

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.**

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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

how tactile, visual, and gustatory elements enrich children's engagement with stories. Veryeri Alaca reimagines traditional approaches to literacy through unconventional mediums, such as food, packaging, and tableware, transforming them into educational tools that encourage creativity, learning, and emotional connections. Her work highlights the profound interplay between physical objects and storytelling, making a compelling case for multisensory approaches to children's education.

Chapter 1, "The Role of Materials and Materiality in Picturebooks", considers how the materiality of picturebooks – such as their tactile, visual, and spatial properties – enhances children's reading experiences. It underscores the interdisciplinary nature of materiality, incorporating insights from art, design, and technology to redefine the traditional reading process. Key themes include the sensory and embodied interactions children have with books, fostering deeper engagement through elements like texture, interactive pop-ups, and even digital adaptations. The author delves into the history of materials in children's literature, from early toy books to contemporary hybrids, emphasising how physical aspects of books contribute to storytelling. Notable examples include Margaret Wise Brown's experiments with tactile elements, such as fur-covered books, which merge sensory engagement with narrative meaning.

The next chapter, "The Potential of Surfaces for Early Literacy", focuses on the critical role of surfaces in children's literature, expanding on the concept of materiality. It shows how surfaces – whether glossy, textured, or interactive – shape the reading experience and aid early literacy. The discussion spans from historical reading surfaces like clay tablets and hornbooks to modern materials like Magic Paper and smart textiles. The chapter underlines the multisensory potential of book surfaces, blending vision, touch, and even taste to create immersive experiences. Through examples like *Do Not Lick This Book* (2017) and Bruno Munari's *I Prelibri* (1980), the author illustrates how surface design can engage children in playful learning, promoting literacy through tangible, real-world interactions.

In Chapter 3, "Food-Related Reading", Veryeri Alaca investigates how food and its material and symbolic associations intersect with early literacy, using examples from children's literature and everyday life. It explores how food-related texts, images, and narratives in picturebooks engage children's senses, creating a multisensory reading experience. The discussion highlights how food stimulates visual literacy and cognitive associations by linking familiar edibles to narratives and literacy skills. Iconic works like *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (2009) serve as examples of how stories integrate food to introduce concepts like counting, days of the week, and life cycles. Additionally, the chapter examines the symbolic and sensory roles of food in folklore and literature, discussing its capacity to evoke emotions, memories, and learning through taste and texture.

Chapter 4, "Literacy and Synesthesia", looks into the intersection of synesthesia and literacy, focusing on how cross-sensory perceptions can enhance early learning experiences. Synesthesia, characterised by the blending of senses (e.g., associating sounds with colours), offers cognitive benefits like improved memory and creativity. The author delves into how children's early exposure to cross-modal associations, such as matching sounds to shapes, or letters to colours, lays a foundation for symbolic communication and language acquisition. The chapter also discusses synesthesia in children's literature, using

examples from picturebooks like *The Girl Who Heard Colors* (2013) and *The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art: The Noisy Paint Box* (2014). These stories foreground characters with synesthetic perceptions, demonstrating how such experiences foster metaphorical thinking and enrich language understanding.

Chapter 5, "Packaging Supporting Literacy", considers how product packaging, often overlooked, can serve as an innovative medium to support literacy development. It draws parallels between packaging and picturebooks, emphasising their shared ability to convey information through text, imagery, and design. Packaging, like books, can act as symbolic objects, introducing children to literacy concepts while promoting curiosity and interaction. Veryeri Alaca discusses case studies where packaging has supported literacy through playful or educational elements, such as food wrappers featuring cartoon characters or eco-friendly designs paired with informational content. The cultural and symbolic aspects of packaging are examined, showcasing examples like Japan's "ekiben" bento boxes, which combine art, storytelling, and regional heritage to create meaningful, multisensory experiences. The chapter also critiques the transient nature of packaging, suggesting ways to make it more impactful, such as incorporating augmented reality or designating space for literacy-focused content through policies like the "percent for literacy" initiative.

Chapter 6, "Consumer Goods and Packages in Children's Literature", expands on the role of consumer goods and packaging by focusing on their role in children's literature, exploring how these everyday objects serve as both narrative and educational tools. Veryeri Alaca studies examples of branded storytelling, such as the Campbell Kids and Hershey's, which blend marketing with literacy development. The chapter also highlights picturebooks like *The Day the Crayons Quit* (2014) and *Not a Box* (2006) that anthropomorphise objects or use the transformative potential of packages to ignite children's creativity and imagination. Furthermore, Veryeri Alaca examines the educational affordances of folding or constructing 3D forms from 2D materials, as seen in *Aconà Biconbi* (2017) or *Folded Little Stories* (2019). Additionally, it reflects on keepsake boxes and boxed books, such as *The Secret Box* (2011) and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (1982), which transform packaging into cultural artifacts or interactive stages for storytelling.

Chapter 7, "Plates and Pages", considers the use of children's tableware, such as plates and spoons, as unconventional tools for fostering emergent literacy and imaginative engagement. Starting with historical examples of decorated tableware from as early as ancient Egypt, the chapter illustrates how the imagery and inscriptions on these objects extend their utility beyond eating to include storytelling, cultural education, and literacy development. The chapter analyses intertextuality, showing how designs on tableware can connect children to familiar narratives, evoke curiosity, and stimulate creative conversations during mealtime. It also discusses modern innovations, such as augmented reality-enhanced plates and interactive utensils, which further engage children's senses and promote learning.

Chapter 8, "Children's Literature Focusing on the Plates and Eating Utensils", investigates the role of plates and eating utensils in children's literature, demonstrating how these everyday objects can serve as tools for stimulating creativity, narrative

building, and cultural appreciation. The chapter examines a variety of works where utensils are presented as educational tools, playful elements, or anthropomorphised characters that inspire empathy and storytelling. Picturebooks like *Spoon* (2009) by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and *La Storia che Avanza* (2012) by Alessandro Lumare show how plates and utensils can encourage visual and linguistic literacy, turning mundane items into imaginative springboards for narrative creation.

Chapter 9 delves into the concept of “edible reading”, studying how incorporating taste and food into literacy experiences can enrich children’s multisensory learning. It argues that traditional reading, limited to visual and auditory engagement, can be expanded by involving the senses of taste and smell, fostering deeper connections to language and narratives. Historical practices like gingerbread hornbooks and contemporary innovations such as 3D-printed edible books reveal how food can serve as both a medium for learning and a playful tool for literacy development. By merging gastronomy, design, and technology, edible texts could transform early literacy, making learning more engaging, interactive, and memorable.

Chapter 10, “Reading on Fluid Surfaces: From Soups in Narratives to Interacting in a Fluid Narrative Space”, investigates the potential of soups and other fluid surfaces to support emergent literacy, blending play, nutrition, and learning. Building on the concept of edible reading, the chapter explores how liquids like soup can become interactive reading surfaces, encouraging creativity and literacy through the playful arrangement of floating letters and words. Drawing from children’s literature, such as Maurice Sendak’s *Chicken Soup with Rice: A Book of Months* (2014) and Kate Banks’s *Alphabet Soup* (1994), it highlights the symbolic and emotional connections of soup to warmth, comfort, and home, while examining its imaginative uses in storytelling and literacy activities.

Veryeri Alaca’s *Consumable Reading and Children’s Literature* expands the boundaries of early literacy by demonstrating the potential of material and sensory experiences to engage young readers in innovative ways. From the textures of picturebooks to the tastes of edible texts and the fluidity of soup surfaces, the book reveals the myriad ways that literacy can intersect with the everyday. By integrating historical insights, cutting-edge technology, and creative practices, Veryeri Alaca provides educators, caregivers, and scholars with new strategies to inspire children’s learning. This thought-provoking volume spotlights the transformative potential of connecting the tangible with the textual, offering a unique perspective on how literacy can be a playful, embodied, and deeply immersive experience.

## New Perspectives on Teaching English to Young Learners

**David Valente and Daniel Xerri (eds.). 2022. *Innovative Practices in Early English Language Education*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 340 pp. ISBN 978-3-031-12921-6.**

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*Innovative Practices in Early English Language Education* consists of 14 chapters devoted to teaching English to young children written by leading experts in the field. The