individual thought, inspiring action and prompting social change. Throughout history, literature has challenged dominant ideologies, supported marginalized voices, and encouraged critical thinking, through presenting various human experiences in different stories. Literature and society are deeply connected to each other, and theoretical perspectives provide deep understanding of this relationship, through showing how narratives not only reflect reality but also actively shape collective consciousness, scholars such as Raymond Williams (1977), strongly support this claim. Literature also plays a vital tool promoting social values and shaping society. In this section, we will be discussing how literature acts as reflection and as agent of change, and how children's literature acts as micro-society.

Since literature mirrors societal structures, values, and ideologies while also serving as a medium for artistic expression, the connection between sociology and literature has been a subject of academic inquiry for an extended period. Social realities both shape and are shaped by literature, acting as a means for conveying cultural stories, historical changes, and ideological disputes.

Literary theorists and sociologists have explored literature as a social institution, investigating how class, politics, economy, and culture affect and are influenced by it. In fact, different theories, including Marxism, Functionalism, and cultural materialism, offer varying interpretations of how literature functions within society. This chapter examines the sociological definition of literature and its role as a social product that affects individuals and communities. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted to discuss the interaction between literature and social structures and institutions.

1. Theoretical Perspectives on Literature and Society

Diverse sociological theories offer different perspectives about the relationship between literature and society. The three main perspectives; Marxist, Functionalist, and Cultural, provide distinctive insights into the role of literature as a social institution.

1.1.1. The Marxist Perspective

The Marxist view of literature originally shaped by Karl Marx and further developed by scholars such as Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, and Franco Moretti. It considers literature to reflect economic and social systems. Laurenson and Swingewood (1972) suggest that literature often mirrors societal ideological conflicts, reinforcing the dominant class's ideologies while also providing a voice for opposition. Antonio Gramsci (1971) defines cultural hegemony as the way literature influences public perception to endorse the beliefs of the ruling class. Franco Moretti (1998) applies world-systems theory to literature, asserting that literary production is unevenly distributed according to global economic structures. This concept illustrates how Western literary traditions prevail, while other narratives remain overlooked.

The Marxist view of literature, originally developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, sees literature as a product of their material conditions, shaped by the underlying economic and social structures of society: “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (1970, p. 64). Demonstrating how literature can operate as a tool for spreading and legitimizing ruling ideologies. Theorists such as Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, and Franco Moretti have elaborated this fundamental notion.

It has been argued that “literature is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a whole cultural process which is itself determined by social and economic conditions” (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972, p. 13), which reinforces the idea that literary production and reception are deeply linked to class dynamics and ideological struggles. The dominant class maintains its control not only through economic domination, but also through cultural means. This process is called cultural hegemony, is defined as follows “The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two

ways, as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 57), suggesting that literature has a key role in the shaping of societal consent.

Franco Moretti expands this analysis to the global level by the application of world systems theory to literature, highlighting the unequal distribution of literary production. He states that “the literary world-system is not a metaphor: it is the literary form of a globalized structure of inequality” (Moretti, 1998, p. 182), highlighting the way in which Western literary traditions dominate global discourse while other narratives are left marginalized. In this way, the Marxist approach reveals the role of literature in maintaining and challenging structures of power and inequality.

The works of Charles Dickens, which criticize industrial capitalism and its effects on the working class, illustrate the link between literature and class struggle. For example, in *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens vigorously condemns industrial capitalism by presenting the plight of the working class in 19th century England. He highlights the dehumanizing effects of economic exploitation through characters such as Stephen Blackpool, who represents the struggles of factory workers, and Thomas Gradgrind, who embodies the rigid logic of utilitarianism. Dickens exposes the reductionist approach to the society that underlies this ideology in Gradgrind’s well-known declaration. Dickens writes:

Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them” (1854, p. 22).

Throughout this work, Dickens shows how industrial capitalism dehumanizes individuals and eliminates imagination and compassion, thus illustrating the potential of literature to challenge dominant economic structures.

A Marxist analysis of *Hard Times* shows how literature highlights class oppression, emphasizing the contrast between the ruling class and the working class. Dickens' portrayals of harsh working conditions, social inequality, and the cruel commercialization of human labor aligns with Marxist criticisms of capitalist systems, showing how literature can reflect economic realities and encourage social consciousness and revolution.

1.1.2 A Functionalist Perspective

The Functionalist point of view, influenced by the theories of Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. It views literature as a feature contributing to the stability of society. Laurensen and Swingewood (1972) explain literature reinforces shared values and fosters a sense of cultural identity. From this standpoint, literature, like other societal institutions such as education and religion, plays a role in maintaining social unity.

Critics criticized functionalist perspective, because it can neglect literature's ability to promote social change, as it focuses primarily on how literature supports existing structures rather than challenging them. However, advocates of this view, such as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, highlights that literature helps uphold the balance of society by strengthening shared values and standards. William Shakespear works are a prominent example of literature that reinforces the stability of society, as they often explore themes of order, legitimacy, and the consequences of disrupting established standards. For instance, in examining Shakespeare and social order, his plays, notably Hamlet, confirm Functionalist theories about the need for stable social systems. Hamlet explores themes of duty, hierarchy, and moral responsibility, reflecting the Functionalist idea that literature promotes social cohesion by emphasizing order and legitimacy.

1.1.3 Cultural Perspective

The Cultural approach, particularly Cultural Materialism as defined by Raymond Williams (1977), views literature as a site of ideological struggle (Williams, 1977, p. 5). Unlike traditional Marxist theory, which focuses on class structures, cultural Materialism studies how literature engages with various societal factors including race, gender, and other ideology. According to Mujahid Alwaqaa: “works of literature are the products of a specific culture, time, place, and an individual and they may affect or perhaps change the postulates and constructs of the culture into which these works have been introduced.” (Alwaqaa, 2021, p. 3) This perspective highlights the interaction between literature and the socio-cultural context in which it is produced and received.

In fact, this perspective is particularly important in postcolonial literature, which challenges dominant historical narratives and highlights the beliefs of marginalized communities. For example, in Postcolonial Literature, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) explores the ramifications of slavery and racial trauma in the United States, illustrating how personal and collective memory influence identity and historical consciousness. Similarly, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) addresses issues of post-colonial identity in India, reflecting the fragmented nature of national identity in the wake of colonial domination.

1.2. Mirror or Molder? The Dual role of literature in society

A central concern in the sociology of literature is the debate over whether literature merely mirrors society or plays an active role in shaping it. Raymond Williams (1977) claims that literature reflects emerging social trends before they become fully articulated in the realms of politics or economics, acting as a precursor to societal change. Williams argues "Literature does more than inertly mirror social reality, it actively forms social transformation. It captures developing foundations before they fully appear and helps shape the consciousness that recognizes and engages

with these developments"(1977, p.133).

Therefore, Williams challenges the idea that Literature is not only a demonstration of what society is like. He talks about "emergent" cultural forms, new ideas and values grow inside a society and can go against the usual norms. Williams states that literature shows these new ideas and helps people think about them, so it plays a real part in changing how people see the world and act in it. This way of thinking shows that literature is not just something made by its time, it can also shape the future. From this perspective, we can go into deeper understanding of how literature Mirrors society reflecting its social realities, and how it can shape thought and foster social change.

1.2.1 Literature as a Mirror: Reflecting social realities

Literature reflects society is a fact that has been widely acknowledged. Literature indeed reflects society, its good values and its ills (Lini & Samundeswari, 2017, p.170). In its corrective function, literature mirrors the ills to help society realize its mistakes and make amends. It also projects the virtues or good values in society for people to emulate. Literature imitates human actions, conveying societal thoughts, words, and actions through characters for education, information, and entertainment. No writer is isolated from the world, as they all share societal attitudes and values. To comprehend how literature effectively reflects society, it is crucial to thoroughly examine various literary works. What authors do is to transform the Real-life events in their society into fiction and present it to the public as mirror with which people can look at themselves and make amends where necessary. As a result, literature serves as both reflection of society and a corrective mirror in which members of society (Lini & Samundeswari, 2017, p.170).

This idea can be seen in various literary works that reflect societal realities. For instance, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* – This novel reflects the impact of colonialism on African societies, highlighting the clash between traditional and Western cultures. Another example in Feminist Literature (e.g, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*) – This work discusses women's rights and

gender inequality, reflecting the feminist struggles of its time.

The study of literature's relationship with society is crucial for understanding its role in reflecting social values, traditions, and changes. Literature serves as a mirror, capturing historical events, cultural norms, and moral dilemmas. According to Albrecht (1954) Literature is a mirror of society, Capturing its cultural values, battles, and transitions. Which means when people read literary works, they form a picture of how that society depicts its cultural values, clashes, and changes. Historically Writersoften draw inspiration from their surroundings, addressing real-life issues, historical events and social norms within their works (Dohan, 2015, p.191).

Literature does not just show what is happening in society, it also helps shape what happens next. Stories, novels, and poems have played big roles in political change, up against unfair systems and changing how people see the world. Books like postcolonial and feminist literature talk about important social problems and often see major changes coming before they show up in politics or the economy. As more people study the sociology of literature, they keep finding new ways to understand how books and society connect. The strong link between writing and social change shows why we need to look at literature from different angles to really understand its long-lasting effect on how people think and how societies grow. From this perspective, we can get deeper to understand how literature shapes thought and foster social change.

1.2.2 Literature as Agent of Change: Shaping Thought and Society

Literature and society are deeply related, with each shaping and influenced by each other in profound ways. Literature is more than just a means of artistic expression; it reflects and shapes society. However, it do not only reflects reality, but also inspires change and challenge ideologies. According to Ahmed, (2023) literature and society have a reciprocal relationship, where literature

not merely reflects society but also influences the way individuals observe and engage with the world. This dynamic exchange highlights the importance of literature as a powerful social and historical tool that influences human experiences and collective consciousness.

Furthermore, Literature plays a central role in influencing society and shape how people feel, think, and act. Ardaa (2023) states that literature has the ability to reflect and shape a society's attitudes, values, and beliefs. It is seen as a technology that allows people to share their stories and tell others about their experiences. Literature can both preserve traditions and inspire societal change. Disha Dahiya, (2024) claims that reading literature fosters understanding, critical thinking, and social consciousness, while also highlighting social inequalities and defending the rights of marginalized groups, ultimately promoting a more fair society.

Eqbal A Alfarham (2024) argues that literature serves as a tool for the sharing common social values from generation to the next generation, from traditional to contemporary novels and poems. Literature offers diverse perspectives, experiences, and thought processes, challenging expectations and deepening our understanding of the world. Additionally, it inspires action on important issues and brings social change. The effect of literature on society has been the subject of interest for wide research in recent years. For instance, a study by Kidd and Castano (2019) found that reading literary fiction could improve emotional intelligence, helps people understand oneself and others, reinforce creativity, and foster critical thinking skills. Another study by Koven and Parry (2018) found that reading literary fiction could increase empathy, enhance social awareness, and promote straightforward behavior. The study of literature highlights its importance as a crucial area of research, as it influence society by promoting social harmony and inspiring creativity.

Numerous literary works have explored the influence of literature on society, one of most significant examples is George Orwell's 1984, which serves as a warning against totalitarianism, mass surveillance, and repressive regimentation of people and behaviors in the society. Profound

terms in the novel like “Big Brother” and “Orwellian” are widely used in discussions about privacy and political control even in contemporary times, another powerful example is *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, which reflect the harsh realities of slavery in the United States. By depicting the suffering of enslaved people, the novel addressed the abolitionist movement and contributed to the growing resistance to slavery. These works show the vital role of literature, as a reflection of societal issues and as a tool for influencing public discourse and promotes social change.

William (1977) maintains that literature acts as active process, meaning that it is more than reflection of reality and dynamically influences cultural principles. Literature, in this view, is a challenged field in which underrepresented voices convey meaning, highlighting its power to reinforce and challenge social ideologies (p. 45). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) develops this idea in his concept of cultural capital, stating that literature functions as a type of power, sustaining or contrasting social discriminations. For instance, the canonization of literary works reflects the values of elite institutions, while marginalizing other stories. At the same time, literature permits resistance by giving a voice to historically oppressed populations and promoting cultural change.

Many prominent novels served as agent for social change, highlighting oppression and encouraging critical thinking. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe challenges Western literary narratives of Africa and portray post-colonial conflicts. Through the story of Okonkwo and Igbo society, Achebe explores colonial clichés, representing the diversity and variety of African civilizations that have been misrepresented historically in European narratives. This example determine that literature has the capability to influence public opinion by challenging dominant ideologies, and empowering marginalized communities. Literature continues to play a crucial role in the development of society, influencing both individual ideas and collective social actions.

Williams (1977) claims that literature reflects social trends before they are fully expressed in

politics or economics, acting as a forerunner to society transformation (p.121). This perception is particularly found in feminist writing, which not only represent inequalities between men and women, but also actively questions and reshapes dominant approaches about women's right. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is a warning tale of patriarchal domination, showing how literature can influence political and feminist debate by highlighting the consequences of valuing gender inequality and supporting convinced ideological frameworks.

Literature both reflects and shape social realities. Novels, plays, and poems have historically influenced political movements, challenged repressive systems and transformed cultural narratives. Literary texts, ranging from postcolonial literature to feminist criticism, address important social challenges, and often anticipate larger societal disruptions before they occur in political or economic fields. The sociology of literature, an expanding study, continues to provide vital insights into the relationship between text and society. The dynamic interplay between literary output and social transformation emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary approaches to comprehending literature's long-term influence on human intellect, society, and collective consciousness.

One of the main roles of literature in society is to preserve and transmit knowledge, history, and traditions from one generation to the next. Eagleton (1996) emphasizes the power of literature to shape perspectives and influence thought when he writes, "Literature changes and intensifies common language, deviates systematically from daily speech"(p.2). Literature fosters empathy, encourages critical thinking, and promotes self-expression. It is a vital part of human civilization, influencing education, identity development, and social change in modern society.

1.2.2.1 Literature as Tool for Shaping Social Values

Social values are defined as standards, which individuals and social groups use to establish their own objectives and, in essence, to define the nature and form of social order in a collective. These standards include what is desirable or undesirable, what is acceptable or unacceptable, and what ought or not to be (Tsirogianni, 2011). Literature plays a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing social values while also serving as a tool for change. Literature is defined as a collection of spoken or written works that represent human experiences and frequently provide moral values (Abrams & Harpham, 2015). It underlines social values by presenting storylines that align with societal standards, therefore helping individuals internalize ethical principles (Hogan, 2003).

Nevertheless, literature also play a significant role in questioning and transforming these values as it introduces new viewpoints that challenge existing norms (Eagleton, 2008). Additionally, in Literature critical thinking is reinforced by ethical dilemmas through presenting characters facing moral conflicts, encouraging readers to engage in deeper reflection (Nussbaum, 1997). Through these functions, literature is a powerful that preserve and reshape social values.

Literature has long played a crucial role in influencing societies by reflecting and questioning social structures. As a powerful medium of expression, it promotes social change by raising awareness, inspiring activism, and amplifying marginalized voices (Said,1993). Literature illuminates societal inequalities through narrative, enabling readers to sympathize with viewpoints and see the need for change (Hooks, 1994). Influential books like Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Feminine Mystique are examples of how literature has sparked political movements by exposing oppression and promoting human rights. Additionally, literature provides a platform for historically silenced groups, enabling them to share their experiences and challenge dominant narratives (Spivak, 1988).

Literature serves as a reflection of society and a catalyst for significant change by engaging in critical social issues. Literature and society are mutually influential, each shaping the other.

Literature reflects societal truths, preserving cultural values and traditions, while society shapes literature through its historical, social, and political contexts, inspiring awareness, activism, and change.

Understanding literature through sociological perspectives, whether Marxist, functionalist or cultural, reveals its capacity to reflect, reinforce, or challenge social structures. This analysis is not limited to adult literature but is equally important for understanding children's literature, which plays a significant role in shaping young minds by subtly promoting values, norms and ideologies during their formative years. Children's literature is seen as a powerful cultural tool that actively participates in the socialization process, influencing young readers' perceptions of authority, identity, morality, and belonging. Through a sociological analysis of children's literature, one can gain insights into how societies shape citizens and pass on cultural values to future generations.

1.3. Children's Literature as a Micro-society

Children's literature serves as a powerful tool for shaping young minds by reflecting societal norms, values, and challenges. It gives children a framework for understanding the world around them in addition to entertaining them. Children's books serve as "a mirror for society, reflecting both the reality we live in and projecting how we want our children to be ", as stated by Ariana(2022). Through stories, young readers are introduced to fundamental moral and ethical lessons that guide their development. In many ways, children's literature functions as a micro-society, allowing young readers to ponder complex concerns about morality, justice, and identity.

These stories impact children's perceptions of right and wrong, assisting them in developing their own sense of identity and social belonging (Hunt,1994). Readers learn how social systems work and how to interact with them by following characters as they struggle with ethical decisions, negotiate friendships, or challenge authority. Children's books can shape beliefs and viewpoints in a variety of ways, from fairy tales emphasizing obedience to modern fiction celebrating individuality and self-

discovery.

In addition, Children's literature is more than just entertainment; it shows how people engage with the societal ideals and customs of their day. Stories use the experiences of young characters to show how children manage societal laws, moral issues, and cultural traditions. Some books support traditional values by depicting youngsters who comply with expectations and are rewarded, whilst others question social norms and encourage readers to think critically about their surroundings (Nikolajeva, 2010).

One of the key aspects that children's literature conveys is social values, which can be defined as the shared moral beliefs and principles that help maintain harmony within a society. Social values such as honesty, kindness, perseverance, and respect shape individuals' behaviors and interactions, ensuring the smooth functioning of communities (Turkkahraman,2014). values are unique to each society and evolve over time, making them essential for social stability and cohesion.

According to Kanwal (2024), children's literature plays a crucial role in teaching social values by shaping young minds through engaging narratives. By presenting relatable characters and real-life dilemmas, literature helps grasp the importance of values such as honesty, respect, and perseverance. Many classic children's books serve as powerful tools for instilling values such as honesty, perseverance, and empathy. For instance, Pinocchio illustrates the consequences of dishonesty through its protagonist, whose nose grows each time he lies, reinforcing the importance of truthfulness (Collodi, 1883). Similarly, *The Little Engine That Could* teaches perseverance by showing how determination and self-belief lead to success, even in the face of challenges (Piper, 1930).

Kanwal, 2024 argues that literature positively influences children's attitudes and behaviors, shaping them into responsible and compassionate individuals. According to Shannon Moodie,2022 the use of children's literature is a particularly effective way to establish social-emotional learning

experiences, because books can serve as a point of reference for children, as characters model coping strategies, creative problem-solving, and the acceptance of differences. Through these stories, children learn how to navigate social interactions, develop empathy, and understand diverse perspectives.

In a civilized society, individual behavior is shaped by such influences, as literature helps instill values, ethics, and emotional intelligence that contribute to positive social interactions and responsible citizenship. Reading fiction helps children learn from experiences they've never had, including difficult emotions, within a safe, non-real world (Pinto, 2019). Children's books often feature child-like characters, such as children or animals, facing daily challenges. Children can identify with characters, relate their thoughts and actions, and learn how to express themselves. Stories can also show how social problems can be solved, and children can practice problem-solving strategies in real-life scenarios.

The balance between fitting in with society and remaining true to oneself is a common issue in children's literature. Young protagonists frequently face restrictions and expectations imposed by their families, schools, and society as large, which impact their conduct and choices. Some characters are content with following these conventions, while others question or fight against them, learning vital lessons along the way (Stephens, 1992). Traditional fairy tales, such as Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood, promote obedience, patience, and kindness.

These stories imply that conforming to society standards results in rewards, Cinderella's benevolence is eventually acknowledged, while Little Red Riding Hood's lesson about obedience is learned the hard way (Zipes, 2006). Such narratives foster the notion that social rules exist for a reason and should be followed. Modern works, on the other hand, frequently praise people who defy unfair rules. Matilda, in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* refuses to accept the authority of nasty adults such as Miss Trunchbull (1988), instead fighting back with her intelligence and courage. Her story shows that questioning authority is sometimes important, especially when the rules are unfair. Similarly, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) follows Alice as she enters a

world where none of the rules she knows apply, challenging her to think independently rather than blindly accepting authority. These stories serve as a medium through which children engage with and interpret the values, expectations, and power dynamics present in key social institutions like the family and school.

The practice of using literature to expand an individual's level of self-Understanding and to expand the understanding of others' perceptions (Crothers, 1916) is known as bibliotherapy, and it date back to Ancient Greece, when Aesop shared his moral fables. In his *The Child that Books Built*, Spufford characterizes the process of reading books during formative periods as "life changing experiences" (2003). Good stories have the power to change how we think and how we feel. Teachers and parents can use stories to build a strong foundation of social-emotional learning that will positively influence children's behavior, and can impact their academic, professional, and social outcomes for years to come.

Conclusion

In conclusion, literature serves as both a mirror reflecting society's realities and as a molder shaping them. It represents human experiences and highlights both the advantages and weaknesses of society. Writers often depict their social realties through their works such as poems or novels . In addition, literature plays a major role influencing individual thoughts and promoting social change.

Chapter Two

Analysis of Children's Literature and its impact on Socialization

Introduction

Children's literature play a significant role in the development of young minds, it is not only a source of entertainment but also an influential tool for education and socialization. Children's books serve as a central part in influencing values, behaviors, and worldview from a young age. These stories act as a mirror that reflect children's own experiences, and as a window into the lives of others, fostering empathy, cultural awareness, and gender role understanding. As young readers engage with literature, they begin to grasp moral lessons such as justice, honesty, cooperation and personal responsibility, which is an important component of becoming active member of society.

2.1. The Role of Children's Literature in Socialization

Children's literature offers a structure for socialization that teaches children about integrity, Collaboration, respect, and fairness, main values required for community interaction. Nodelman (2008) states that literature for young readers serves not just as a source of amusement, but also as a means of establishing societal Standards. By depicting characters, problems, and resolutions, stories enable young people to engage with difficult social themes in an understandable and familiar context. These narratives teach young readers how to negotiate social Organizations, solve problems, and understand the concerns of their actions in the greater civilization. One of the vital purposes of children's literature is to demonstrate moral and ethical lessons in ways that appeal to young brains.

According to Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development, introduction to moral Problems, particularly those portrayed in literature, helps a child differentiate between Right and wrong. Fables and allegories provide young readers with rich examples of both good and immoral action, as well as consequences that reinforce moral Decision-making. In many classic stories, characters who prove honesty, Kindness, and perseverance are rewarded, whereas those who exhibit egoism,

Deception or cruelty face negative consequences. This pattern helps children Adopt these teachings, changing their perception of what is socially acceptable and encouraging ethical behavior. Moreover, literature promotes moral Development by presenting characters with difficulties that force them to make Tough decisions, so inspiring critical thinking and moral reasoning (Nikolajeva, 2014). Many children's stories revolve around the thought of justice. Young readers learn about fairness and the meaning of sustaining justice in both personal and social conditions by reading struggle and resolution stories. Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Kalila wa Dimna* exemplifies how storytelling can transmit moral and ethical teachings in Arabic literature. This collection of fables, drawing inspirations from Panchatantra, uses animals' characters to convey lessons on justice, loyalty, and deception. Through stories like *The Lion and the Ox*, the fables emphasize the importance of honesty and communication in relationships, while also showcasing the repercussions of deceit and manipulation. The tales, like Aesop's fables, aim to teach ethical values to young readers. As well as, it serves as effective tools for teaching social principles such as justice and moral responsibility in both Arabic and Western literature traditions. The storylines in these fables, such as in Aesop's work, prefer to use animals' characters to convey ethical teachings to audience. For instance, *The Tortoise and the Hare* story convey the moral of "Slow and steady wins the race" highlights the importance of patience and hardworking to win the race rather than arrogance and laziness that leads to losing the race. Another valuable example known as *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, which emphasizes the importance of honesty and reliability, showing the consequences of dishonesty and the importance of gaining trust through truthfulness. Both stories, *Kalila wa Dimna* and Aesop's Fables share common feature which is highlighting the endless lessons and morals found in these classic fables.

Although they share similar goal they differs in other aspects, Aesop's Fables emphasize human responsibility and the importance of personal standards in creating one's destiny. Stories of this kind highlight how an individual's decisions influence their success or failure. In contrast, *Kalila Wa Dimna* often focuses on the common moral values of social harmony and the negative consequences

of disloyalty and dishonesty in a community. The animals in these fables frequently represent society roles, and the stories highlight the cultural value of shared responsibility and the common good. Children's literature teaches youngsters the value of collaboration, sympathy, and respect in their social relationships.

Both Arabic and Western literature shares stories that shows the significance of collaboration and trust between people to overcome challenges and achieve shared goals. For example, in Kalila Wa Dimna, the tale named *The Lion and the Mouse*, highlight the importance of cooperation and mutual respect in building strong and supportive relationships, focusing on the value of kindness, respect, and reciprocity, regardless of differences in size or status. These kind of stories aim to teach children the value of cooperative relationships. Children's literature is a significant tool for socialization in both Arabic and Western cultures, as it promotes moral and ethical development from young age.

2.1.2 Children's Literature and Promoting Family Values

Children's literature play a significant role in shaping young readers' perceptions of relationships with family members. Through diverse stories, that shows loyalty, respect, responsibility, young readers are exposed to cultural expectations within the family union. For example, *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder demonstrates the importance of strong unions. In this series, Laura's relationship with her parents shows financial and moral support and shared respect and trust. Laura learns important life lessons and appreciate the value of family connections while facing challenges on the frontier.

Another influential example that emphasis the value of family, a story written by Jeanne Birdsall's *The Penderwicks*. The representation of sibling relationships and shared responsibilities shows how young people from the same family can care for each other and work together for the

worthy of the family unit. The book claims that parents and children must function together to create a dynamic strong and loving family. Another important characteristic of children's literature is the way it teaches fundamental moral values such as accountability, respect for elders, and the need for family unity.

Additionally, family unity in literature is often described as a source of strength, specifically in the face of hardship. For instance, In *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery demonstrates the value of belonging and the nurturing power of family ties through the purely acceptance. The story focuses on how parent support and guidance help the protagonist overcome problems and mature emotionally and morally. This theme appear in many Western children's stories, where the story frequently focuses on how family members help each other, particularly in times of emotional distress or personal growth. The representation of family values in children's literature reflects the cultural norms and societal expectations of each society. Arabic literature tends to highlight community identity, family loyalty, and respect for elders, While Western children's literature often encourages independence and personal accomplishment within the home.

The contrast between these values offer an interesting point of comparison, as they show how children's stories are used to reinforce social standards and expectations of family responsibilities. Individualism is supported frequently in Western literature, with individuals encouraged to discover their own voice and pursue personal ambitions, even if this means sacrificing family unity. The story of *Charlotte's Web* written by E.B. White's emphasis on friendship and loyalty, but characters, mostly the younger ones, are given regularly the opportunity to discover their independence. The theme of personal development is central to several Western children's stories, with the family serving as the background to the individual's quest for self-discovery.

Arabic children's literature emphasizes family unity and community identity, with loyalty, and respect for elders, and sustaining family honor represented as key features, the importance of

family duty is illustrated in the *Thousands and One Nights* through Scheherazade's use of her intelligence and storytelling to not only survive but also endure her family's reputation. Elders, particularly fathers and grandfathers, serve as a moral guide, passing down societal values through their guidelines. The text highlights the connection of individuals with their families, where personal actions contribute to collective welfare, contrasting with the personal themes often found in Western stories. Family unity and community identity take priority in Arab literature, showcasing the importance of familial bonds and traditional values in shaping characters actions and values

Children's literature is a crucial tool for teaching and maintaining family values, despite cultural differences in the role of the family in creating people. While Western children's literature frequently promotes personal development, freedom, and autonomy within the family unit, Arabic literature prioritizes community identity, familial loyalty, and reverence for elders. Both cultural orientations, however, emphasize the value of family as a foundation for societal development. Children's literature encourages moral growth in young readers by telling stories about duty, respect, and family relationships. It also teaches them the key principles that govern their interactions within the family and community.

2.2. The Role of Children's Literature in Shaping Social Identity

For centuries, young minds have been shaped by the influence of children's literature. From classic fairy tales to modern adventure stories, books have the power to educate, entertain, and inspire. A well-written children's book can leave a lasting impact fostering creativity, empathy and a love for learning. Additionally, Children literature shapes the way young readers perceive themselves and the world around them. From an early age, children absorb values, social norms, and cultural identities through the stories they read.

Literature act as both mirrors, reflecting a child own experience, and a window, offering insights into different cultures and, perspectives (Bishop,1990). Through engaging narratives and

relatable characters, children's books contribute to the formation of social identity, which encompasses an individual's sense of belonging to a particular social, cultural, or gender group (Tajfel & Turner,1979). Social identity is a crucial part of personal development, as it helps children understand their role within their family, community, and broader society. Tajfel and Turner (1979) introduced social identity Theory, which explains how individuals classify themselves and others into groups, leading to in-group favoritism and intergroup comparisons.

This theory suggests that people derive self-esteem and social belonging from their group memberships. Unlike personal identity, which highlights individual uniqueness, social identity focuses on group-based aspects of self-perception and influences how people interact within societal structure. Social identity is essential in childhood development as it shapes self-perception, social interaction and emotional well-being. A positive social identity fosters prosocial behavior, such as caring for others and seeking social support, and satisfies the psychological need for esteem from others, providing a sense of belonging within a social group. According to Lauren DiMaria Childhood is an important period of social development, particularly in the formation of social identity or a child sense of who they are based upon group affiliations. Every child has a social identity. This is how they perceive their roles in society in relation to others. Whether through social position, culture or ethnicity, interests, achievements, or beliefs, social groups can give children a sense of self-worth and pride, also influencing their self-esteem.

2.2.1 The Role of Storytelling in Identity Formation

Children have an innate love for stories. Stories create magic and a sense of wonder in the world. Stories teach us about life, our identities, and those around us. Through storytelling, children not only experience magic and adventure but also learn valuable lessons about life, themselves, and others. Stories serve as powerful tools or shaping identity by helping children understand who they are, where they belong, and how they relate to others. By exposing them to diverse cultures,

traditions, perspectives, storytelling fosters respect, empathy, and appreciation for people from different background, race, and religions. It plays a significant role in social and moral development, shaping children's values, behaviors, and beliefs, while also giving them a sense of self and community.

Kate C. McLean (2015) highlights that storytelling is particularly influential in adolescence, as young individuals use stories to explore their roles, values, and aspirations. Additionally, Jack Zipes (2006) argues that children's literature and fairy tales play a crucial role in socializing children into cultural norms, reinforcing values, and shaping moral beliefs. Through storytelling, children learn ethical lessons such as morality, kindness, and resilience while developing a sense of belonging and national identity.

Storytelling considers as powerful tool for identity formation, helping young readers to navigate their social environment, learn more about themselves, and shape their personal narratives. The influence of storytelling on identity is marked in many classical children's tales, for example, African folk tales, such as Anansi the spider, present cultural heritage and problem-solving skills, fostering a sense of social identity and connection with tradition. Through this kind of tales, young readers not only learn moral lessons but also shape their identities by becoming attached to the characters, adopting cultural values, as well as helping them to understand their role within the world.

2.2.2 Developing a Sense of Identity through Children's Literature

The development of a child's identity is deeply influenced by Children's literature. Through attractive stories and insightful characters, young readers can understand their emotions, appreciate their personal experiences and realize their place in society. Psychological theories and educational practice highlight the importance role of literature in influencing a child's self-image and social

understanding. Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development that categorizes a series of eight stages that a healthy developing individual should pass through from early childhood to late adulthood. This theory emphasizes the prominence of social interactions and role models in the formation of identity (Erikson, 1968). When children read about characters in literature who face and overwhelmed challenges, they often see reflections of themselves, which can reinforce their own self-image. For example, a child reading about a protagonist who challenges and defeats fears may adopt the notion that they, too, can show bravery, in similar situations Lev Vygotsky highlighted the role of social interaction and cultural tools in the development of children's identity and thinking. Through communication and shared activities, children learn how to understand themselves and the world around them.

Literature provides a framework for young readers to make sense of their emotions, desires, and personal experiences by drawing parallels with fictional characters. For example, a story depicting a character grappling with self-doubt and ultimately finding confidence can inspire children to view themselves as capable and resilient. Rudine Sims Bishop introduced the concept of books serving as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" illustrating how literature can reflect a child's own experiences, introduce them to other perspectives, and allow them to step into different experiences, thereby fostering empathy and self-awareness (Bishop, 1990). Representation in children's literature is crucial for reinforcing self-identity and promoting cultural understanding. Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment* discusses how fairy tales and children's stories assist young readers in navigating inner conflicts and emotions, offering symbolic lessons that shape identity and self-awareness (Bettelheim, 1976). Exposure to narratives that delve into emotions like fear, joy, and sadness allows children to explore these feelings safely. A child experiencing loss, for instance, may find solace in stories that address themes, aiding them in processing emotions, and understanding their own experiences more deeply.

2.2.3 Promoting Cultural Awareness

Children's literature plays a vital role in promoting cultural understanding and awareness by exposing young readers to diverse perspectives and traditions. It represents different cultures genuinely, helping children acknowledge diversity and develop empathy (Bishop, 1990). Myths and Folktales maintain cultural legacy, fostering respect for everyone's background (Zipes, 2006). Literature also challenges stereotypes by presenting realistic portrayals of different societies, breaking down misconceptions (Bishop, 1990). Additionally, it promotes open-mindedness and empathy by depicting cross-cultural friendships and struggle (Tschida et al,2014). Language and identity are reinforced through bilingual books, highlighting the importance of linguistic diversity (García, 2009). In addition, children's literature can develop historical and social awareness, as it introduces young readers to important historical events and social issues (Botelho & Rudman ,2009).

2.2.4 Gender Roles in Children's Literature

Gender stereotypes in children literature have long been an issue of interest that shape young minds and influence their perceptions of gender roles from an early age. Hamilton et al (2019), state that gender stereotypes in children literature reinforce traditional roles and exceptions, with the male characters being strong, adventures, and assertive, while the female characters are portrayed as nurturing, passive, domestic. Simon de Beauvoir (*The second sex*, 1949) argue that literature has historically positioned women as the "Other", reinforcing a secondary and submissive role. Women in literature are often depicted through a male gaze, meaning they exist in relation to male character rather than as independent individuals. According to Elizabeth Atemi many classic children's stories portray male character as leaders, problem-solvers, and heroes, while female character often depicted as followers, caregivers.

This consistent pattern can influence young readers' perceptions, reinforce the idea that leadership is a male trait and that girls should play supportive roles. For instance, in classic fairy

tales like *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*, male characters (princes) are often the ones who act, rescue the heroine, or resolve conflicts, while female characters remain passive and await salvation. These representations can shape the way young girls perceive their own role in society, associating power, independence and heroism with male figures. Over time, modern works of literature involving strong independent female characters has evolved to challenge traditional gender norms and more divers representation of masculinity. Children's literature is a powerful tool for shaping social identity, particularly regarding gender. Through examining and promoting stories that respect gender equality, we can help children shape a more comprehensive understanding of their roles in society.

2.3. Children's Literature as Tool for Social Change

Children's literature functions as an influential tool for social transformation by exposing young minds to varied concepts, cultures, and social structures. According to Peter Hunt, (1994) children's literature acts as both a form of entertainment and a vehicle for conveying social values. He argues the stories reflect complex ideologies and play a key role in influencing young readers' understanding of the world. This idea shows how children's literature serve as tool for fostering social change, as it helps to promote values like empathy, critical thinking, and equality. Form sociological viewpoint social change defined as a change in human interactions and relationships that transforms cultural and social institutions. These changes happen over time and often have profound and long-term consequences for society (Dunfey, 2023).

According to Reader Response Theory, the meaning of a story is not fixed by the reader, but it shaped by the reader's personal interpretation. In the perspective of children's literature, this means that young readers engage with stories with imagination and emotion, allowing them to develop empathy and social awareness. For instance, a child reading *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna may

begin to understand the fear and struggle of refugee families. This emotional connection can lead to new attitudes and behaviors, making children's literature a powerful agent for social change.

In addition to promoting empathy and emotional development, children's literature can also be used for encouraging critical thinking and challenging social standards. According to Miranda Muge Aisyah (2021) critical thinking can be defined as "the act of seeking the clearest idea about a subject's fact, point of view, and observation." (Aisyah, 2021 .P,193). She explained that critical thinking begins with perception, where the learner forms an overall picture of a situation. This is followed by analysis, which the learner breaks down the situation into smaller elements to study them more deeply. This step-by-step engagement enables children to move beyond surface understanding, which is essential when dealing with themes such as gender equality or fairness in children's literature. According to Nikolajeva (2014) children's literature supports the development of critical thinking through images and stories that reflect children's everyday experiences, feelings, and problems. These stories help shape

Children's understanding of the world and influence their beliefs. When young readers are presented with characters and situations, they can relate to fear, unfairness or identity struggles, they begin to question, connect, and reflect. For example, the story of *Empty Pot* by Demi, a tale that encourages young readers to reflect on values such as honesty, courage, and fairness. When ping presents an empty pot while others bring blooming flowers, children are invited to think critically: why is he rewarded instead of others? What does it mean to be honest in the world? Where does everyone else cheat? Those kinds of questions encourage the reader to analyze moral choice and recognize the importance of integrity. Each text or story carries specific perspectives and moral value to young readers. So, these can inspire people to have better personalities (Aisyah, 2021).

Children's literature is also a powerful tool to help children develop critical thinking about gender equality. Gender equality involves treating individuals fairly, regardless of gender, deserve the same

rights, opportunities, and respect. Children literature can challenge traditional gender roles and encourage young readers to think critically about how society shapes expectations based on gender. According to Nikolajva (2014) children's literature supports critical thinking by helping readers "create new schemas " and "concepts and ideas". When children read stories; where gender roles are questioned or reversed, they promote thinking beyond stereotypes and ask questions like, "Why can't girl be the hero?" or "Why it is surprising that a boy likes cooking or helps his mom cleaning?".

This reflective thinking fosters what Paul and Elder (2006) define as intellectually disciplined thinking, which involves analyzing, questioning, and evaluating ideas, by encountering non-traditional gender roles in stories, children begin to analyze the fairness of societal expectations. Sunderland (2000) also emphasizes that literature for children can be used to interrogate gender norms and develop awareness about equality and justice. Stories that include strong, capable female characters or sensitive, caring male characters help children realize that behavior, talent, and value are not determined by gender.

In this way, literature becomes more than entertainment, it becomes a tool for change. As children learn to question gender stereotypes through reading, they are building the skills to think independently and to imagine a fairer and equal world. These interpretations can affect their attitudes and actions in the life. Children's literature is more than just stories; it is a powerful medium for influencing young minds and inspiring social change. Literature also helps children think critically. When they read, they begin to question the world around them.

Conclusion

Children's literature embraces a great position in guiding children to become better members of society. It plays a critical role in shaping identity, cultural awareness, and a comprehensive way to understand their gender roles. Parents or teachers should choose carefully a story that develops their personalities. Through engaging and insightful stories that convey essential values such as

honesty, respect, empathy, helping them to think critically and navigate in complexities of social life.

Chapter Three

Bridging Cultures: Exploring Arabic and Western Children's Literature

Introduction

Children's literature plays a crucial role in shaping social and cultural understanding of young readers. Children's stories are not only source for entertaining but also as a means of conveying values, beliefs, and tradition in both Arab and Western literature. Western children's literature often emphasizes individualism and personal freedom. In contrast, Arab children's stories are deeply rooted to religious teaching and family structure. In this part, we will explore the representation of social values in Arabic children's literature, comparing it with western traditions. By examining how families, religion, gender roles, and children's rights are depicted in each tradition, we can better understand the cultural values they promote. In addition to analyzing similarities and differences between the two.

3.1. Narratives of Childhood: The Role of Children's Literature in Arab Cultural Identity

In Arab culture, children's literature is not simply entertainment, but serves to disseminate values, preserve cultural identity and influence youth. These literary works are closely associated with social and religious customs, and are often designed to convey lessons about appropriate behavior, family dynamics, national pride, and religious beliefs. Through these stories, essential aspects of Arab societies are transmitted and retold.

Thanks to oral traditions, storytelling has played an important role in Arab culture for many years. Historically, stories were shared between generations at family gatherings, in marketplaces and by professional storytellers called hakawatis in public spaces such as cafés. These stories were not only intended to entertain, they also served to express values, religious beliefs and historical awareness.

The *One Thousand and One Nights* (Alf Layla wa Layla), a famous collection of folk tales combining adventure, moral principles and creativity, is an admirable example. These stories have influenced the way stories are told throughout the Arab world. Even in modern times, folk tales remain an essential aspect of daily life in Arab societies. They are shared informally, through family conversations, humor and everyday anecdotes, but also more formally, in books, films, and online content. As new mediums such as film, theatre, and digital platforms emerge, storytelling continues to serve the dual purpose of educating and entertaining while fostering identity.

This tradition is particularly significant in children's literature, where traditional storytelling values, such as imparting morals, igniting imagination, and conveying social lessons are preserved yet slightly adapted to resonate with young readers. The social and educational significance of narratives is acknowledged by many scholars. Jack Zipes (2000) points out that storytelling fulfils a "meaningful social function... [illuminating] the gaps between truth and falsehood in our immediate society" (p. 89). This aspect is also evident in Arab storytelling customs. Similarly, Ruth Finnegan (2012) argues that oral narratives aid communities in recalling their history and teaching ethical lessons. Although her research concentrates on Africa, the same principles can be applied to comprehend the role of storytelling in Arab culture. works in Arab culture.

3.2 Themes and Values in Arab Children's Literature

In Arab nations, children's literature serves as a crucial means for conveying cultural identity, social norms, and moral principles. It is designed not only to entertain young readers but also to educate them. The stories help children to understand values, behaviors, and mentalities is to align themselves with Arab customs and Islamic teachings. Unlike Western children's literature,

that may exclude religious elements, Arab tales emphasize values such as honoring elders, religious practices, hospitality, and kindness through concrete examples. These values are not only present in the stories, but they are also an integral part of children's upbringing within Arab culture and faith.

3.2.1 Family Structures and Respect for Elders

Arab children's stories highlight the significance of family and respect for elder generations. Portraying them as a nurturing environment where children receive care, and guidance. In *al Sadiqatan* (The Two Friends) by Kamel Kilani (2021), the story features a cat and a dog. Through their friendship, themes of trust, loyalty, and problem-solving emerge. Although these characters are not from the same family, lessons about forgiveness, teamwork, and respect are nonetheless conveyed. The story uses classical Arabic and moral teachings are integrated, allowing children to learn the language along with positive behavior. Many of the tales depict parents and grandparents as wise figures, emphasizing the value of respect for older people, as age is associated with wisdom and good judgment in Arab culture. This fosters an understanding among children that they should honor and heed the advice of their elders.

3.2.2 Religious Devotion and Spiritual Education

Many Arab children's stories incorporate religious teachings, particularly those derived from Islam. These lessons are designed to help children comprehend and embrace religious practices as a natural and joyful aspect of life. Concepts such as prayer, fasting, and charitable giving are presented in a straightforward and gentle manner. Through storytelling, children learn not only the actions to take but also the significance behind them. In *Aḥmad Yuhib al Ṣalah* (Ahmed Loves to

Pray), the narrative follows a young boy gradually developing the habit of praying five times a day (Islamic Academy, 2018). This practice is illustrated through everyday scenarios, such as at home and school.

The boy is not compelled to pray; instead, prayer is depicted as a soothing and comforting experience. Repetition, encouraging words, and enjoyable moments are employed to help children perceive prayer as a joyful part of their routine. Thus, prayer is not only described but is seamlessly integrated into a child's life in a nurturing way. Another notable example is *Aḥmad wa al Siyam wa al Qiyam* (Ahmed and Fasting and Night Prayer), which narrates a child's initial encounter with Ramadan (Stories Realistic, 2020). In this story, the boy discovers fasting during the daytime, praying at night, and sharing meals with others. Values of patience, compassion toward the less fortunate, and communal worship are introduced gradually. Ramadan is portrayed not merely as a period of rules but as a time filled with love, family, and spiritual growth. Children learn that religion is something they can be proud of and appreciate.

3.2.3 Social Values: Hospitality, Generosity, and Ethical behavior

Arab children's stories often used to convey important social values such as hospitality, generosity, and good behavior. These values are often emphasized in Islamic teachings and Arab customs, where guests are treated with the utmost respect and moral values such as honesty and kindness. In *al Dayf al Thaqil* (The Heavy Guest) by Fayhaa Nabulsi (2021), the story shows a family meeting an unexpected visitor. At first, the family does not welcome the guest enthusiastically and feels anxious. However, by the end of the story, the guest is embraced and treated with warmth.

This story illustrate the Arab attitude of welcoming others, even in difficult circumstances. Children learn that kindness should extend to everyone. The story is told in a light, entertaining way to engage young readers, while conveying a profound message about kindness and generosity.

Through accessible language and pleasant narration, lessons about positive interaction with others are subtly conveyed. This type of story help children to understand and remember what is considered in Arab cultures.

3.1.2 Reflection of Cultural and Religious Norms

Arab children's literature transmits not only stories and language, but also the cultural and religious values that determine expected behaviors. These stories teach children morality, good manners, and the importance of obeying to their faith. Elements of Islamic teachings, religious celebrations, and gender standards are frequently included. This section examines the representation of Islamic principles, religious occasions, and gender expectations in children's literature.

3.1.2.1 Gender Roles and Expectations within Family and Society

In Arab children's literature, the roles of men and women are often presented in a way that respects traditional cultural and religious norms. Male characters generally play active, external roles such as leading, protecting, or providing, while women are portrayed as the guardians of the home and family.

In fact, such depictions have a considerable impact on children, particularly considering developmental psychology insights regarding gender learning. Research by Martin and Ruble (2010) indicates that children, after 18 months, start recognizing gender groups and applying gender labels in their language, including sorting items by gender. From around three to six years of age, these concepts solidify, and children may react negatively when someone acts contrary to their gender expectations.

They also tend to gravitate toward playing with peers of the same gender. Therefore, when

children's literature presents boys as self-reliant and girls as nurturing, these messages are reinforced in the minds of young readers. Such early impressions can influence how children perceive themselves and others within their families and communities. Nonetheless, some contemporary books are beginning to feature diverse character representations, showcasing girls in leading roles and boys in caring capacities.

3.1.2.2 Influence of Islamic Teachings

In Arab cultures, gender roles have been influenced by Islamic teachings, which are frequently reflected in children's literature. Although the Qur'an conveys that men and women are equal in terms of faith and spiritual rewards, cultural interpretations of religious texts have often resulted in distinct roles for men and women in everyday life. The Qur'an states that all individuals, regardless of gender, will be rewarded for their good deeds and faith. One verse mentions, "But those who do well, whether male or female, and have faith will enter Paradise and will never be wronged even as much as the speck on a date stone" (Quran 4:124). Nevertheless, other Islamic teachings, such as Hadith, have been utilized to reinforce specific gender roles.

A notable Hadith from Sahih Bukhari (9:89:252) indicates that "a man is a guardian of his family," while "a woman is a guardian of her husband's home and his children." In children's literature, these beliefs are often represented through characters. Fathers are typically depicted as providers, whereas mothers are shown as nurturers. These narratives serve not only to tell a story but also to convey religious and moral teachings. They assist young readers in understanding what is expected of boys and girls according to their religion and culture. Through these tales, children learn both the principles of Islam and their expected roles in society. However, these roles are often more influenced by cultural practices than by direct religious teachings.

3.1.2.3 Impact on Children's Perceptions

The way children learn about gender roles is influenced by what they see, hear, and read. In Arab children's literature, these roles are often illustrated through stories, and children from an early age absorb the messages conveyed. Assumed that literature is commonly read in homes and schools, it serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a means of education. This renders it a powerful instrument for shaping children's self-perceptions and the positions they are expected to fulfil within society.

When stories portray boys as brave, active, and dominant, and girls as quiet, helpful, or focused on household chores, these distinctions are recognized by young readers. Over time, these patterns take root and are perceived as normal. Children may believe that boys must show strength and avoid crying, while girls may see their role as caring for others rather than leading. As a result, certain aspirations or goals may seem inaccessible to both genders.

However, other messages can also be conveyed through literature. If stories feature a girl who leads or solves problems, or a boy who shows kindness and emotional depth, new perspectives can emerge. In this case, children see that it is acceptable to step outside traditional roles. This encourages them to explore more possibilities for themselves and others, fostering a sense of freedom in choosing their individual path. Literature can therefore serve a dual purpose. It can confirm society's expectations of gender or encourage children to think differently and adopt ideas that are more equitable. In this way, literature has the potential to reinforce or challenge prevailing norms.

The tradition of Arab children's literature is rich, but it has often been criticized for its lack of individuality, diversity and progressive ideas. Many early works emphasized collective identity, adherence to authority and loyalty to family or nation. For example, Kanafani's *The Little Lantern* (alqandil alsaghir) (1978) presents a figurative tale of sacrifice and duty, encouraging service to the community rather than personal goals. Similarly, *Hussein's Sami and His Father* (2023) emphasizes ethical lessons and the importance of family ties, paying little attention to

personal aspirations or independent thought.

Examiners and educators have found that while these stories are deeply rooted in cultural values, they often limit diverse experiences and prevent critical self-expression. Important themes such as gender equality, cultural awareness, disability and refugee stories are largely absent from children's literature. This neglect has led to a growing demand for stories that reflect the wider realities and dreams of contemporary Arab youth. Recently, modern Arab children's literature has begun to embrace new themes reflecting social development. For example, Sharafeddine's *The Amazing Discoveries of Ibn Sina* (2015) introduces young audiences to scientific reasoning and honors intellectual interest through the story of a historical figure.

Casey's My Friend the Tree (2024) promotes environmental awareness and stresses the importance of caring for nature. In addition, the *Farah Rocks series* by Muaddi Darraj (2021) features a young Palestinian American girl confronting bullying, cultural identity, and personal development, offering readers a charming and inspiring heroine. Organizations such as the Tamer Institute for Community Education and Kalimat Group have played a major role in promoting literature that emphasizes diversity, critical thinking, and empowerment. Their initiatives testify to a substantial shift towards stories that celebrate individuality, address pressing issues and inspire young readers to envision new possibilities for themselves and their communities.

3.2 Comparison between Arabic Literature and Western Literature

Children's literature is an essential tool for shaping the social and moral understanding of young readers. Through stories, children assimilate, often without realizing, values linked to the roles of men and women, justice, equality and cultural identity. Literature is often seen as a reflection of societal norms, serving as a guide for future behavior. Researchers such as Nodelman (2008) and Hunt (1994) assert that the messages contained in children's books are rarely neutral, they represent the ideologies of the cultures from which they originate.

Whether it is the maintenance of traditional roles or progressive ideas, ethical frameworks are constructed through children's stories to shape young minds. For this reason, it is particularly important to compare Arabic and Western children's literature, as this illustrates how each cultural tradition chooses to present, maintain or challenge its values in a globalized world. Examining the representation of social values in Arab and Western children's literature is essential to understanding how cultural narratives influence the social and moral development of young readers from differing societies.

While Western children's literature has steadily combined themes such as gender equality, racial diversity and individual rights (Stephen, 1996), Arabic children's literature tends to reflect traditional values influenced by religion, family dynamics, and social expectations (Mdallel, 2004). This comparison is crucial not only to highlight ideological differences, but also to determine how universal values intertwine with local customs to shape children's perspectives.

In the context of cultural globalization, children are exposed to both local and international literature, underscoring the need to analyze the messages they receive (Stephens, 2009). Understanding this dynamic approach helps identify potential gaps or biases within each tradition, paving the way for more inclusive and balanced narratives for future generations.

To understand how values are represented on global scale, it is essential to examine how different cultures transmit their beliefs and societal norms through literature. Literature has played a fundamental role in transmitting values, shaping identities and reflecting societies. Among the many literary traditions, western literature occupies a key position due to its considerable influence and historical importance. It encompasses all the literary works of European cultures and the western world.

Richard Tarnas (1991) emphasizes that the western literary tradition is closely linked to the intellectual and cultural evolution of the west, influenced by values such as individualism,

rationalism, and humanism. Western literature frequently reflects the prevailing ideologies propagated within western educational systems, forming what is recognized as the western canon (Bloom, 2004). However, thinkers like Edward Said (1993) have criticized this canon, claiming that it also mirrors colonial and imperial ideologies that have shaped global views.

Examining how western literature impacts children's literature and the transmission of values across cultures is essential. This exploration would be incomplete without considering the historical context that formed the narratives and values in both Arabic and western cultures.

3.2.1 Western Children's Literature History and Evaluation

Historically, prior to the 17th century, literature specifically for children was virtually non-existent as children were not held in high regard, they are today within a family context, they were regarded and treated similarly to adults. Parents often devoted much of their time to establishing economic stability, and many children from impoverished backgrounds spent most of their days working alongside their parents. Literacy rates were very low, further exacerbated by the scarcity of available books (Bingham and Scholt, 1980).

Printing books for children was economically unfeasible, leading to most stories being transmitted orally from one generation to the next. With each new generation, stories acquired variations, thanks to the vivid imaginations of the adults of that era. Notable tales from this period include Robin Hood and King Arthur. Additionally, children would read religious texts or adult literature, such as fables or myths (e.g., Aesop's Fables) (Seth, 2008). The 17th and 18th centuries marked a pivotal time of innovation for the evolution of children's literature in the west.

This era saw the emergence of the movable-type printing press, which facilitated easier book

production, resulting in more individuals acquiring reading skills. Moreover, as trade expanded, new narratives began to reach the west, and with improved economic conditions, greater numbers of children were encouraged to engage in educational activities (Bingham and Scholt, 1980). This period heralded the beginning of publishing texts specifically targeted at children. However, many of these works did not yet embrace the ideal of childhood innocence.

Thus, many children's books, such as the *Book of Martyrs*, often illustrated harsh realities, including violent episodes during wartime (Hunt, 1995). At this time, John Locke's philosophy, which viewed the child's mind as a blank slate, gained traction. He suggested that children would develop more effectively if they were exposed to enjoyable and simple literature at an early age, gradually encountering life's harsher truths as they matured. For the first time, children were perceived as newly discovered beings (Hunt, 1994). Additionally, Locke's philosophy advocated for educating children through reason rather than fear.

The 19th century is often referred to as the golden age of children's literature, a time in both America and Britain that saw the rise of fictional works, fantasy tales, and dramatic pieces specifically crafted for young audiences. This Golden Age is defined by its creative and engaging storytelling directed at children (Gale Research Inc, Vol, 100, 2000). The importance of children's literature for its cultural literary value was acknowledged, becoming a major focus of publishing efforts (Stevenson, 2011).

Works from this golden era frequently feature literate child protagonists. A child hero is a youthful character who is neither innocent nor oblivious to the world, but rather an educated individual. These characters are intertwined with society, embodying the values, customs, and ethics of their time. Authors believed that young readers could understand complex language, wordplay, and references to literary, religious, and scientific concepts (Gubar, 2009). The

landscape of children's stories underwent significant shifts during the 20th and 21st centuries. Writers and publishers explored various ideas, ranging from picture-only books to digital formats. The protection of children intensifies during this period. Although imaginative works continued to thrive towards the end of the 20th century, they began to gain recognition as the 21st century approached. The emergence of multimedia and the internet expanded the possibilities for presenting educational content, including animation and podcasts. A key publication from this era is the Harry Potter series along with its related films.

3.2.2 Arabic Children's Literature History and Evaluation

Arabic children's literature boasts a rich and evolving heritage that reflects the impact of societal, cultural, and political elements within the Arab world. The progress of children's literature in this context was slower compared to the West. Nonetheless, once it began to develop, it became an important educational and cultural resource. The origins of storytelling in the Arab region can be traced back to classic Arabic texts like *Kalila wa Dimna* and *One Thousand and One Nights*. While these narratives were not initially aimed at children, they were frequently adapted to engage young audiences. These tales combined moral teachings with entertainment, creating a foundation for the children's literature that followed (Ghazal, 2010).

During the *Nahda* (Arab Renaissance), modern Arabic children's literature began to emerge, influenced by European educational models and printing technology advancements. Arab intellectuals recognized the importance of childhood for learning and national progress. Mohammed Othman Jalal (1829-1898), who translated and adapted fables and stories to make them accessible to young readers, often for educational process (Tohme, 2003). In the early 20th century, Arabic children's literature continued to evolve, notably in countries like Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, Kamal Kilani (1897-1959), An influential figure of this time, played a key role in

establishing children's literature as a respected and valued genre.

He wrote and translated over 200 books for young readers, blending Islamic principles with captivating stories and moral lessons (Al-Qasim, 2012). His works remain well-known and appreciated throughout the Arab world. After the independence of various Arab nations in the mid-20th century, the emphasis shifted to the cultivation national identity. Children's literature was used to encourage patriotism, transmit social values and promote the development of Arabic language. Governments and educational institutions began to support the creation of children's books, often as part of wider literacy initiatives.

The field of Arabic children's literature has developed remarkably, focusing on modern topics such as gender identity and roles to reflect changes in the Arab world. Publishers like Dar Al-Fata Al-Arabi and Kalimat Group have been instrumental in promoting high-quality, culturally relevant children's literature that blends local traditions with global narrative techniques (Shalaby, 2019). By understanding the historical context of Arabic and Western children's literature, we can now delve deeper into how each culture and tradition conveys social values.

3.3 Presentation of Social Values in Arabic and Western Children's Literature

As a part of the discussion on social values, it is important to analyze how Arab and Western children's literature addresses issues such as children's rights, race and gender equality. Children's literature is widely recognized as a reflection of societal values, the safeguarding of children's rights being a crucial issue in both Arabic and Western traditions. In both contexts, Literature addresses important matters, including children's rights under international law, identity, family rights, the right to be heard, freedom from discrimination and the right to education.

The representation of children's rights varies according to tradition, in Western literature, children's rights are often treated as a central theme, with stories used to educate young readers,

inform them about their freedom and advocate justice and equality. Todres and Higinbotham (2016) emphasize that literature significantly helps children understand their rights by developing empathy and awareness of societal values. Through storytelling, children are introduced to human rights principles in a way that is familiar and understandable to them, reinforcing the idea that every child deserves dignity, protection and a voice in society.

Works such as *Matilda* by Roald Dahl are a striking example of how Western children's literature supports the concept of children's rights. In *Matilda*, the young protagonist, a avid reader, is confronted with neglect and abuse from her parents and the school principal. The story underlines the importance of valuing children's voices, especially their right to education, and ensuring that they can flourish. Through *Matilda's* experiences, Dahl emphasizes that children must be heard, supported and protected from injustice, reinforcing the essential principles of children's rights in a captivating and accessible way.

Whereas Western children's literature often focuses on individual rights such as self-expression or the ability to make choices, Arab children's literature tends to emphasize values such as respect for family, moral responsibility, and societal order. In Arab stories, children are often depicted as vital members of a larger community, influenced by cultural and religious principles rather than personal freedom. Yasmine Motawy (2010), a specialist in Arabic children's literature, notes that these tales often reflect collective identity and social expectations, paying less attention to a child's individual freedom.

This distinction represents a significant difference in the way the two cultures define children's rights, with one focusing on the individual child, while the other defends the values associated with community and tradition. Gender equality is another crucial social issue reflected in Arab and Western literature. The analysis of gender representation in Arab and Western children's literature focuses on how gender roles are portrayed. According to Sandra Bem's theory, children's literature has a considerable impact on the formation of gender identity and should

present girls and boys in diverse and rewarding roles that go beyond traditional stereotypes.

In the Western context, children's literature has progressed to promote gender equality, presenting stories where female characters are shown as courageous, intelligent, and self-reliant, as illustrated by the famous fairy tale *Frozen*, where the female protagonist takes initiative to save her sister, becomes the queen and takes control of problem-solving and decision-making. On the other hand, Arabic children's literature has traditionally depicted common gender roles, showing female characters in subordinate or domestic roles while male characters state themselves in leadership positions. However, recent research reveals a gradual transition towards a more equitable representation.

Almuqbil (2024) carried out in depth analysis of 26 Arabic children's picture books and found that, although traditional roles continue to exist, with males associated with independence and financial power and females with care, there are examples of unbiased representations regarding interests and problem-solving skills. Both genders are portrayed taking part in activities such as drawing and building, with female characters demonstrating creativity and resilience not just a traditional activities.

The influence of literature on shaping children's cultural perceptions is growing, particularly when it comes to social issues such as race. The stories found in children's literature develop their worldview, teaching them the importance of cultural diversity and acceptance. According to Bouhaja (2010), many researchers in the Western context argue that literature reflects changing views on race and presents models that encourage mutual understanding. The representation of racial themes in Western children's literature is an important topic that reflects the social and cultural diversity within Western societies.

Many literary works address issues of racial diversity, highlighting the significance of

peaceful coexistence and acceptance of one another. In this regard, the role of folk tales becomes apparent, as they act as instruments for teaching children the values of equality and kindness. Some researchers emphasize that children's folk tales are among the most notable forms of both entertainment and education across various cultures, telling stories related to daily life and moral lessons in a manner that is enjoyable and accessible for young readers. In Western literature, characters from various ethnic backgrounds are often portrayed in minor roles, perpetuating stereotypes of weakness or strangeness (Majaj, 2012).

In the story *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, the depiction of Tiger Lily and her tribe exemplifies how characters from different cultural backgrounds are frequently sidelined, reduced to secondary roles, and presented in a stereotypical manner. Tiger Lily, a Native American princess, is introduced as a brave and exotic figure, yet her character lacks depth or development beyond her connection to Peter. Her role primarily serves to highlight Peter's heroism; he saves her, and she expresses gratitude, but she never voices her own opinions. The "Indian" tribe is chiefly utilized as a fantastical element, serving as a source of adventure rather than being portrayed realistically or with respect. Their language is limited to broken English, and their customs are either oversimplified or mocked.

This representation not only marginalizes characters of diverse ethnic origins but also fosters a narrative where Western (white) characters take center stage, while non-Western characters merely exist to assist or entertain. Such portrayals subtly convey to young readers that cultural "others" hold less significance or are unworthy of leading roles. In contrast, the Arabic literary tradition is significantly shaped by Islamic teachings, reflecting the principle articulated by the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) when he said: "there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor of a white over a black, and no black over a white except through righteousness (taqwa)." Arabic children's literature aims to present positive role models that showcase cultural diversity and foster mutual understanding. Jammali (2020)

emphasizes the importance of Arabic children's literature adapting to demographic shifts by incorporating diverse Arab voices and supporting inclusive cultural representation.

In the modern Arab landscape, themes of race and identity are examined in ways that highlight cultural diversity and varied experiences within communities. Additionally, contemporary Arabic literature navigates the complexities of identity through diverse characters that mirror different social environments, enabling children to understand both themselves and others in a more comprehensive manner (Bottoms, 2012). The narrative of Bilal ibn Rabah stands out as a notable example in Islamic culture used to impart lessons of racial equality, perseverance, and human dignity to children. Parents and educators frequently share this story as a moral teaching, reinforcing the idea that an individual's worth is determined by their character and faith, not by their race, skin color, or social standing.

Literature is widely recognized as a reflection of society, mirroring its social norms, values, conflicts, and transformations. Furthermore, it serves as a vehicle for moral guidance, inspiring individuals to adopt commendable values and directing them toward ethical behavior (Singh, 2022). Hence, literature plays a crucial role in portraying social realities while simultaneously contributing to moral and cultural advancement. Authors, whether consciously or unconsciously, depict the circumstances of their time and convey them through creative expression. Eagleton (2005) notes that literature not only reflects social reality but also acts as a catalyst in shaping that reality, which implies that the themes, styles, and directions found in any literary tradition are influenced by the society in which they emerge, whether in the classical poetry of Arabic culture or the contemporary novels of the West. This relationship sets the context for the upcoming comparative discussion.

Both Arabic and Western literature are rich and influential traditions shaped by distinct

cultural, religious, and historical factors. Arabic literature is deeply intertwined with Islamic culture, oral traditions, and classical forms such as poetry and prose, reflecting values influenced by religion, including honor, courage, and hospitality. The rise of Islam in the 7th century had a profound and lasting impact on Arab culture and its literary forms. Arabic literature emerged during the Islamic Golden Age and had continued to evolve to this day, with prominent poets and prose writers throughout the Arab world achieved notable recognition (Allen, 2005).

Conversely, Western literature traces its origins back to the classical civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome, where epic poetry, drama, and philosophical discourse established the groundwork for literary expression. This Greco-Roman legacy was preserved and transformed due to the advent of Christianity, which significantly influenced writing during medieval Europe. Gradually, literature in vernacular languages began to emerge, particularly during the Renaissance (Catherine, 2019). The variety of Western literary traditions continued to develop with the introduction of new ideas in later periods, such as the Enlightenment, which placed greater emphasis on individualism and human rights (Andrei, 1998).

Although Arabic and Western literature share important thematic and stylistic similarities, they also exhibit unique characteristics that are a result of their distinct religious, cultural, and historical contexts. The following discussion will delve into the notable similarities and differences between the two literary traditions.

3.4 Similarities between Arabic and Western Literature

Despite their varied cultural and historical backgrounds, Arabic and Western literature exhibit notable similarities, particularly in their examination of universal human themes. Both literary traditions address themes such as love, war, nature, and religion, reflecting the common

concerns of their respective societies (Abu-Haidar, 1985). Moreover, both traditions use allegory and symbolism as artistic means of exploring complex emotions and concepts, also employ rhyme schemes and complex meters in their poetry (Blair, 1992). Both cultures illustrate that literature, whatever its origin, aims to give meaning to human experiences.

To understand how each literary tradition addresses common human themes and uses similar techniques such as allegory and symbolism, it is important to analyze the common themes present in Arabic and Western literature. One important similarity between the two traditions is their exploration of universal themes. Love, for example, is a central theme in both literary forms. However, it is often presented not by romantic relationships but by deep friendships and family ties.

In Arabic children's literature, for example, *Kalila wa Dimna*, translated and modified by Ibn al-Muqaffa, tells the story of *the Lion and the Ox*, illustrating how the two animals enjoy each other's company, establishing a strong friendship based on loyalty and trust. However, jealousy from others leads to misunderstandings and conflicts between the two. When he discovers the truth, the lion is overwhelmed by grief and regret. This story shows how love can manifest itself through friendship and loyalty. Similarly, Western literature offers a compelling example of love in *Oscar Wilde's The Selfish Giant*, where the main character isolates himself by building a wall to keep children out of his garden.

As a result, the garden is plunged into an eternal winter without spring, flowers and birds. When a child sneaks back into the garden, it fills with flowers and sunlight. Eventually, The Giant learns that love and sharing bring true happiness, so he tears down the wall and welcomes the children, establishing friendships with them. In this case, love is represented by kindness and generosity. While there is no doubt that love is a powerful theme in both Arabic and Western literature, religion has also significantly influenced literary expression in both traditions.

Numerous writers have engaged with religious themes not just to mirror societal values but also to explore faith, human purpose, and morality. For instance, in Arabic literature, thinkers like Al-Ghazali, in his well-known work *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences), organize the content into four distinct sections, covering acts of worship, daily life practices, and paths to salvation. Its most significant achievement was harmonizing orthodox Sunni theology with Sufi mysticism into a practical and comprehensive guide addressing every aspect of Muslim life and death (Janin, 2003, p. 83). Likewise, in Western literature, authors have drawn upon biblical narratives to impart moral teachings. For instance, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is an epic poem written in blank verse that reflects profound theological concerns and probes issues of free will and the moral repercussions of disobedience through the tale of humanity's fall. Milton seeks to elucidate the ways of God to man, examining concepts such as human choice, predestination, and the conflict between good and evil. Another similarity can be found in the stylistic features employed by writers across both traditions. Poetic elements such as symbolism and allegory are fundamental components in both Arabic and Western literature, facilitating the expression of complex ideas and emotions (Blair, 1992).

3.5 Differences between Arabic Literature and Western Literature

Literature significantly contributes to the reflection of the cultural, social, and historical development of societies. Studying literature provides insight into diverse viewpoints, artistic styles, and linguistic traditions of various civilizations throughout history. In this section, we will emphasize the key distinctions between Arabic literature and Western literature. Although both traditions share some common themes, they also exhibit many differences. These thematic differences can be observed in how each tradition portrays crucial concepts such as fate and personal freedom.

A major subject where Arabic and Western literature diverge is the notion of self-

determination. This refers to the drive behind individuals' decisions and their influence on their own destinies, particularly in the absence of external factors such as fate or tradition (Rayan & Deci, 2000). In Western literature, this theme is prominently reflected; for instance, in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, Harry encounters numerous obstacles, yet he consistently makes his own choices. One line that encapsulates this concept appears in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, when Dumbledore tells Harry: "It is our choice, Harry that shows what we truly are, far more than our abilities." (Rowling, 1999, p.333).

This quote underscores the Western belief that individuals mold their destinies through their actions and decisions. Conversely, Arabic literature presents destiny as something shaped by faith and divine will, rather than personal self-determination. For example, Ibn Battuta's adventures have been transformed into children's literature by parents, educators, and writers to impart significant values. The theme of destiny is intrinsically linked to faith in God's plan. Ibn Battuta's travels are portrayed as experiences directed and blessed by divine will but not simply as the result of his individual aspirations. In children's stories inspired by his adventures, young readers are encouraged to trust in God's wisdom and accept their life journey as part of a larger, predetermined plan. This point of view highlights the fundamental value of Arabic culture: trust in the divine will (Tawakul) and submission to fate (Qadar), rather than emphasizing total individual authority over one's destiny.

After examining the thematic differences between Arabic and Western literature, it is also essential to reflect on their stylistic differences. Poetry, one of the main literary forms in both traditions, is a powerful means for conveying emotions and beliefs. However, the approach to poetry in Arabic and Western cultures varies considerably. In Arabic literature, poetry is highly formal, adhering to strict structures of rhythm and rhyme. Poets in general use fixed meters and consistent rhymes throughout their works, resulting in a musical and formal style (Allen, 2012). For example, Ahmed Shawqi in his poem *The Orphan* "Al-Yateem" states:

The orphan is not her whose parents
Have passed away, leaving him humiliated and weak.
The true orphan is he who finds
A mother neglectful, or a father too busy to care. (Shawqi, 1915)

When a child reads such a poem, or hears it recited by storytellers, he finds comfort in the fact that his sense of isolation is recognized and validated by others. This poem reflects the specific style of Arabic literature, characterized by classical language, structured meter and coherent rhyme. In contrast, Western children's literature often shows an informal literary style that makes the text more comprehensible and captivating for young readers. This style uses simple language and rhythmic, playful elements to capture children's attention and imagination.

An excellent illustration of this style can be seen in Dr. Seuss's "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" where the author uses short, rhythmic phrases and engages directly with the reader, as shown in the lines:

You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose. (Seuss, 1990.p, 1).

This casual approach not only makes literature more captivating for children, but also encourages imagination and self-expression, distinguishing Western children's literature from more formal and instructive styles often found in other literary traditions. Arabic and Western literature come from rich cultural and historical contexts, deeply influenced by diverse social norms and customs. Despite their differences, these traditions share similar objectives, such as entertaining young readers, educating them and conveying moral values through thoughtful and engaging stories. These stories often deal with common themes such as love, religion and nature.

Religion is an important tool for shaping the ethics and moralities presented to young

readers in both Arabic and Western children's literature. Furthermore, these themes are articulated using common literary techniques, remarkably allegory and symbolism, which enhance the depth of meaning and help express complex ideas. In Western literature, the emphasis is on individualism and freedom, suggesting that children are free to choose their paths or actions without any external pressure or guidance.

In contrast, Arabic literature explain the concept of destiny as being influenced by tradition or religious beliefs, emphasizing the importance of understanding what is haram or halal, or what is acceptable within the framework of societal norms and not just by the individual choice. In addition, there is a difference in a style, with Arabic poetry characterized by a more formal and structured approach, while Western poetry tends to be less formal, more liberated and emphasizing the imagination while using simpler language.

To sum up, these differences and similarities demonstrate that Arabic literature is often more insightful and interesting to read, making it a better choice for children and parents alike, as it goes beyond mere reading to provide a solid foundation that contributes to the development of a better society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both Arabic and Western children's literature mirror each other's societies. While Arab children's literature is often emphasizes community, religious devotion and traditional roles, Western literature strongly promotes individual rights and gender equality. Despite these differences, both traditions share common themes such as love, religion, and the importance of

social values, often conveyed through storytelling techniques like allegory and symbolism.

General Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the crucial role of children's literature from a sociological lens, highlighting its dual function as both a reflection and a shaper of social reality. Generally speaking, Literature, does not simply mirror social realities but dynamically contributes to their construction, this idea is sustained by Raymond Williams, who states that:

Literature does more than inertly mirror social reality; it actively forms social transformation. It captures developing foundations before they fully appear and helps shape the consciousness that recognizes and engages with these developments (Williams, 1977, p. 133).

Such a perspective underlines literature's influential role to both portray and affect social transformation. Accordingly, the study stresses the distinctive and foundational function of children's literature in affecting the social awareness of young readers. As Nodelman (2008) clarifies, that children's literature is regarded not merely as a source of entertainment but also as a means for teaching social standards and morals. Through narratives that are both appealing and informative, young readers adopt cultural values, traditions, and moral lessons, often unintentionally, making children's literature a vital instrument for identity formation, social education, and cultural advance.

The study further examines children's literature across cultural settings, particularly comparing Arabic and Western customs. This comparative method tracks their historical development and emphasizes key thematic differences: Western children's literature typically underscores individualism and personal empowerment, while Arabic children's literature often focuses on spiritual instructions and moral lessons. Despite these differences, both traditions function to socialize children into their corresponding cultural contexts.

In conclusion, the dissertation employs a quantitative content analysis, scrutinizing themes, character models, and cultural norms rooted in children's stories. This methodological approach allows a deeper understanding of how children's literature both reflects and shapes social values and ideologies. When examined through a sociological framework, children's literature emerges not only as a reflection of cultural standards but also as a dynamic power in shaping the worldview of upcoming generations.

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الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة عن دور أدب الأطفال في التنشئة الأخلاقية والاجتماعية والعاطفية للأطفال من منظور اجتماعي. وتهدف إلى استكشاف كيفية مساهمة القصص الموجهة للقراء الصغار في بناء ونقل القيم الاجتماعية، والتوجيه الأخلاقي، والتقاليد، والسلوكيات الثقافية ضمن سياقات ثقافية مختلفة. وتستند الدراسة إلى خلفية اجتماعية، وتعتمد على تحليل نصي دقيق لكتب أطفال مختارة، مع التركيز على مواضيع مثل التعاون، والتعاطف، والاحترام، والنزاهة، والصدق. وتُظهر النتائج أن أدب الأطفال يعمل كأداة تكوينية في بناء تصور الأطفال للعالم، مع التركيز على المعتقدات الأسرية والاجتماعية، وتعزيز التفكير التأملي حول القيم والمسؤوليات المجتمعية. وبالتالي، يخلص البحث إلى أن أدب الأطفال ليس مجرد وسيلة للمتعة، بل هو أيضًا أداة أساسية في التنشئة. وتوصي الدراسة الآباء والمعلمين وصانعي السياسات بدمج الأدب المُلهم اجتماعيًا والملائم لأعمارهم في البيئات التعليمية الرسمية وغير الرسمية على حد سواء لتشجيع نمو الطفل المتكامل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدب الأطفال، البيئات التعليمية، المنظور الاجتماعي، القيم، التنشئة.

