

or political drawings in newspapers, typically single panels, are cartoons, while sequential works with titles and speech bubbles are comics. Comics gained popularity in humour magazines and then in newspapers, which adopted the term “comics”, despite the content not always being humorous. Differentiating cartoons from comics is challenging. The author argues that distinguishing them solely by the number of panels is incorrect since they belong to different categories. Why, then, has the cartoon style become so dominant in comics, with creators often (wrongly) labelled as cartoonists? The author offers two reasons. Comic artists faced high production demands and tight deadlines, necessitating the simplicity offered by cartoons. For instance, Charles Schultz created an average of one comic strip daily for over 50 years, while Jack Kirby produced 8–10 comic pages daily between 1956 and 1970. Secondly, comics are printed in small formats, and the cartoon style ensures readability. Simplified visuals and exaggerated characteristics make it easier for readers to grasp visual humour and satire. This is exemplified by a publisher’s statement: “Don’t give me a Rembrandt; give me production!”

The book also delves into philosophical questions about comics: are comics art? Comics, composed of drawing and storytelling, share similarities with well-established art forms like painting and literature. But to what extent do these overlaps exist? The author further explores this idea by asking which comics qualify as modern artistic works. Drawing an analogy with wrestling matches, the author concludes that just because something is classified as art does not mean it is “good” art, and something not considered “good” art can still have value. The author also highlights the ethnocentrism of Western art classifications, emphasising that global concepts of art vary.

The book is a significant contribution to comics research from a philosophical perspective, questioning all its aspects and existing definitions. By posing numerous rhetorical questions, it encourages readers to reflect and seek their own answers. This philosophical exploration enhances the understanding of comics’ unique characteristics and fosters greater appreciation for the diversity within the medium. Titled *The Philosophy of Comics*, the book’s name implies a definitive philosophy, but the author acknowledges a more suitable title might be *A Philosophy of Comics*, reflecting its less authoritative stance. The author admits that his views are controversial and likely flawed in some areas. Nevertheless, he expresses optimism about comics’ present and future. Comics are now of higher quality than they were 20 years ago, and their increasing prestige attracts talented creators. Serious writers and artists, having honed their skills in other fields, are now choosing to work in comics. This book stands as a testament to the growing importance, influence, and exceptional quality of the comics medium.

## Philosophy and Picturebooks in Childhood

**Thomas E. Wartenberg. 2022. *Thinking Through Stories: Children, Philosophy, and Picture Books*. New York: Routledge. 138 pp. ISBN 978-1-003-25745-5.**

Enikő Nagy-Kolozsvári, Anikó Beregszászi

In today’s educational environment, there is growing recognition of the importance of fostering critical thinking, philosophical inquiry, and emotional intelligence in young

learners. *Thinking Through Stories: Children, Philosophy, and Picture Books* by Thomas E. Wartenberg makes a significant contribution to this discourse. Wartenberg, a distinguished educator and philosopher, explores how picturebooks can serve as effective tools for introducing philosophical ideas to children, supporting their cognitive and emotional development in the process. Through this work, he advocates for the integration of philosophy into early childhood education, challenging traditional educational paradigms that often view philosophy as too abstract for young learners.

The book is organised in a way that is accessible to educators, parents, and anyone interested in the intersection of literature and philosophy. It is divided into a preface, introduction, three main parts, and a conclusion, with additional reference sections providing further resources. The structure of the book mirrors the process of philosophising with children, guiding the reader through practical and theoretical aspects of using stories as springboards for philosophical exploration.

In the introduction, Wartenberg sets the stage for his exploration of philosophy in childhood education. Drawing from his personal experiences, he recounts how his childhood fears of death, left unaddressed by the adults around him, sparked his early fascination with philosophy. His story illustrates the natural curiosity of children and their tendency to ask profound, existential questions about life, death, and existence – questions that many adults avoid addressing. Wartenberg argues that these natural inquiries should not be dismissed or overlooked; rather, they should be embraced and cultivated as opportunities for philosophical exploration.

One of the central themes of the book is that philosophy can and should be introduced in early childhood. Wartenberg critiques traditional views that consider philosophy too abstract for young children, asserting that children's ability to think critically and philosophically is often underestimated. He stresses the importance of creating spaces where children can freely express and explore their ideas, thus promoting critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the world around them. Picturebooks, according to Wartenberg, provide an ideal medium for this type of exploration, offering accessible narratives and illustrations that help make abstract philosophical concepts tangible and engaging for young learners.

Wartenberg also addresses the practical aspects of using picturebooks to introduce philosophy, reassuring educators that formal philosophical training is not required. By offering concrete strategies for initiating philosophical discussions and handling sensitive topics, he equips teachers with the tools necessary to engage children in meaningful conversations about ethics, justice, and existential themes. He emphasises that philosophy, when introduced early, can foster a sense of self-awareness, a capacity for empathetic reasoning, and the ability to engage in respectful, thoughtful dialogue.

In Part I, Wartenberg lays the foundation for the argument that philosophy is not only suitable for children but essential for their intellectual and emotional development. He argues that childhood is a time of wonder and curiosity, which makes it an ideal period to introduce philosophical ideas. Chapter 2, titled “Why Teach Children Philosophy”, draws on the work of prominent educational philosophers such as Matthew Lipman and John Dewey to demonstrate the value of philosophical inquiry for young learners.

Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme, which emphasises the development of critical thinking skills, serves as a cornerstone for Wartenberg's argument. Lipman contends that teaching philosophy in early education allows children to develop reasoning skills that are crucial for active participation in a democratic society. While some critics question the necessity of philosophy in education, Wartenberg argues that it provides children with the tools they need to engage with complex questions about morality, justice, and the world. Unlike traditional educational approaches that prioritise finding "right" answers, philosophy allows children to explore open-ended questions, encouraging them to think critically and express their beliefs in an environment that values dialogue over dogma.

Wartenberg's discussion of wonder and its role in philosophical inquiry is further expanded in Chapter 3, "The Role of Wonder in Childhood". Drawing upon the work of philosophers like Piaget and Gareth B. Matthews, Wartenberg challenges Piaget's deficit model, which suggests that children's cognitive abilities are limited compared to adults. Wartenberg argues that children, in fact, possess the capacity for abstract thinking and philosophical exploration. Their natural sense of wonder – the constant questioning of the world around them – makes them "natural philosophers", eager to explore profound existential questions about life and death.

The chapter also critiques the traditional view that childhood is a time of intellectual incompleteness. Instead, Wartenberg argues that children's philosophical thinking should be nurtured and celebrated, rather than dismissed as immature or irrelevant. By fostering wonder in the classroom, educators can help children develop a lifelong curiosity and a deep intellectual engagement with the world. In this way, philosophy becomes not merely a subject to be taught, but a way of approaching life, a lens through which children can understand themselves and their place in the world.

In Part II, Wartenberg shifts focus to the central tool for introducing philosophy to children: the picturebook. Chapter 4, "The Uses and Limitations of Philosophical Novels", compares the use of novels specifically designed for philosophical education with the broader category of children's picturebooks. While philosophical novels, such as those created by Lipman, have their merits, Wartenberg argues that picturebooks offer unique advantages in engaging young learners. Picturebooks, with their combination of visual and textual elements, provide a multisensory experience that stimulates both cognitive and emotional responses. This dynamic interaction between words and images helps children connect with the story at a deeper level, facilitating philosophical reflection in an accessible and engaging way.

Wartenberg critiques Lipman's opposition to picturebooks, which he believes limit children's imagination by intertwining illustrations with text. Wartenberg counters this argument by highlighting the imaginative potential of picturebooks. He argues that the visual elements in books like *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* do not stifle creativity but rather enhance it by providing a visual language that complements and enriches the narrative. The illustrations in picturebooks offer multiple layers of meaning, inviting children to explore abstract concepts through their own interpretations.

In Chapter 5, "The Advantages of Picture Books", Wartenberg further elaborates on the advantages of using picturebooks for philosophical discussions. He highlights the flexibility

of picturebooks in addressing complex themes, such as ethics, identity, and social justice, in a way that is accessible to young readers. Picturebooks also encourage children to reflect on their own experiences and beliefs, fostering critical thinking and empathy. Books like *Dragons and Giants* by Arnold Lobel provide opportunities to discuss difficult concepts like bravery and fear in a manner that resonates with children's own lived experiences.

In Part III, Wartenberg addresses the practical challenges of facilitating philosophy discussions with young children. In Chapter 7, he reassures educators that they do not need formal philosophical training to engage in meaningful philosophical dialogues with children. Instead, they can rely on well-designed resources, such as picturebooks, and adopt a simple methodology that encourages open-ended inquiry. Wartenberg's approach emphasises the importance of facilitating conversations that allow children to express their own ideas and ask their own questions, rather than imposing rigid frameworks or predetermined answers.

This chapter also offers practical advice on how to guide discussions on complex philosophical concepts, such as identity and fairness. The author encourages facilitators to use everyday experiences and objects as starting points for philosophical inquiry, demonstrating that even the most ordinary things can inspire profound philosophical questions.

In Chapter 8, "Using Picture Books to Discuss Racial Issues", Wartenberg discusses how picturebooks can be used to introduce children to complex social issues, such as racism and inequality. He critiques some of the traditional approaches to children's literature, which oversimplify or fail to provide adequate historical and social context. Wartenberg argues that certain contemporary picturebooks can effectively promote nuanced discussions about race and justice, helping children understand the complexities of social issues while encouraging empathy and respect for diversity.

Chapter 9, "How to Facilitate Discussions of Books with Morals", explores how picturebooks with moral lessons can serve as a foundation for philosophical inquiry. Even in stories with clear moral conclusions, such as "The Hare and the Tortoise", Wartenberg argues that there is room for critical reflection. By encouraging children to question the validity of the moral and explore its broader implications, teachers can help children develop a deeper understanding of ethics and virtue.

In the conclusion, Wartenberg revisits the two central goals of the book: advocating for the inclusion of philosophy in early education and promoting picturebooks as powerful tools for philosophical exploration. He reaffirms that philosophy helps children develop critical thinking, self-awareness, and the ability to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways. Through the use of picturebooks, teachers can introduce children to abstract ideas in a manner that is engaging, accessible, and deeply meaningful.

Wartenberg also suggests alternative methods for introducing philosophy to children, such as thought experiments and discussions of everyday objects. However, he maintains that picturebooks provide an ideal entry point for young learners, offering a blend of narrative, visual elements, and philosophical themes that can stimulate intellectual growth.

By advocating for philosophy with children, Wartenberg encourages educators to embrace a pedagogical approach that values inquiry, reflection, and dialogue. The book provides valuable insights into the intersection of literature and philosophy, offering both theoretical foundations and practical strategies for incorporating philosophical inquiry into the classroom.

*Thinking Through Stories* is an invaluable resource for teachers, parents, and anyone interested in the philosophical development of children. As educators who have always sought to ignite young minds with curiosity and reflection, we were especially drawn to Wartenberg's exploration of how picturebooks can be used to foster critical thinking and moral reflection. His thoughtful analysis, combined with practical advice, makes this book an essential tool for anyone seeking to introduce young learners to the power of philosophical thought.

Through this work, Wartenberg challenges the traditional boundaries of education, arguing that philosophy is not a luxury but a necessity for children's intellectual and emotional development. This book is a call to action for educators to embrace philosophy as a tool for nurturing the next generation of thoughtful, compassionate, and critical thinkers.

### Behind the Pages: The Institutional Role in Kids' Books

**Claudia Nelson, Elisabeth Wesseling, and Andrea Mei-Ying Wu (eds.). 2024. *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature and Culture*. New York and London: Routledge. 550 pp. ISBN 978-1-032-10359-4.**

Enikő Nagy-Kolozsvári, Katalin Lizák

*The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature and Culture*, edited by Claudia Nelson, Elisabeth Wesseling, and Andrea Mei-Ying Wu, offers a broad and thorough exploration of children's literature within a global cultural framework. This volume is remarkable for examining not only printed texts, but also digital and electronic media aimed at children aged zero to thirteen. It skilfully addresses contemporary issues such as identity formation, cultural representation, and the interplay between traditional and digital forms of literature. As an interdisciplinary work, this companion is well suited for students, scholars, and educators who seek a deeper understanding of the field in its historical, cultural, and contemporary dimensions.

The editors have successfully organised the volume into five sections, each of which highlights different aspects of children's literature, offering key themes and methodologies for analysis. Their intention is to reflect on how children's texts shape and reflect identity across cultures and time periods. In doing so, the collection moves beyond conventional literary analysis to incorporate insights from cultural studies, exploring how production, distribution, and consumption patterns influence the field. The volume highlights how children's literature has historically been a powerful tool in constructing identity, both individual and collective, and how contemporary literature increasingly represents marginalised identities.

The first section, "Concepts and Tools", introduces foundational concepts and methodologies for analysing children's literature. This section is crucial for students and scholars new to the field, offering them a starting point for engaging with both theoretical and practical approaches. The seven chapters in this section cover a variety of critical perspectives that have long been essential to the study of children's literature, as well as new approaches emerging from technological and conceptual developments. Karín Lesnik-