



Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter

Seth Lerer

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Ever since children have learned to read, there has been children's literature. *Children's Literature* charts the makings of the Western literary imagination from Aesop's fables to Mother Goose, from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to Peter Pan, from *Where the Wild Things Are* to Harry Potter.

The only single-volume work to capture the rich and diverse history of children's literature in its full panorama, this extraordinary book reveals why J. R. R. Tolkien, Dr. Seuss, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Beatrix Potter, and many others, despite their divergent styles and subject matter, have all resonated with generations of readers. *Children's Literature* is an exhilarating quest across centuries, continents, and genres to discover how, and why, we first fall in love with the written word.

"Lerer has accomplished something magical. Unlike the many handbooks to children's literature that synopsise, evaluate, or otherwise guide adults in the selection of materials for children, this work presents a true critical history of the genre. . . . Scholarly, erudite, and all but exhaustive, it is also entertaining and accessible. Lerer takes his subject seriously without making it dull."—*Library Journal* (starred review)

"Lerer's history reminds us of the wealth of literature written during the past 2,600 years. . . . With his vast and multidimensional knowledge of literature, he underscores the vital role it plays in forming a child's imagination. We are made, he suggests, by the books we read."—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"There are dazzling chapters on John Locke and Empire, and nonsense, and Darwin, but Lerer's most interesting chapter focuses on girls' fiction. . . . A brilliant series of readings."—Diane Purkiss, *Times Literary Supplement*

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