The Motif of Human Flying in Children's Literature

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine works of children's literature that included humans that could fly, and to further examine the reaction of students who were exposed to the specific works. Twenty-six books were studied and the results were compiled using qualitative procedures. The data that were examined in the study of the books included reviews and editorial commentaries from many sources and the researchers own notes, taken during the reading and studying of the books identified by this research. The research conducted with the literature details the patterns and similarities that can be found in the cross section of works studied. These include variations of dream patterns and themes involving cultural identities and social issues. Four students participated in the study, which introduced them to a wide variety of the books used in the first phase of the research. Data were collected from their journal entries, transcriptions of audiotapes that were recorded during discussions and interviews, and written or visual work that was completed as part of the project. The students believed that the books that they were introduced to were written for the purpose of inspiring imagination in the readers, and that they thematically represented ideas about freedom. All of the data from both phases of the study were triangulated to reach conclusions with regard to the literature that is available to educators with a motif of human flying, and in drawing conclusions regarding what students believe about this specific type of literature.

Comments
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Like the concept of childhood, children's literature is very much a cultural construct that continues to evolve over time. Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society COPYRIGHT 2004 The Gale Group Inc. Children's Literature. Like the concept of childhood, children's literature is very much a cultural construct that continues to evolve over time. Children's literature comprises those texts that have been written specifically for children and those texts that children have selected to read on their own, and the boundaries between children's literature and adult literature are surprisingly fluid. A plot motif is a recurring action or situation in literature. While plot motifs are generally the same throughout stories, they may be used in certain and perhaps different ways, in different stories and at different times. The motif of love, whether it be falling in love or acts relating to love can be found in nearly all of children's literature. However, the use of it varies from story to story. In some stories such as The Tinderbox, we see love as unattainable, while in others
such as The Frog Prince and The Little Mermaid the love is unattainable until a transformation occurs in; in Flight is amazingly common in children's stories. Characters often take to the air. Perhaps they venture onto a roof, or they float. Joseph Campbell gives several illustrations of magical flights, and suggests the motif stands for a hero's attempts to stall the avenging forces in any way possible, by throwing down "protective interpretations, principles, symbols, rationalizations, anything...to...delay and absorb" their power. What the hero throws down in a chase may also represent a sacrifice, the leaving behind of something of value. Nesbit also had a good grasp on what flying was for, in children's literature, and the ideology of most works that have come before. By 'come before', I'm pretty sure Nesbit was thinking about the Icarus story when she wrote