

*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-

Oberstein's contribution is particularly significant, as she interrogates the underlying assumptions about childhood that permeate children's literature. She raises critical questions such as "What is a child?" and "What happens when a child reads?," questions that challenge the presuppositions of authors, marketers, and readers alike. These questions emphasise the importance of theory in understanding children's texts, urging scholars to consider the broader cultural and philosophical implications of their work. Karen Coats provides a historical overview of the relationship between poetics and pedagogy, exploring how children's literature has navigated the dual purposes of instruction and entertainment throughout history. She examines how these two objectives have shaped the evolution of the genre, focusing on how educational imperatives influence literature created for children. Amanda K. Allen's chapter on ethics and historical perspectives delves into how children's texts reflect both the biases of their time and the perspectives of contemporary scholars who study them. This approach highlights the importance of historical context when interpreting children's literature, revealing the cultural and moral assumptions embedded in past works. Another innovative contribution comes from Björn Sundmark and Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang, who examine literary geography. This chapter explores how spatial settings in children's literature influence and reflect cultural perceptions of childhood. The authors provide a fresh perspective on how physical spaces contribute to identity formation. Megan L. Musgrave's chapter on posthumanism and new materialism challenges traditional boundaries between human and non-human entities, offering new insights into how readers interact with texts. Her analysis prompts reconsideration of how children's literature engages with the material world, suggesting that children's texts invite readers to question the dichotomies between humans and their environments. Deanna Stover introduces readers to digital humanities, advocating for a playful, creative engagement with digital technologies in children's literature scholarship. From digital archives to 3D-printed artifacts, she emphasises the importance of digital tools in expanding the field of children's literature studies. Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak closes this section with a chapter on participatory research methods, where children are involved as co-researchers. Her work stresses the agency of children, moving beyond the traditional view of them as passive recipients of literature. Instead, the author advocates for methodologies that actively include children's voices in research.

The second section, "Media and Genres", broadens the discussion to include not only printed texts but also digital and electronic formats. This section recognises that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, children engage with stories through a variety of media, reflecting the pervasive influence of technology. By addressing these diverse formats, the editors acknowledge that children's literature is constantly evolving in response to media innovations. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer offers a detailed analysis of picturebooks, emphasising the materiality of these texts and their significance in shaping children's early literary experiences. Her chapter highlights the dual audience of picturebooks: children and the adults who read to them, underscoring the complexity of this seemingly simple genre. Annette Wannamaker and Jennifer Miscek's examination explores how early readers, though aimed at children just beginning to read independently, employ sophisticated techniques to captivate their audience. Their work reveals the careful balance between simplicity and engagement in beginner texts. Kristine Moruzi and Joseph Michael Sommers contribute chapters on

magazines and comics, respectively. Moruzi discusses the historical role of magazines as both educational tools and platforms for children's voices, while Sommers examines the evolution of comics and their cultural significance. Both authors underscore how these ephemeral formats, once overlooked, have gained importance in the study of children's literature. Deborah Stevenson, Giorgia Grilli, and Michael Joseph expand the discussion to fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Stevenson categorises fiction into subgenres, illustrating the diversity within children's literature, while Grilli highlights the aesthetic and literary merit of the nonfiction picturebook, a genre that is increasingly recognised for its educational value. Joseph, in turn, examines the role of poetry, exploring how this genre bridges the gap between text and image. Manon van de Water's chapter on children's theatre provides a global perspective, revealing the local distinctiveness and universal attributes that define this art form. Christine Lötscher and Debbie Olson explore children's film and television, respectively, focusing on audience dynamics and the challenges of adapting literary texts for the screen. Angela Colvert rounds off the section with her exploration of digital media, emphasising the playful interactions children have with digital environments. Her chapter highlights the importance of digital apps and online communities in shaping contemporary children's experiences with literature, illustrating the fluidity of media in today's literary landscape.

The third section, "Identities", centres on how children's literature shapes and reflects identity. Historically, children's texts have been used to reinforce societal norms, but more recently, literature has also become a platform for marginalised voices. The chapters in this section critically engage with gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, and disability, exploring how children's literature navigates these complex categories. Vanessa Joosen's chapter on age explores how childhood and aging intersect in children's texts, with a focus on how these depictions reflect broader societal attitudes. She examines the fluidity of age representations, illustrating how texts engage with cultural expectations around age. Mia Österlund and Åsa Warnqvist examine the intersection of gender studies with children's literature, demonstrating how feminist theory has informed the field and contributed to more nuanced understandings of gender as a social construct. They highlight how children's literature has both reinforced and challenged traditional gender norms, offering contemporary examples that broaden representations of gender diversity. Further contributions from Sara Van den Bossche, Gabriele von Glasenapp, and Kimberley Reynolds examine national identity, citizenship, religion, and class, respectively. These chapters explore how literature shapes children's sense of belonging to specific social groups, highlighting how texts both uphold and question dominant cultural narratives. Trevor Boffone and Cristina Herrera's discussion of race and ethnicity in American children's literature is particularly interesting. They emphasise the growing body of work by racially diverse authors, illustrating how recent texts offer a more inclusive vision of identity that resonates with contemporary young readers. Mateusz Świetlicki's chapter provides a comparative analysis of LGBTQ+ children's literature across Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia, offering insight into how different cultural contexts shape the reception of this literature. This chapter contributes to the broader discussion of how children's literature reflects societal attitudes toward sexual and gender diversity. Toshio Kimura and Junko Yoshida examine the representation of disability in children's texts, focusing on both the Anglo-American tradition and global perspectives. Their chapter calls

attention to the increasing prominence of disability in children's literature, inviting readers to consider how these texts engage with broader discourses on identity and inclusion.

In the fourth section, "Border Crossings", the editors explore how translation, adaptation, and cultural exchange contribute to the global canon, illustrating how children's literature is not confined to national boundaries. Through its eight chapters written by twelve scholars, this section provides a comprehensive exploration of how texts for children cross geographical, linguistic, ideological, and media boundaries. The chapters collectively highlight the complexities involved in translating, adapting, and marketing children's texts as they move from one context to another, reflecting how such processes influence both the reception and interpretation of these works. The section opens with three foundational chapters by Emer O'Sullivan, Virginie Douglas, and Anja Müller in which they explore the ideological, cultural, and commercial forces that shape which children's texts are translated, retranslated, or adapted into new formats. They provide insightful discussions on how every new version of a text, whether through translation or adaptation, inevitably represents an interpretation, highlighting certain elements while suppressing others. This theoretical framework is followed by an analysis of how national boundaries and cultural identities shape children's literature. Weronika Kostecka's chapter investigates the ways in which Polish authors have appropriated the global fairy tale tradition to produce localised versions that resonate within Polish cultural contexts. Clare Bradford, Kristine Moruzi, and Michelle J. Smith build on this by examining stories of migration and transnational identities in contemporary Australian, American, and Canadian children's literature. Their work reveals how stories by Indigenous authors and those focusing on refugee or immigrant experiences dismantle static national borders, portraying identity as fluid and transitory. Dafna Zur and Rachel Feldman's chapter introduces a fresh comparison between Korean and Hebrew children's poetry, showing how this approach can uncover surprising similarities between works from different languages and cultures. By comparing these distinct traditions, they offer a deeper understanding of how children's cultures worldwide can share common themes and concerns, even when separated by time and distance. The last two chapters focus on the commercialisation of children's literature. Naomi Hamer's chapter discusses how successful children's books often expand into franchises across multiple platforms, including toys, games, and films. She highlights the growing role of transmedia storytelling in modern children's culture. Similarly, Sara K. Day and Carrie Sickmann explore how digital environments offer new ways for children to interact with texts, while also addressing concerns about safety and creative engagement online. Throughout the section, the authors provide both historical and contemporary examples that enrich their analyses.

The final section, "Institutions", investigates the roles of publishers, educational systems, and cultural institutions in shaping children's literature. This section reveals how larger forces (e.g. economic, political, and cultural) influence what gets published, valued, and taught in schools. The institutional approach underscores the importance of understanding the broader frameworks within which children's literature is produced and consumed. This section begins with three case studies on the diverse history and geography of children's publishing. Courtney Weikle-Mills explores how British children's books circulated within the British Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, focusing on how colonial contexts, like the East and West Indies, shaped the content and accessibility of books. Emily Bruce examines

Germanophone and Francophone children's publishing in Europe, linking changes in society and family structures to shifts in children's books. Shih-Wen Sue Chen provides a comparative study of contemporary publishing in China, Japan, and India, highlighting how local demographics and globalisation influence children's literature. Next, the focus shifts to how children's books are distributed. Etti Gordon Ginzburg discusses the role of children's literature in schools across the US, Britain, and Israel, distinguishing between books that promote literacy and those that inspire a love of reading. Margaret Mackey explores how libraries in North America and Britain shape access to children's books, while Julie Fette and Anne Morey examine the role of book clubs as intermediaries between publishers, families, and schools, showing how these clubs negotiate cultural and literary values. The final chapters look at practices shaping the content of children's literature. Ramona Caponegro and Kenneth B. Kidd discuss the shift in literary awards, with traditional prizes now complemented by child-centred voting systems, reflecting children's growing influence in the literary marketplace. Valerie Coghlan reviews international efforts to promote children's reading through book fairs and organisations, while Andrew Zalot examines censorship in children's literature, focusing on how morality and ideology influence what children are allowed to read, particularly in the US. This section of the volume is a critical contribution to the field, underscoring the importance of institutional analysis in understanding the production and dissemination of children's literature.

Overall, *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature and Culture* is an indispensable resource for anyone studying children's literature. Its blend of traditional literary analysis with contemporary approaches from cultural studies, media studies, and childhood studies provides a multifaceted view of the field. By bridging past and present, print and digital media, and national and transnational perspectives, this volume succeeds in presenting children's literature as both a mirror of and a vehicle for societal change.

As someone who has long been engaged in the study of literature, I found this companion to be both intellectually enriching and inspiring. The depth of scholarship across a wide range of topics challenges conventional views and opens new avenues for understanding how children's literature intersects with contemporary cultural and technological developments. I believe that this collection will not only serve as a valuable reference but also spark new conversations and research ideas, particularly for those of us who are passionate about exploring how literature shapes, and is shaped by, the world around us.

## Food as a Vehicle for Literacy

**Ilgim Veryeri Alaca. 2022. *Consumable Reading and Children's Literature: Food, Taste and Material Interactions*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 260 pp. ISBN 978-90-272-1116-3.**

Nikola Novaković

Ilgim Veryeri Alaca's *Consumable Reading and Children's Literature: Food, Taste, and Material Interactions* offers an innovative exploration of how everyday objects, sensory experiences, and material interactions can be leveraged to enhance early literacy. This interdisciplinary study bridges art, design, literature, and technology, demonstrating