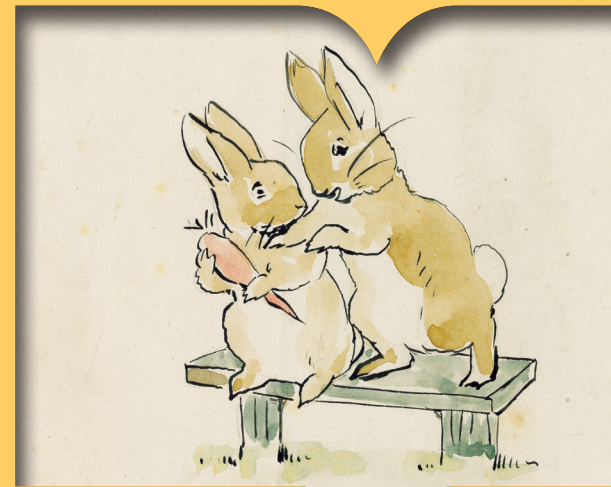


ANIMALS ARE US

Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature

CELEBRATING THE PETER J. SOLOMON COLLECTION



HOUGHTON LIBRARY + HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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2021

This catalog accompanies an exhibition at Houghton Library,

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FRONT COVER (center) and TITLE PAGE:

Garth Williams (illustrator), *Stuart Little*
(New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1945)
Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

FRONT COVER (left and right):

Charles H. Bennett (author-illustrator)
Preparatory drawing for title page illustration for
The Frog Who Would A-Wooing Go (detail), ca. 1865
Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Beatrix Potter (author-illustrator)

From final study for *The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit*, ca. 1906
Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation, 2020

BACK COVER:

Lewis Carroll [Charles Dodgson] (copyist)
The Cheshire Cat (detail), from copies of woodcuts
for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, ca. 1865
Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

See cat. nos. 18, 37, 57, 49C, respectively

Illustration copyright information on pages 117–118

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Foreword

Animals Are Us: Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature; Celebrating the Peter J. Solomon Collection arrives at an auspicious time in the history of Houghton Library as the exhibition we have chosen to mark our reopening after a major renovation. In renovating the building, we have created a more accessible and welcoming environment in order to invite a broader and more diverse population to visit our reading rooms, classrooms, and exhibition spaces. This exhibition sets the perfect tone for the new spaces and sensibilities we bring to the Houghton of today and the future.

Children's literature possesses an inherently broad appeal, as all of us were once (or are still) young, and many will recognize figures and stories from their own early days of consciousness and intellectual development; others will recall sharing these same stories with their children and grandchildren. While we welcome feelings of delight and nostalgia, this exhibition—and children's literature in general—quickly reveals itself as a much more potent source for understanding our collective past and present.

Though rarely a haven for young people, most rare book and manuscript libraries seek to collect and preserve the important titles of children's literature for a variety of reasons. Good children's literature is simply good literature, and its inclusion within a library provides important sources for literary study. The interplay of text and image central to children's literature has created innovations in illustration processes that have transcended the genre. As we seek to preserve and better understand the ways humans have communicated with one

another throughout history, children's literature has much to teach us about how our methods of literary production have evolved. Perhaps most importantly, in conscious and unconscious ways, children's books teach customs and mores; they represent one particularly potent way a society transmutes its values from generation to generation. A critical reading of children's books reveals important aspects of our social and cultural history, showing a wide range of human experience, perspective, foibles, and triumphs. All of these elements can be easily seen in this exhibition, and all serve the primary goals of Houghton's exhibition program: displaying selections from our collections to draw more patrons into our reading rooms, more faculty and students into our classrooms, and to promote cultural enrichment at Harvard and beyond.

Animals Are Us succeeds in providing an engaging and aesthetically pleasing experience for visitors, but it also makes an even greater contribution. It makes a new set of arguments about an approach commonly taken by the authors and illustrators of children's literature: anthropomorphism. A quick glance through my own kids' bookshelves reveals the White Rabbit, Peter Rabbit, Frog and Toad, Elephant and Piggie, Stuart Little, the Richard Scarry universe, and many others. This exhibition and catalog celebrate and interrogate this genre, showing us its potential—and its pitfalls. For while literary anthropomorphism offers children a way to learn by immersing themselves in stories marvelous and ordinary, it has, until recently, uncritically mirrored the values and prejudices of dominant cultures. This exhibition takes us through the genre's historical trajectory: from early morality tales to twentieth-century archetypes of social class (Toad in his motoring clothes vaunts the carelessness of the upper class, while the pig Wilbur

only wants the right to live out his life). Issues around cultural appropriation and the reclaiming of historical stories lead into modern, more conscious, tales that better reflect the true diversity of our societies today: young Julián lives his dream of becoming a mermaid; an Ojibwe girl experiences firsthand how intertwined the lives of dogs and humans are; and a new Sam outwits the old tigers. We leave the exhibition with a greater sense of the capacity of children's literature to reflect and promote a more inclusive society and culture.

Last but not least, the exhibition serves as a celebration of the gift of a major collection by Houghton's great friends and supporters, Peter J. Solomon (Harvard College Class of 1960, MBA 1963) and Susan Solomon. The Solomons' gift inspired and enabled the exhibition, and magnificent selections from their collection can be found throughout it. Over the course of several decades, Peter Solomon has built a collection distinguished by its rarity and quality, including first editions, drawings for book illustrations, manuscripts, letters, and other materials. Peter professes a love of whimsy and nonsense and, appropriately, his collection is particularly strong in Lewis Carroll (including a copy of the suppressed 1865 edition of *Alice in Wonderland*), Beatrix Potter, and Edward Lear, among many other authors and illustrators.

Houghton has at times been described as a "collection of collections," and in donating his books to the library, Peter joins a proud group of Harvard alumni who have turned a private passion into a public good. Though Houghton has included important exemplars of children's literature among its collections to date, the Solomon collection takes our holdings in this area to a new level and provides a strong foundation for a new collecting emphasis for the Department of Printing

and Graphic Arts. This gift represents Peter's commitment to the academic endeavor at the heart of Houghton Library, and what's truly exciting to consider about Peter's collection is the research and teaching it will enable for current and future Harvard faculty and students, as well as the international scholarly community the library serves. This exhibition demonstrates the potential of Peter's collection to open new opportunities for intellectual engagement, and it embodies a spirit of critical inquiry that has characterized Peter's life and career.

Peter J. Solomon's support of Houghton transcends the gift of his remarkable collection. Peter is a longtime supporter of Harvard and its libraries whom I first met in April 2016 when he visited Houghton. Our meeting had been arranged by the rare book dealer Justin Schiller and Hope Mayo, former Philip Hofer Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts, to discuss the donation of his collection. During a tour of the library, Peter saw the same limitations of and potential for the Houghton Library building that we had begun to envision. He encouraged Sarah Thomas, former Roy E. Larsen Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and me to develop our thinking for a renovation, thus serving as the catalyst for the project that ultimately transformed Houghton. Peter contributed important insight into all phases of the design process for the renovation; he generously provided vital underwriting for construction costs, thereby clearing the way for the project to proceed; and he funded important elements and enabled the library to secure donations from other sources. In recognition of Peter's gift to the university, the gate to Harvard Yard facing Houghton has been redesigned and commemorated as the Peter J. Solomon Gate. Astute observers

will notice design elements that capture Peter's sense of whimsy and serve to unite the gate with the library and our newly acquired collection of children's literature. The renovation of the Houghton building has created an environment within which scholars, students, and library visitors will engage with Peter's books for generations.

Houghton could not have acquired the Solomon Collection and installed this exhibition without an army of contributors. Our gratitude goes out to guest curators H. Nichols B. Clark and Meghan Melvin; exhibition advisory board members Katie Egan Cunningham, Mary Ann Cappiello, Erika Thulin Dawes, Grace Enriquez, and Mary Newell DePalma; advisors Justin Schiller and Tom Lecky; Harvard staff Martha Whitehead, Sarah Thomas, Roger Cheever, Robert Zinck, Carie McGinnis, Laura Larkin, Susi Barbarossa, Peter Accardo, Jennifer Dunlap, Adrien Hilton, Naomi Handler, Mitch Nakaue, Micah Hoggatt, Mary Haegert, Monique Duhaime, Hope Mayo, and many others too numerous to list. Anne-Marie Eze, Houghton's Director of Scholarly and Public Programs and acting Philip Hofer Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts, deserves special praise and recognition for spearheading the exhibition, catalog, and programming associated with this exhibition and Houghton's reopening.

THOMAS HYRY

*Associate University Librarian for Archives and Special Collections
and Florence Fearrington Librarian of Houghton Library*



Courtesy of the Solomons

Susan and Peter J. Solomon.

A is for Alice: The Solomon Collection of Children's Literature

PETER J. SOLOMON

Susan and I are honored that the opening exhibit at the renovated Houghton Library is devoted to our collection of children's books, illustrations, and manuscripts. In particular, we thank Thomas Hyry, the Associate University Librarian for Archives and Special Collections and Florence Ferrington Librarian of Houghton Library; H. Nichols B. Clark and Meghan Melvin, who have curated the exhibit under the direction of Anne-Marie Eze, Director of Scholarly and Public Programs and acting Philip Hofer Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts; Sarah Thomas, former University Librarian; her successor Martha Whitehead, the Roy E. Larson Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; and Hope Mayo, former Hofer curator.

Books, rare and otherwise, are endangered. Hopefully, the increased accessibility to Houghton will entice more undergraduates and visitors to experience the thrill of holding a rare text in their hands, enjoy the delight of reading a manuscript or letter, and see the original of illustrations they have long admired. We also hope that the addition of our collection to Houghton's already robust holdings of children's literature will stimulate more academic and popular interest in the field, including exhibits, lectures, and seminars.

Collecting children's books and related illustration art might seem an unusual hobby for an investment banker whose career has focused on advising owners and senior executives on strategic financial decisions. It is not even in the mainstream of collecting, where collectors may acquire recognized art or participate in widely attended exhibitions and auctions. Book collecting is a lonely pursuit, and even for bibliophiles,

focusing on children's literature and associated illustrations may seem idiosyncratic.

Our collection began in 1981. The catalyst was a reading list at the Collegiate School, which my brother and I had attended, in New York. My goal was quite simple: to replicate the list and add other first editions of books that an American elementary school student would have read at the time of their original publication.

Upon reflection, my decision to collect American children's literature evolved naturally. American history always interested me; my grandparents lived in Salem and Boston, so visits often involved excursions to colonial sites. My favorite poem in elementary school was Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride."

After graduating from Harvard in 1960 and Harvard Business School in 1963, I joined Lehman Brothers and bought a 1780 colonial house in Connecticut featuring wide floorboards, beamed ceilings, a beehive chimney, and, in the parlor, a "coffin" door. American folk art seemed the appropriate complement for the home. I began to frequent Saturday flea markets and met wonderful dealers like Avis and Rock Gardner, who scoured the countryside for furniture, books, maps, etchings—any historic item. As the years passed, I often mused that it would have been wise to have bought every item they suggested.

Fortunately, Jacob Blanck had produced the bibliography *Peter Parley to Penrod*, a compendium of "those outstanding books which have withstood the years of change in reading tastes and are favorites still." The bibliography, which runs from 1830 to 1938, includes familiar novels such as the *Uncle Remus* books, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Varmint*,

as well as other classics like *Call of the Wild*, *The Man without a Country*, and *Green Mountain Boys*. The bibliography also included a number of titles I wasn't familiar with: *Robert and Harold or The Young Marooners on the Florida Coast*, *The Flight of Pony Baker: A Boy's Town Story*, and *Barnaby Lee*.

Through Julian Edison, whose miniature book collection is now at Houghton and who contributed financially to the room housing this exhibit, I had the good fortune to meet the expert in children's literature Justin Schiller. Justin's thoughtful guidance over the past forty years has made the depth and breadth of our collection possible. He has found treasures that were thought lost, such as Lewis Carroll's letter to his publisher explaining why the cover of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* had to be red; he has advised me against pursuing items that might not be authentic; and, most importantly, he has encouraged me to purchase books and illustrations that seemed, at the time, too esoteric and costly, such as a Hans Christian Andersen papercut from the mid-1860s that added immeasurably to our holdings. Justin's good judgement proved to me time and again the adage that a collector rarely regrets his excesses but almost always regrets his economies. Finally, Justin insisted that items be in the best possible condition, and therefore we rejected those that did not meet this standard. Our collection is a tribute to Justin, his friendship, and his knowledge.

After acquiring the books included in *Peter Parley*, thereby satisfying my first goal, I began to search more extensively. Just as with imagination, there are no boundaries to children's literature. Every country has its own body of children's literature, and one book alone, *Alice*, has been translated into 174 languages. Neither my pocketbook nor my residences could accommodate all aspects of the field, so



Photograph: Dennis M. V. David

Peter J. Solomon and Justin Schiller looking at items from Peter's collection at the Solomon home.

I needed a plan. By the late 1980s, I had decided to organize my growing collection according to five criteria.

First, I extended my range in American children's literature to include books that were published and read widely while I was growing up in the 1940s. *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little* are in the exhibit (cat. nos. 47, 48, and 37, respectively). Additionally, I bought familiar books such as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Millions of Cats*, *The Story of Ferdinand* (cat. nos. 38, 44, and 52), *The Torn Book*, *Paddle-to-the-Sea*, and

volumes written by John R. Tunis about the Brooklyn Dodgers, such as *The Kid from Tomkinsville*.

Second, I bought books that are considered "classics"—but only if I could understand the language, which for me meant English and French. English-language highlights included *A Christmas Carol*, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, *Treasure Island*, and *Little Black Sambo* (cat. no. 34). I was lucky to find Jean de La Fontaine's 1668 edition of *Fables choisies* (cat. no. 8), and Justin brought me the 1697 second printing of Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, better known under its more familiar title of *Tales of Mother Goose* (cat. no. 4). I passed up a German manuscript of an unpublished Grimm Brothers fairy tale but did acquire the first English translation of their two volumes of tales illustrated by George Cruikshank.

Subsequently, I widened my vision to include English illustrators and authors due to their influence on children's literature and illustrations. Beatrix Potter—her letters, books and original art—became central to my collection, but I did not ignore Randolph Caldecott or his contemporary, Kate Greenaway.

Third, as I expanded my holdings, I realized that original material is often more interesting than first editions because it reflects the creative process. The exhibit, for example, includes Beatrix Potter's letter to the magazine *The Horn Book* explaining why she wrote *Peter Rabbit*, her fourteen-foot manuscript of *The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit*, and one of her picture letters (cat. nos. 58, 57, and 42).

A fourth theme is that of nonsense. Collecting examples of nonsense in literature seemed a natural outgrowth of my view of most events that I have witnessed in politics and

finance, two areas in which I have spent considerable time. Limericks attracted me, so Edward Lear became an anchor of the collection. In the exhibit, you will find Lear's manuscript for a pictorial alphabet, presented to the son of Poet Laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson (cat. no. 28). The collection includes a number of other Lear items, including Arthur A. Houghton Jr.'s own two-volume set of the first printing of Lear's seventy-three limericks.

Of course, *Alice* is at the confluence of both children's literature and nonsense. As I became more adventuresome, I acquired a copy of the virtually unobtainable 1865 "suppressed" *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (cat. no. 49D) and a first edition of *Through the Looking Glass* with thirty-eight bound-in original drawings by John Tenniel, as well as a number of other books, letters, and drawings by Carroll and Tenniel. The exhibit includes Carroll's nine ink drawings—the copies of Tenniel's illustrations he created for Alice Liddell so she could see them prior to the book's publication. I even bought the pocket watch owned by Oxford don Charles Dodgson (cat. no. 49A). Fifth, Josh Solomon (Class of 1990), our son, has always favored *Oz* stories, so we collected most of the *Oz* titles, as well as several illustrated manuscripts created by L. Frank Baum's successors, Ruth Plumly Thompson and John Neill. L. Frank Baum's *Mother Goose in Prose* is displayed in the exhibit (cat. no. 20).

More recently, we discovered the genius of Maurice Sendak, whose poster drawing for the nonprofit group Reading Is Fun-damental is on display (cat. no. 60). We have since broadened our Sendak collection and believe that he, as well as Potter, Caldecott, and others, deserve to be recognized as fine artists and should not be relegated to the category of illustrators.



Photograph: Harvard Library

Peter J. Solomon presenting a copy of the 1865 "suppressed" *Alice* to Thomas Hyry and Sarah Thomas for Houghton.

My mother would say that the process of buying an item adds to its enjoyment. This is true, but equally true are our memories of the material that has eluded us. The most unfortunate was my short-lived acquisition of one of the few Hans Christian Andersen picture book manuscripts still in private hands. Having purchased it over the telephone at a Danish auction, the Hans Christian Andersen Birthplace Museum in Odense exercised its right to refuse an export license despite our promise to gift it to Houghton. But such is life in the auction arena.

This exhibit, in short, is a glimpse into my passion for children's material. What seemed early on to be an eccentric hobby developed into a greater appreciation for its influence on the morals and mores of young people. It also led me to appreciate the value of fantasy, of adventure, and of nonsense. We are pleased that the bulk of our collection will find a permanent home at Harvard, where it can be studied and enjoyed.

“Indelible Impressions”: Why Children’s Books Are Important

H. NICHOLS B. CLARK

This exhibition catalog celebrates Peter J. and Susan Solomon’s donation of their exemplary collection of children’s books to Houghton Library and their generous support of the library’s building renovation, recently recognized by the University.¹ Significantly, the Solomon collection comprises the first gift of its kind to enter Harvard’s libraries: one dedicated almost exclusively to children’s literature. This collection profoundly augments Houghton’s legacy holdings of children’s books, especially the materials published after 1950. Those holdings were small enough that Harvard, Houghton Library, and Houghton curator Philip Hofer did not appear in Justin Schiller’s recent discussion of the legitimacy of collecting rare children’s books.² The Solomon gift has changed all that; thus, it is fitting to put the Solomons’ passion for children’s books into the context of Houghton’s remarkable collections and the current debate on why children’s books matter.

Why *do* children’s books matter? As an artist dedicated to illustrating children’s books and the acknowledged father of illustration in America, Howard Pyle asserted their significance in a letter to a patron: “In one’s mature years, one forgets the books that one reads, but the stories of childhood leave an indelible impression, and their author always has a niche in the temple of memory from which the image is never cast to be thrown into the rubbish-heap of things that are outgrown and outlived.”³ Pyle’s assessment of the significance of children’s literature and their illustrations has often augmented the worth of juvenile literature. Lewis Carroll had his Sir John Tenniel; L. Frank Baum his W. W. Denslow; A. A. Milne his E. H. Shepard; and

E. B. White his Garth Williams, to name a few. Additionally, author-illustrators also benefited immeasurably from their dual talents, and Randolph Caldecott, Edward Lear, Beatrix Potter, Wanda Gág, and Maurice Sendak serve as exemplars.

In his insightful essay in the present catalog, Mr. Solomon (Harvard College Class of 1960, MBA 1963) describes the genesis of his collection as centered on a reading list of primarily twentieth-century books distributed by his elementary school that he supplemented in 1981 with Jacob Blanck's bibliography (1938) of mostly nineteenth-century books that an elementary school student might have read, a choice that created a connection to Harvard's previous holdings. Clearly pedagogy and pleasure commingled here; but the heart of his collecting later gravitated to some of the legendary figures in the field. The Solomons' taste and passion is manifest in their choice collection of Lewis Carroll material that significantly enhances the remarkable compilation assembled by Harcourt Amory (Class of 1876) and held at Houghton Library. The Solomons' donation includes important and rare editions (the 1865 edition is the only one at Houghton in the original cloth binding) as well as drawings by the hand of Carroll himself (cat. nos. 49D and 49C). The remarkable bound volume of Carroll's sketches after Tenniel's proofs were intended as a gift to the eponymous Alice Liddell. Initially thought to be in Tenniel's hand, the bound sketches were acquired by Justin Schiller, the long-standing advisor to the Solomons, who recognized the notations in the margin to be in the hand of Carroll (who had artistic aspirations) and ascertained that the drawings were by him as well.⁴ The Solomons' gift includes also wonderful additions to Houghton's Edward Lear collection (cat. no. 28), anchored by

the extraordinary donations of William B. Osgood Field and Philip Hofer (Class of 1921).⁵ Their edition of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (cat. no. 55) is inscribed by the author, making it very rare, since Sewell died shortly after the publication of her influential novel. Their copy of Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé: avec des moralitez* (1697; cat. no. 4) improves on Houghton's existing edition, as it contains the frontispiece lacking in the former.⁶

In particular, the Solomons' deep and varied holdings of Beatrix Potter and Maurice Sendak will significantly enhance Houghton's collection. Competition among collectors for these two masters is intense, and the Solomons have demonstrated keen determination, acquiring not only rare and early first editions of Potter's work, including the initial edition of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* privately printed by the author herself (1901; cat. no. 41), but also a wonderful assortment of drawings and watercolors. Arguably, the jewel in the crown is the magnificent watercolor final study for the published accordion book, *The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit* (fig. 1; cat. no. 57). While almost none of Sendak's art for his picture books comes on



FIGURE 1. Beatrix Potter. Fierce bad rabbit eating carrots on a bench while being stalked by a hunter, from *The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit*.

the market, many of his beloved characters turn up in other formats, such as a drawing for a poster of Max and the Wild Things, who assure us “reading is fun-damental” (cat. no. 60).

To his great good fortune, in the early 1980s, Mr. Solomon sought out Justin Schiller, one of the luminaries in the antiquarian children’s-book trade, while searching for a special gift.⁷ This encounter blossomed into a long and fruitful relationship. When Mr. Solomon began to consider a future home for his collection, he sought Schiller’s advice, who—knowing that his client was a Harvard alumnus—suggested Houghton. Initially Mr. Solomon demurred, having been exasperated, like so many undergraduates, by the lack of access to this library in the late fifties. This resistance notwithstanding, Schiller engineered an introduction to Hope Mayo, then Philip Hofer Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts. She forged a strong relationship with the collector, who came to recognize that Houghton had greatly broadened access to its collections since the 1960s, making it the logical repository for his collection today.

Although Houghton historically has been selective in its acquisition of children’s books, the library had nevertheless already amassed impressive holdings of the works of Edward Lear, donated by William B. Osgood Field and Philip Hofer (Class of 1921); of Lewis Carroll, collected by Harcourt Amory (Class of 1876) and given in his memory, along with endowed funds, by his widow Gertrude Amory; of Randolph Caldecott and Walter Crane, assembled by Caroline Miller Parker, spouse of Augustin Hamilton Parker (Class of 1897), who donated these collections in her memory, to name a few.⁸ With the addition of the extraordinary Solomon collection, Houghton emerges well placed to validate the importance of juvenile literature.

Despite the historical recognition of the importance of children’s books as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century,⁹ children’s books and their illustrators were disdained until the latter part of the twentieth century, primarily by the intelligentsia. Stigmatized with the prevailing opinion, “Anyone can write a children’s book,” and thus not worthy of serious consideration, the genre struggled for validation. The rare, if not sole, exception was Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865; cat. no. 49D), which was unquestionably highly sophisticated; Carroll was teaching at Oxford at the time, which accorded him justifiable credentials. Happily, the tide of opinion has turned, and serious scholarship about children’s literature has proliferated in the last four decades.

This current state developed over three centuries, beginning with the recognition, by the mid-seventeenth century, of literacy as the conduit to learning—and therefore salvation. Bibles, prayer books, alphabets, primers, and catechisms constituted the core of early modern publishing for the young pupil. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Czech philosopher Johann Amos Comenius was pioneering a progressive approach to education, emphasizing observation and interpretation; he also recognized the value of images in reinforcing the learning process. Later in the century, the English philosopher John Locke lamented the dearth of suitable books for children and suggested that effective education flourished where elements of “play and recreation” existed, making learning a game rather than a chore.¹⁰ Children were perceived as a tabula rasa, and too often their capacity to learn was underestimated. A notable exception a century later was Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, author of the best known version of *Beauty and the Beast* (1756), who observed

in 1760, “We don’t form a true judgment of the capacity of children; nothing is out of their reach . . .”¹¹ By the middle of the eighteenth century, children’s books enjoyed wide distribution on both sides of the Atlantic, and publishers and booksellers were aggressively targeting this market—a phenomenon that exists to this day. All the books in this exhibition assert the importance of children’s literature, and a selective survey confirms this assertion.

After a hundred and twenty years, why does *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* still resonate so deeply with young audiences? Disobedience and its consequences still mesmerize the child. With this theme, Potter’s work anticipates another subversively iconic book of the twentieth century, Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are*, whose characters feature in the poster *Reading is Fun-damental* (ca. 1979; cat. no. 60). Significantly, Potter was one of Sendak’s literary heroes. Potter had to self-publish *Peter*, and when it emerged as an immediate phenomenal success, a publisher came running, and Potter’s career was launched.

Like Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908; cat. no. 43), A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926; cat. no. 51) evolved out of bedtime stories for his young son Christopher. This book, with its cast of talking stuffed animals and delightfully innocent episodes, has prospered even in the most cynical of times. Its success and enduring fame benefited further from its Disneyfication, and it became a pop culture phenomenon.

From an unruly rabbit and copacetic stuffed animals, we turn to a pacifist bull who prefers to smell the flowers rather than fight in the ring. Published in 1936, *The Story of Ferdinand* (fig. 2; cat. no. 52) became a lightning rod for controversy, garnering outrage from all sides of the political spectrum. These

unintended consequences only fueled sales, and the Oscar-winning cartoon of 1938 further ensured *Ferdinand*’s legacy. Deceptively sophisticated, the text is succinct, the drawing deft, and the characterization irresistible; after more than eighty years, *The Story of Ferdinand* continues to engage readers young and old with its gentle message of self-worth.



FIGURE 2. Robert Lawson. “It was [Ferdinand the Bull’s] favorite tree and he would sit in its shade all day and smell the flowers,” from *The Story of Ferdinand*.

Eighty-two years ago, Robert McCloskey was what we would call “an emerging talent.” In 1939, at the age of twenty-five, he won a Rome Prize, entitling him to a two-year residence at the American Academy in Rome. However, the onset of World War II forced him to defer this opportunity and sent him down a different career path. Like many professional artists, McCloskey turned to writing and illustrating children’s books. He brought a highly accomplished draftsmanship to this calling. His second original effort, *Make Way for Ducklings* (1941; cat. no. 45), won the prestigious Caldecott Medal in 1942. In his acceptance speech, McCloskey observed self-deprecatingly, “I’m not a children’s illustrator. I’m just an artist who, among other things, does children’s books.”¹² Published in wartime, the narrative’s reassuring and universal message on the importance of family (albeit one of ducks), struck a powerful chord.

Wanda Gág also figured among this cohort of professional artists and illustrators. Her *Millions of Cats* (1928; fig. 3; cat. no. 44), highly innovative in terms of layout, garnered a 1929 Newbery Honor—the second-highest accolade for children’s-book writing bestowed by the American Library Association. Gág enjoyed commercial success and prestige in her primary career as a printmaker, having attracted the notice of Alfred Stieglitz and fellow Minnesotan, Georgia O’Keeffe. Gág imbued both of her vocations with commensurate gravitas, taking her illustration as seriously as her fine art.

E. B. White produced two of the most enduring books for the young reader: *Stuart Little* (1945; fig. 4; cat. no. 37) and *Charlotte’s Web* (1952; cat. nos. 47 and 48). The former created a stir with its initial description of Stuart, a mouse, “born” into the human Little family. Later, this phrasing was

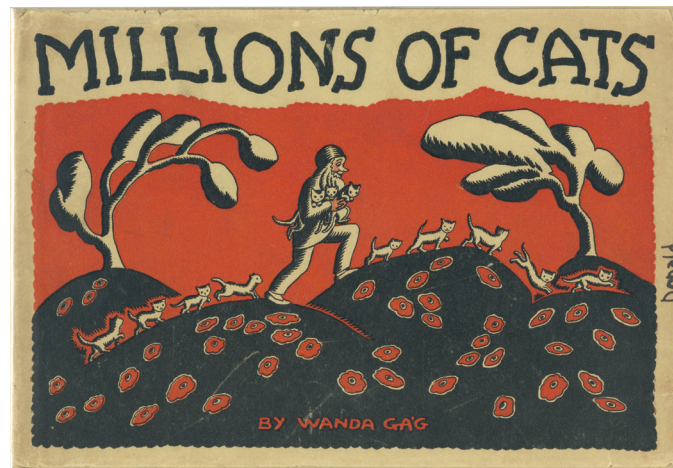


FIGURE 3. Wanda Gág. Cover image, featuring the old man walking amidst a parade of cats, from *Millions of Cats*.

amended to “arrived.” Despite the efforts of Anne Carroll Moore, an influential arbiter of children’s books, to suppress the book on the grounds of the “unnatural” birth, *Stuart* proved irresistible, and the book has enjoyed enormous commercial success as well as recent serious consideration by Jill Lepore.¹³ The later *Charlotte’s Web* is a tear-jerker, with its themes of friendship, sacrifice, salvation, and death. Both books benefited immeasurably from the consummate drawings of Garth Williams, whose images of Stuart or Wilbur leave the reader with that all-important “indelible impression.”

Instructional readers have an enduring and important history and have a long-standing presence in Harvard’s libraries, one formalized in the late nineteenth century by



FIGURE 4. Garth Williams. Frontispiece: the Little family meets Stuart, from *Stuart Little*.

the creation of a class for juvenilia, “Juv,” within its library classification system. They form a bridge to literacy. And they can be mind-numbingly dull; in 1954, John Hersey published an article to this effect.¹⁴ In the wake of this critique, Theodor Geisel (a.k.a. Dr. Seuss) accepted the challenge of creating an irresistible beginner children’s book utilizing 225 different words. Seuss expanded this number to 236, and in *The Cat in the Hat* (1957; cat. no. 39), he created a literary, educational, and commercial phenomenon. With its subversive theme of a mischievous cat who disrupts the otherwise mundane day of two children left at home to their own devices—no helicopter parents here—the book launched an extraordinarily successful imprint, Random House’s Beginner Books. For decades, this book enjoyed “beloved” status, but has been excoriated recently for its subliminal racist imagery.¹⁵ *The Cat in the Hat* joins several other “classics” in the exhibition that have come under scrutiny for racial insensitivity, and these important new perspectives in academic circles indicate that children’s books are, indeed, instrumental in raising issues of social awareness.

Two other revered, though controversial, books have been rehabilitated after similarly drawing increased scholarly attention. Recent critical assessment of Joel Chandler Harris’s *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* (1895; cat. no. 33) is wildly mixed, ranging from adulation to vitriolic condemnation.¹⁶ Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Maria Tatar offer a penetrating analysis of *Uncle Remus* in their recent anthology of African American folktales.¹⁷ Some consider these adaptations, based on tales handed down orally by enslaved Africans, to be revolutionary in their use of dialect and animal personages. Most likely these stories originated in African “trickster” tales, such as those centered on Anansi the Spider, whereby

animals drive the narrative, not unlike in *Aesop's Fables*.¹⁸ The opposite viewpoint contends that these tales are larcenous appropriations that deprive African Americans of a crucial element of their cultural identity. The Disney film *Song of the South* (1946) only fueled the flames with its unapologetic stereotypes. The difficult-to-pronounce dialect of *Uncle Remus*, acknowledged to be very accurate,¹⁹ relegated the stories to literary limbo. Teachers and librarians, among them the eminent African American Augusta Baker, loved the stories but found the texts impossible to recite. Happily, the 1980s saw the resurrection of the stories in accessible mainstream English with tinges of dialect.

It is fitting that Augusta Baker, a pioneering librarian who advocated greater dignity in literature for children of color, wrote the introduction to Julius Lester and Jerry Pinkney's modernized version of Harris's work, *The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit* (1987; cat. no. 35). Despite her reservations about the original, Baker "loved the stories and appreciated Brer Rabbit as a cultural hero and significant part of [her] heritage." Lester, who transformed the stories' original dialect into more standard language, noted in his foreword that the stories occupy a "singular and undisputed" place in American culture. Jerry Pinkney's exquisitely detailed illustrations paid homage to A. B. Frost's gold-standard drawings from the 1895 edition; significantly, his frontispiece depicts a dignified Uncle Remus conversing with Brer Rabbit, perhaps anticipating the conflation of animal and human characteristics in the ensuing pages. This interpretation constituted a profound departure from the much-criticized traditional scene of Uncle Remus sharing the stories with his white master's son.

Helen Bannerman could never have anticipated that her diminutive story, *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1899; cat. no. 34), would engender such a tumultuous history, beginning with Britain's imperialist presence in India and later extending to civil rights activism and racial politics in the United States. Originally written to amuse her two daughters, Bannerman aspired to publish her story, succeeding at the expense of allowing the story to enter the public domain. The subsequent loss of royalties and editorial control triggered a noxious legacy whereby the story became fodder for commercial exploitation at the expense of African American dignity.

Initially, Black librarians grudgingly accepted the book, since it was one of the very few that contained characters of color. By the early 1930s, however, the volume came under increasingly intense criticism and disappeared from lists of books recommended for children of color. Many acknowledged the narrative's merit, with its vulnerable underdog outwitting self-absorbed predators, but determined that both the story and the illustrations needed to be reframed. Fortunately, that occurred with the publication of *Sam and the Tigers: A New Telling of Little Black Sambo* in 1996 (fig. 5; cat. no. 36). Lester and Pinkney set out to return the highly inflammatory *Little Black Sambo* to the mainstream. Lester contended the story "transcended stereotypes" and admired its "truth of the imagination." Similarly affected by the story from childhood, Pinkney wanted to revisit, reclaim, and redeem the story. The team produced a radical makeover. Pinkney also insinuated sly references to characters from *Uncle Remus*, such as when Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and Brer Wolf attend the culminating pancake supper, thus discreetly connecting these two controversial books.



FIGURE 5. Jerry Pinkney. “A few minutes later Sam and Sam came back with Miss Cat, Mr. Elephant, Brer Rabbit, Mrs. Monkey, Mr. Giraffe, Brer Fox, and Brer Wolf. They were talking about the happenings in the community. Seems like Brer Tiger had disappeared that morning and nobody could find them. Sam smiled but didn’t say a word.”

Substance, quality, and controversy (framed by intellectual discourse) have raised the reputation of children’s books since the 1980s. Consequently, all the books in this exhibition are important. Children’s books have gained hard-earned respect and, whether geared to the young reader/listener, the beginning reader, or the more advanced reader, they are the portal to extraordinary realms. As Tony Kushner wrote in tribute to Maurice Sendak, “Children’s literature makes us fall in love with books and we never recover—we are doomed.”²⁰

This exhibition, as any exhibition, presents only a sampling, whether personal or institutional. Houghton Library is fortunate, indeed, that through the years it has been guided by prescient curators, such as Philip Hofer, Eleanor M. Garvey, Anne Anninger, and Hope Mayo, among others. Likewise, the library has been embraced by generous collectors, such as

William B. Osgood Field; John McAndrew (Class of 1924) and his wife Betty McAndrew; and Bayard Livingston Kilgour (Class of 1927) and his spouse Kate Gray Kilgour. Thus, there is no better way to celebrate a new era in Houghton’s history than the exquisite marriage of the library’s legendary holdings with the superb collection of Peter J. and Susan Solomon.

NOTES

- 1 See Kaitlin Buckley, “A New Vision for Houghton Library,” *The Harvard Gazette*, January 14, 2019, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/01/a-new-vision-for-harvards-houghton-library/>; Annie C. Doris and Sahana G. Srinivasan, “Donor’s Collection of Children’s Literature Sparks Houghton Library Renovations to Increase Accessibility,” *The Harvard Crimson*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/1/25/houghton-renovations-accessibility/>; and Jacob Sweet, “A Sense of Belonging: A Renovation to Make Houghton Library ‘Open to All,’” *Harvard Magazine*, May–June 2019, <https://harvardmagazine.com/2019/05/houghton-renovation-renewal>.
- 2 Justin G. Schiller, “Bibliophiles in the Nursery: The Gradual Legitimacy of Collecting Rare Children’s Books,” in *One Hundred Books Famous in Children’s Literature*, ed. Jill Shefrin (New York: The Grolier Club, 2014), 27–32.
- 3 Howard Pyle to Peveril Meigs, May 8, 1909, Archives of the Delaware Art Museum.
- 4 This information was provided by Justin G. Schiller, a key figure in helping build Mr. Solomon’s collection, in an email to the author, May 31, 2020.
- 5 Hope Mayo, “The Edward Lear Collection at Harvard University,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 22, nos. 2–3 (2012): 69–124. For a substantive account of Philip Hofer’s life and career, see William Bentinck-Smith, “Prince of the Eye: Philip Hofer and the Harvard Library,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 32, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 317–347. For aspects of his collection, see Eleanor M. Garvey’s introduction in *A Catalogue of an Exhibition of The Philip Hofer Bequest in the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard College Library, 1988).
- 6 Justin G. Schiller, email to the author, May 5, 2020.
- 7 Ibid.

- 8 See Francesca Tancini, "The Caroline Miller Parker Collection of the Work of Walter Crane: A History and Survey of the Collection," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 26, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2015): 87–170.
- 9 See Jill Shefrin's contribution, "Pity that any Children should be . . . brought up . . . without the Skill of Reading," in *One Hundred Books Famous in Children's Literature*, ed. Jill Shefrin (New York: The Grolier Club, 2014), 33–38.
- 10 John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education. By Mr. John Locke*, 7th ed. (London: printed for A. and J. Churchill, and sold by John Kent, at the Black Swan and Bible in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1712), 227. Available in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, http://estc.bl.uk/F/JRH1LS3SK6T1CMKVA158G8YTX18DR7HCX9JGGL62XPFUQ4U86-24835?func=full-set-set&set_number=032356&set_entry=000005&format=999, accessed July 21, 2020.
- 11 Shefrin, "Pity," 37.
- 12 Robert McCloskey's Caldecott acceptance speech, quoted in Michael Patrick Hearn's introduction "Discover, Explore, Enjoy," in *Myth, Magic, and Mystery, One Hundred Years of American Children's Book Illustration*, ed. Liliane McCarthy (Boulder, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1996), 4.
- 13 Jill Lepore, "The Lion and the Mouse, The Battle that Reshaped Children's Literature," *New Yorker*, July 14, 2008, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/07/21/the-lion-and-the-mouse>.
- 14 John Hersey, "Why Do Students Bog Down on First 'R'?" *Life*, May 24, 1954: 136–150.
- 15 Philip Nel, *Was the Cat in the Hat Black? The Hidden Racism of Children's Literature and the Need for Diverse Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 31–66.
- 16 For a survey of critical essays, see R. Bruce Bickley, ed., *Critical Essays on Joel Chandler Harris* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981) and R. Bruce Bickley and Hugh T. Keenan, eds., *Joel Chandler Harris: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1977–1996 with Supplement, 1892–1976* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997).
- 17 See "Joel Chandler Harris and the Uncle Remus Tales," in *The Annotated African American Folk Tales*, eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Maria Tatar (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018), 177–197. Interestingly, the decision to include this tale engendered extensive discussion between the two editors, with Professor Gates's commitment to inclusion carrying the day.
- 18 See Gates Jr. and Tatar's "Introduction: Recovering a Cultural Tradition," in *The Annotated African American Folk Tales*, lxxvi, as well as the chapter "Making Sense of Anansi: Stories, Wisdom, and Contradiction," 3–24.
- 19 Sumner Ives, "Dialect Differentiation in the Stories of Joel Chandler Harris," *American Literature* 27, no. 1 (March 1955): 88–96. Ives's analysis has been endorsed as recently as 2010; see Rudolph Troike, "Assessing the Authenticity of Joel Chandler Harris's Use of Gullah," *American Speech* 85, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 287–314, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2010-017>.
- See Erin K. Davis, Joy Gillispie Lowery, and Aaron B. Wellborn, eds., *One Hundred Years of Little Black Sambo: A Catalogue of the Collection* (St. Louis: Special Collections, Washington University Libraries, 2008).
- 20 Tony Kushner, *The Art of Maurice Sendak: 1980 to the Present* (New York: Abrams, 2003), 78.

*The Pitfalls and Potential of Anthropomorphism
in Children's Literature*

KATIE EGAN CUNNINGHAM, MARY ANN CAPPIELLO,
ERIKA THULIN DAWES, GRACE ENRIQUEZ

Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human-specific characteristics (e.g., motivations, behaviors, actions) to nonhuman animals. Nikolajeva articulates three types of animal stories: animals in their natural environment with humanlike thoughts; animal fantasy, in which anthropomorphized animals are human stand-ins, living in humanlike communities; and finally, anthropomorphized animals “appearing or living among humans, as friends or intelligent pets.”¹ Stories with anthropomorphized animals living in the wild offer the child reader an early form of virtual reality—seeing and experiencing the natural world as animals do, filtered, of course, by human experience. Anthropomorphized animals as human stand-ins invite readers to experience human foibles and virtues through the safe distance provided by the animal characters. Those stories that foreground anthropomorphized animals as friends or family members bring readers’ fantasies to life. What would the family dog have to say? How animal-like is a younger sibling?

In this essay, we explore the history of the growing resistance to anthropomorphism as the diversity gap in children’s literature continues to gain traction and media attention, and as publishers are held more accountable. We also posit new ways of thinking about how children learn and engage with animal stories today, drawing on the books featured in the exhibition.

Stories with anthropomorphized animals emerged across the globe through oral storytelling thousands of years ago, often through “pourquoi” tales, that is, stories explaining natural phenomena. The ancient Greeks are credited with the first recorded academic discussion on the topic in the Western world,² and “[t]he tradition of casting different species of animal as models of virtue or vice can be traced back at least to Aesop.”³ Medieval European bestiaries described the attributes of real and mythical animals. In the modern era, *Orbis Pictus* (1658; cat. no. 3), provided the child reader with factual information about animals. With the advent of the printing press in Europe, folktales and fairy tales (often known as wonder tales) were published beginning in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, though they were not intended exclusively for children.⁴ While Enlightenment thinking and Puritanical ideals of the eighteenth century discouraged the reading of these wonder tales in Europe and the North American colonies of England, the nineteenth century saw an expansion of such publications, thanks to the efforts of German writers such as the Brothers Grimm and Heinrich Hoffmann (cat. nos. 6 and 27). Some of these stories also included anthropomorphized animals.

The development of children’s literature in England in the 1740s signaled a cultural shift in the recognition of children and childhood. While still serving as a tool to instruct children on topics and issues of knowledge and social beliefs, children’s literature became a tool for entertainment. As the rational ideals of the Enlightenment gave way to the more playful ideas of the Romantic movement, animal stories became popular as an outgrowth of this transition, with “the belief in the child’s unity with nature”⁵ combined with “the didactic

function characteristic of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century animal stories for children, in which compassionate values are advocated in the narrative.”⁶

In the late twentieth century, as part of a larger movement toward the diversification of children’s literature, new wonder tales and pourquoi tales from around the world, some with anthropomorphized animals, were published, such as the 1973 Caldecott Honor-winning *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti*, adapted and illustrated by Gerald McDermott. Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, books with animal characters continued to appear on publisher’s annual lists.

THE PITFALLS OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Anthropomorphism appears in pre-primers, primers, first readers, picture books, and novels written for children. However, its wide use in children’s literature is not without controversy. Critique has centered around the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes about minoritized races and cultures, the normalization of white culture, and issues of representation.

Perpetuating Stereotypes

Examples abound of the use of animal characters to denigrate particular cultural groups. Children’s literature, like other forms of popular media, can perpetuate harmful stereotypes through both words and images. Arguably the most notorious example of stereotyping in children’s literature is included in this exhibition. Helen Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo* (1899; cat. no. 34) includes the offensive nicknames for and illustrations of a dark-skinned boy. Bannerman composed and illustrated the story for her children. The story was set in India, where they

lived, and originally depicted an Indian protagonist, but when Bannerman lost copyright to the story, reproductions were created which further exaggerated the stereotypical images and more clearly conjured an association with negative African American images. Although the anthropomorphized animals themselves are not the issue, Langston Hughes identified the problematic consequence of these alterations and the boy's interaction with them, stating that they were "amusing undoubtedly to the white child, but like an unkind word to one who has known too many hurts to enjoy the additional pain of being laughed at."⁷ Such stereotypes obscured the ingenuity and spunk of the young boy as he outwits talking tigers in the original storyline. Subsequent versions of the story have attempted to reclaim this aspect. Perhaps the most notable of these retellings is that of renowned African American artists Julius Lester (author) and Jerry Pinkney (illustrator). *Sam and the Tigers* (1996; cat. no. 36), also included in this exhibition, centers on the individuality of Sam as he carefully selects the clothes his parents will purchase for him.⁸

Stereotyping through both text and illustration also appears in Maurice Sendak's *Alligators All Around: An Alphabet*, in *Nutshell Library* (1962; cat. no. 65). In this diminutive alphabet book, the page for the letter "I" includes the text "Imitating Indians" and depicts two alligators in feathered headdress, one carrying a tomahawk and the second smoking a peace pipe. Debbie Reese, founder of the *American Indians in Children's Literature* (AIICL) website, offers a strong critique of this entry:

First, imagine what the response would be if the alligators were imitating a different racial or ethnic group! Second, most readers of AIICL know that the

word "Indian" obscures the diversity that exists across the over 500 American Indian Nations in the U.S. today. Third, the page suggests that Indians wear multi-colored feathered headdresses, and carry tomahawks and smoke peace pipes. And of course, they do that and everything else with stern or stoic expressions.⁹

Another stereotype of indigenous Africans appears in Jean de Brunhoff's *The Travels of Babar* (1934), featuring the popular anthropomorphized pachyderm who is featured in de Brunhoff's alphabet book, also displayed in this exhibition (cat. nos. 29A and 29B). In *The Travels of Babar*, Babar and his wife Celeste are beset by "fierce and savage cannibals" who are half-clothed Black men.¹⁰ The Babar series has been broadly critiqued as an endorsement of French colonialism:

When Babar is juxtaposed with humans, with black "savages," and later with the rhinoceroses, racial distinctions become clear. Consequently, de Brunhoff's racist and stereotypical illustrations of blacks (representative of the bourgeois prejudice of French people) reinforce the colonialist binaries of black/white, master/slave, civilized/savage.¹¹

Racialized anthropomorphism is a subtle and systemic means for sustaining stereotypes and implicit bias. While it may be tempting to view images and language of beloved animal characters in children's books as fictitious and innocuous, these characters create lasting impressions on the imagination, as Langston Hughes articulated.

Today, more readers may recognize the images in "classic" children's books as racist, but debate exists on what to do with books that contain harmful language and images. Parents have

called for their censure, and librarians have removed them from shelves.¹² Children's literature scholar Philip Nel recommends using these books as springboards for dialogue about how and why the images offend.¹³ Citing the allusion to blackface performance and other racist imagery in the widely familiar *The Cat in the Hat* (Seuss 1957; cat. no. 39), Nel writes:

Considering the Cat's racial complexity both serves as an act of desegregation, acknowledging the "mixed bloodlines" (to borrow Shelley Fisher Fishkin's phrase) of canonical children's literature, and highlights how during the 1950s—a turning point for African Americans in children's literature—picture books were a site where race, representation, and power were actively being contested.¹⁴

The complexity of racialized anthropomorphism that Nel surfaces here would deepen across the next two decades and beyond.

Normalizing Whiteness

Many of the titles included in this exhibition reflect the didactic origins of children's literature and the ongoing tension for children's books to both instruct and amuse their readers. Approaching these titles through the lenses of postcolonial theory and critical race theory presents another point of contention: stories with morals consistent with de facto whiteness can fail to problematize whiteness as the norm to which all else is measured. Postcolonial theory challenges the hegemony of white European norms, advocating for more nuanced and more authentic representations of cultures, practices, and perspectives, while critical race theory highlights the ways in which race is used to maintain oppressive social

structures and institutional systems. The substitution of animal characters for humans make the normalization of whiteness more subtle, but no less impactful.

Beatrix Potter's books, several of which are included in the exhibition (cat. nos. 21, 41, and 57), have delighted generations of children. Their trim size, ideal for small readers' hands, and intricate watercolor illustrations of rolling fields, backyard gardens, and cozy animal homes invite the reader into a world where mice clean dollhouses, hedgehogs launder clothing, and frogs go fishing with poles. Potter's scientific exactitude revolutionized the children's book industry, and the backdrops against which her animals live are a visual feast of accurately painted flowers, leaves, and vegetables. Indeed, she recreated the flora and fauna of England's Lake District and the world in which she inhabited. But the creature comforts reflected in her books do not exist in a vacuum. The pastoral life reflected in Potter's books is a result of the outsized power and affluence England gained through imperialism and colonialism, thus normalizing the cultural norms and mores of white British culture and, due to their popularity, contributing to the ongoing global dissemination of that culture.

The enduring appeal of Potter's books is not, on its own, problematic, but hegemonic white culture as the default in children's literature is. Because diverse authors and illustrators continue to face barriers in the publishing world, children today still can't avail themselves of a range of anthropomorphized books with authentic and affirming representations of other cultures. As the publisher Lee and Low writes,

We're looking forward to the day creators of color will be able to tell their own stories and be given the same opportunities to write stories with animal characters or

talking inanimate objects that white authors are given. . . . But change will only happen when publishing recognizes that equity is crucial, that the world is rapidly changing, and that creators of color deserve the chance to have their voices heard too.¹⁵

Slowly, a more diverse body of work is developing, including picture books such as *Bowwow Powwow: Bagosenjige-niimi'idim* (cat. no. 66), included in the exhibition, as well as other recent works beyond those in the exhibition, such as *No Kimchi for Me!* and *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale*.¹⁶

Animals as Proxy for Humans

Criticism has also been applied to the substitution of animal characters for human characters in order to facilitate social dialogue. Talking, thinking, and acting animals have been used to soften socially controversial topics and invite children into dialogue around social issues and the dynamics of power, identity formation, and difference. Indeed, initiatives for cross-cultural understandings and interracial relationships, along with other cultural shifts in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, gave rise to narratives featuring the interactions of racialized animal characters of different species.¹⁷ The intent was constructive; the didactic stories illustrated how different humans could cooperate, intermingle, and learn to appreciate one another. Substituting animals for humans can provide children the emotional distance to join complicated conversations.

However, anthropomorphized animals in stories run the risk of presenting “difference as superficial, racism as an irrational response to superficial difference, and tolerance and integration as solutions to racism.”¹⁸ As an example, in *The*

Berenstain Bears: New Neighbors,¹⁹ Papa Bear confronts and overcomes his own prejudices when a family of panda bears moves in next door. Problematizing the use of animals as stand-ins for human characters, Bow states:

Such narratives offer thinly veiled social parables about overcoming species bias. Yet these visualizations are often at odds with their didactic intent, asking viewers to take pleasure in biological differences paradoxically in service to the message that such differences do not matter.²⁰

The trouble with using racialized animals to teach social lessons is that the markers ascribed to the animals to make them recognizable as a certain race consequently reinforce artificial distinctions. While using animals as a proxy for humans may offer children the comfort of distance from emotionally challenging subjects, it can also promote the separation of issues such as racism, classism, sexism, and ableism from temporal and spatial realities.²¹

Issues of Representation

Another problem in using anthropomorphized animals in children's literature is the sheer abundance of animal stories at the expense of a broader representation of humanity. In 1985, the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education began compiling data on children's books by and about Black authors published in the United States. Eventually, their efforts expanded to include other identity groups. The penchant for children's publishers, authors, and illustrators to use a variety of animals rather than a diverse array of humans extends beyond issues of race and ethnicity to any identity trait that

does not support the normalization of dominant cultures of gender, family structure, disability, religion, sexuality, and socioeconomic class. In 2018, the CCBC began specifically tracking books with animals and inanimate objects as subjects or protagonists in order to provide more statistics overall, using these numbers to produce an impactful infographic that succinctly summarizes the issue (fig. 1). The CCBC's most recent data (2020) demonstrates that children's books continue to favor the use of animals over depictions of diverse people to represent real-world situations for children to explore, as "books about white children, talking bears, trucks, monsters, potatoes, etc. represent nearly three quarters (71%) of children's and young adult books published in 2019."²² In that same year, only 11.9 percent of the books the CCBC received from publishers featured Black and African Americans as primary subjects or protagonists; 8.7 percent featured Asians and/or Asian Americans; 5.3 percent included major Latinx characters, and only 1 percent featured First Nations/Native Americans. Only 3.4 percent of these books reflect the (dis)ability experience, while 3.1 percent include LGBTQIAP individuals, and Pacific Islanders appear in .05 percent of books. (Beginning in 2020, the CCBC will also track books written, illustrated by, and featuring Arabs and Arab Americans.)²³

Since 2014, educators, librarians, and publishers have been responding to a new call to action to diversify children's books. Several events served as the catalyst. In March 2014, author Walter Dean Myers and author-illustrator Christopher Myers published tandem father and son op-eds in *The New York Times* on the continued dearth of books for children featuring diverse characters and subjects. After almost half a century of writing for young people, Walter Dean Myers

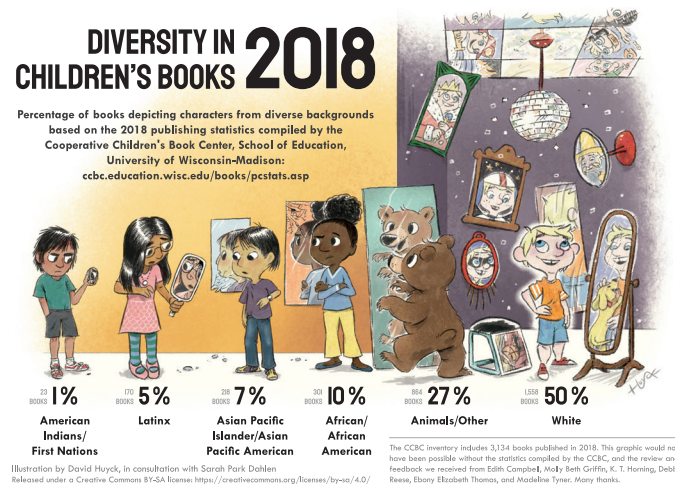


FIGURE 1. David Huyck and Sarah Park Dahlen. *Diversity in Children's Books 2018*, June 19, 2019.*

**sarahpark.com* blog. Created in consultation with Edith Campbell, Molly Beth Griffin, K. T. Horning, Debbie Reese, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, and Madeline Tyner, with statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison: <https://cbbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/cbbc-diversity-statistics/>. Retrieved from <https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2019/06/19/picture-this-diversity-in-childrens-books-2018-infographic/>.

affirmed that "[b]ooks transmit values. They explore our common humanity." Because of that, he asks:

What is the message when some children are not represented in those books? Where are the future white personnel managers going to get their ideas of people of color? Where are the future white loan officers and future white politicians going to get their knowledge of people of color? Where are black children going to get a sense of who they are and what they can be?²⁴

A month later, a diverse range of children's book authors, illustrators, and editors, including Ellen Oh, Malinda Lo, and Aisha Saeed, participated in Twitter conversations about the problematic nature of an all-male, all-white panel representing the field at the first BookCon, a consumer-focused event connected to publishing's annual Book Expo industry event. From this conversation, the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks emerged, followed soon after by the nonprofit organization We Need Diverse Books, with the mission of "Putting more books featuring diverse characters into the hands of all children."²⁵ In 2015, author Corinne Duvyis coined the hashtag #ownvoices "to recommend kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group."²⁶

The publishing industry has made significant shifts since Nancy Larrick's seminal 1965 article, "The All-White World of Children's Books." But despite continued efforts to address the disparity by authors, illustrators, educators, librarians, publishers of multicultural children's books, nonprofits and organizations, bloggers at *The Brown Bookshelf*, *American Indians in Children's Literature*, *De Colores: The Raza Experience in Books for Children*, *Disability in Kid Lit*, and, most prominently, *We Need Diverse Books*, a disproportionate focus on animal characters continues to perpetuate the centering of animals over people of color and First Nations and Native Americans.²⁷

THE POTENTIAL OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TODAY

Despite the controversies described above, positive and constructive examples of anthropomorphism do exist. Contemporary authors and illustrators featured in this

exhibition have crafted stories that invite children to imagine and create a better world than the one they may see in the media or outside their front door. Their works respect the child as an independent reader, critical thinker, and flexible person who can take control, make ethical and compassionate decisions, and take action for a better world. The stories discussed below facilitate inquiry into the role anthropomorphism and children's literature overall play in encouraging individual and collective agency, fostering compassion and social responsibility, rewriting and reconstructing narratives to promote social justice, and reflecting children's lived realities.

Agency in Contemporary Anthropomorphism

As fields such as childhood studies, psychology, and literacy education developed their understanding of the child reader, children's literature also evolved to position children as more purposeful, thoughtful, and agentive. Such stories show the anthropomorphized protagonist in control of their lives and decisions; when they are not, they are depicted as capable of making decisions to improve their situations. A prime example is the widely popular *Elephant and Piggie* series by Mo Willems, in which the characters regularly encounter childhood conflicts (e.g., disagreeing with a friend, feeling exclusion from a group, practicing patience, etc.) and ultimately find ways to overcome those challenges either through individual effort or with a friend's support.

Dan Santat's *After the Fall* (cat. no. 25) depicts the journey of its English nursery-rhyme protagonist Humpty Dumpty from post-tumble injuries to full recovery and rebirth. Although Humpty Dumpty is an egg, animals—specifically

birds—play a critical role in his recovery. They provide the reason why, as a birdwatching enthusiast, Humpty was initially perched upon the wall; they hover in the distance in various two-page spreads; and when he summons enough courage and determination to ascend the wall again, they swirl about him like belayers, offering harnesses of support. Such a depiction initially relegates animals to their conventional roles in nature. However, in the final pages, Humpty’s shell cracks, transforming him into a bird who majestically soars above the city to join the friends who had been there all along, implying their anthropomorphized purpose (fig. 2). Here, anthropomorphism serves both as a vehicle to represent and drive the protagonist’s growth—“It wasn’t the same as being up in the sky with the birds, but it was close enough”—and as a metaphor for the possibilities that agency presents: “Hopefully, you’ll remember me as the egg who got back up . . . and learned how to fly.” It also transforms this traditional tale from one of tragedy into one of determination and hope.

Power, Compassion, and Social Responsibility

Another exhibition feature, Jerry Pinkney’s *The Lion and the Mouse* (cat. no. 15), a largely wordless retelling of Aesop’s fable, offers a particular view of the value of social exchange where both the lion and the mouse act with compassion to support the other. Pinkney’s evocative illustrations capture the dynamics between the animals and draw upon young readers’ preconceptions of power between a lion and a mouse. Readers are positioned to grapple with the realities of power and powerlessness and life-and-death realities between predator and prey, a dynamic that demonstrates respect for the child as reader. Without written language to accompany the illustration



FIGURE 2. Dan Santat. “And learned how to fly,” from *After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again*.

where the lion clutches the mouse, readers must come to their own conclusions about the mouse’s fate (fig. 3). A turn of the page reveals the ultimate outcome and leaves readers to imagine the mouse’s flight to safety. More than a moral story, Pinkney’s version serves as a model of empowerment whereby both animals take control of their worlds and are considerate of the other. In this story, one finds greater happiness by focusing on the happiness and well-being of others.

Moreover, the lion subtly instructs children to move beyond sympathy (a visceral response to someone else’s feelings) and toward compassion (the emotional response to perceiving suffering and a genuine desire to help alleviate it). As such, Pinkney’s *The Lion and the Mouse* represents a shift in the use of anthropomorphism in animal stories from sentimental sympathy toward the cultivation of compassion. Sentimentalism in children’s literature of the past represented

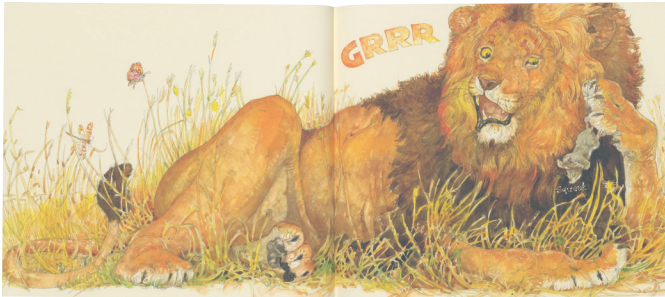


FIGURE 3. Jerry Pinkney. "Grrrr," from *The Lion and the Mouse*.

"a sense of overindulgence in emotion and an impractical belief in human goodness"²⁸ and "a systematized effort to educate youth in the principles of kindness."²⁹ Certainly, kindness alone will not combat institutionalized racism, sexism, and ableism, unequal schools, food insecurity, or police brutality.

Even an emphasis on compassion eschews the reality that many children of color are subject to an inequitable social structure that is rarely found in children's literature with anthropomorphized animals. Rather than just relieve or avoid causing distress to others, Pinkney's mouse upends conventional power dynamics. Pinkney's deliberate choice to depict the lion and the mouse as equal in size on the book jacket affirms this (fig. 4). So, too, does his choice to set the story in the Serengeti. Pinkney, who identifies as African American, deliberately blended the stories he grew up on—largely fables and African American history—to reclaim a familiar tale for children whose identities trace back to lands and traditions rarely seen in children's books.³⁰ Anthropomorphized power, therefore, is not limited to any



FIGURE 4. Jerry Pinkney. Front and back book jacket illustrations from *The Lion and the Mouse*.

individual character, but can infuse a narrative and work to reframe and re-story it.

Rewriting and Reconstructing Narratives

Such reframing of classic and traditional tales has gained traction in recent decades, working to combat stereotypes and emphasizing and reclaiming the power of marginalized voices. Animal anthropomorphism as a means to reclaim power and perspective can also be seen in Ashley Bryan's *Beautiful Blackbird* (cat. no. 46). In this adapted tale from the Ila-speaking peoples of Zambia, the blackbird is "the only bird who had it all." While the other birds of Africa were all colors of the rainbow, none had any black marks on their feathers or heads, so they unanimously raise their beaks and sing that the blackbird is the most beautiful of all. In this narrative, Black is beautiful. Black is enviable. Black is powerful. Rather than keep the power and admiration of others to himself, Blackbird stirs a blackening brew in his medicine gourd and paints a black mark on each bird, thereby sharing his beauty and power with them.

As in *The Lion and the Mouse*, Blackbird's actions go beyond kindness. His decision to share its power gently nudges children to recognize how power works and to strive for equity. Bryan's lyrical language draws readers in and supports them to recognize difference while also affirming the shared interconnection of these colorful creatures. In adding black markings to the other birds, Blackbird does not try to fundamentally change them: "We'll see the difference a touch of black can make. Just remember, whatever I do, I'll be me and you'll be you."

As the paint in the gourd runs low, Blackbird finds a way to decorate all of the birds, no matter how big or small. In his first use of collage illustration, which later became integral to his work, Bryan emphasizes the unique markings on each bird while reminding readers that Blackbird is the source of the newfound joy each bird experiences. Language elements familiar to folkloric traditions, such as alliteration, repetition, and singsong, serve as a backdrop to a sophisticated subtext that rewrites and reconstructs power dynamics to foster social imagination and justice-based solutions.

Reflecting Reality

The bilingual picture book *Bowwow Powwow/Bagosenjige-niimi'idim* written by Brenda Child, translated into Ojibwe by Gordon Jourdain, and illustrated by Jonathan Thunder, offers a way to use animals as human stand-ins to respectfully reflect children's realities (cat. no. 66).

At the annual end-of-summer powwow, Windy Girl's uncle describes how, before the powwow was established, their ancestors had traveled from house to house, dancing, sharing gifts, and singing the song, "We are like dogs. We are like dogs."

Once at the powwow, illustrations depict Ojibwe characters in both contemporary and traditional dress, sleeping in modern tents and traditional shelters, with the northern lights illuminating the sky above. When Windy Girl falls asleep and dreams that the old and the new converge, the words of the old song, "We are like dogs," are made manifest.

Thunder's illustrations and Child's sparse text immerse readers in a world that is rooted in the reality of a contemporary powwow while emphasizing the past interconnectedness of dogs and humans. Dogs assume multiple identities: elders in traditional dress, able-bodied and disabled veterans, traditional dancers, grass dancers, and jingle-dress dancers (fig. 5). Past and present fuse together both in the drum circles and the fry bread—"Indian fast food." On the final page, Windy Girl and Itchy Boy sit together, the dogs of her dream and her Ojibwe ancestors dancing across the page above them (fig. 6). Windy Girl "understood the powwow is always in motion, part old and part new, glittering and plain, but still wonderful, almost like a dream."

In *Bowwow Powwow*, non-Ojibwe readers receive an accessible entry point into the Ojibwe culture and an exposure to the Ojibwe language. Ojibwe readers are offered a celebration of their culture and tradition. All readers bear witness to the emotional interconnectedness between humans and dogs, as one becomes the other. Reflecting the reality of contemporary Ojibwe families and communities, *Bowwow Powwow* invites children to see how the past informs the present, how dogs' and human's lives are tied up together, and how ritual and ceremony allow us to mark time, commemorate shared history, and enact beliefs.

Stories with anthropomorphized animals remain tools



FIGURE 5. Jonathan Thunder. “She dreamed about the jingle-dress dancers, stepping softly to the ground,” from *Bowwow Powwow*.



FIGURE 6. Jonathan Thunder. “That night Windy Girl understood the powwow is always in motion,” from *Bowwow Powwow*.

for thought. This exhibition of the Solomon and Houghton collections invites delight in the cultural artifacts produced by children’s literature while also challenging viewers to consider the troubling role that anthropomorphism has played in perpetuating stereotypes and normalizing dominant cultures. As the field of children’s literature and the publishing of children’s books continue to evolve toward greater equity, diversity, and inclusion, we are hopeful that more children will see themselves and their communities represented with dignity in the books they read. As anthropomorphized animals continue to play a role in sparking children’s imaginations, we must ensure they also work toward a more just world.

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Animals Are Us: Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature
Celebrating the Peter J. Solomon Collection

H. NICHOLS B. CLARK and MEGHAN MELVIN

Why do we tell stories to children through and about animals? Are there reasons why we shouldn't? Creative storytelling through word and image is one of the most effective forms of education, and stories and books for young readers abound with appealing anthropomorphic, or human-like, animals. Talking mice. A cat that wears boots. A spider that can spell. An owl that can't.

Animals Are Us draws on the children's literature collection of spouses Peter J. Solomon (Harvard College Class of 1960, MBA 1963) and Susan Solomon and the holdings of Houghton Library. Through a selection of exceptional illustrated European and American children's books from the sixteenth century to the present day, the exhibition surveys influential historic examples of anthropomorphism in dialogue with contemporary books.

Traditionally, the children's book industry has prioritized books (typically by male authors) with animals and white human characters over books featuring Black, Indigenous, and other characters of color. Librarians, teachers, and academics, particularly those of color, have long attributed the literary preference for animal anthropomorphism as a factor delaying diversification. Thanks to decades of their advocacy, children today are more likely to see the human mosaic reflected in characters. Through these highlights, you are invited to engage critically with animal anthropomorphism and delight in the artfulness of an enduring literary genre.



BEGINNINGS

Children's literature as a genre began in the eighteenth century. Animal anthropomorphism was a feature of these books from the beginning, drawing on a long oral tradition of animal-based fables and myths. Additionally, new scientific studies of the animal kingdom played a role. This section contains influential works not intended for children as well as examples of early anthropomorphic books made just for them.

I

Ovid (Roman, 43 BCE–17/18 CE, author)

Gabriele Simeoni (Italian, 1509–1575, translator)

Bernard Salomon (French, ca. 1506–1561, illustrator)

La vita et Metamorfoseo d'Ouidio, figurato & abbreviato in forma d'Epigrammi...

Lyon: Giovanni di Tornes, 1559

17 x 12 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 515.59.663

Gift of Ward M. and Miriam Canaday, 1954

The Roman author Ovid's best-known work is the *Metamorphoses*, which chronicles transformations in Greco-Roman mythology. This Italian adaptation proved extremely influential, less for the epigrammatic text than for the finely wrought woodcuts. "Diana and Acteon" tells of the deadly consequences of a hunter stumbling upon a goddess at her bath. Diana transforms Acteon into a deer to be torn apart by his own hounds, leaving him unable to call them off.



2

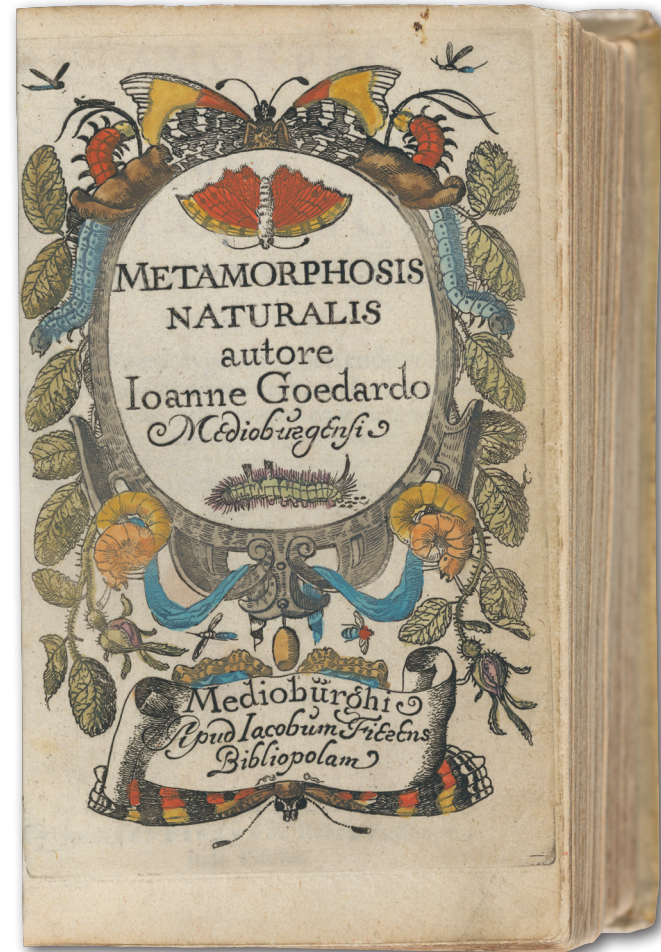
Johannes Goedaert (Dutch, 1617–1668, author-illustrator)

Metamorphosis naturalis

Middelburg (Netherlands): Jaques Fierens, ca. 1662–1669
16 x 11 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Entomology, or the scientific study of insects, emerged as a serious field in the late sixteenth-century Netherlands. Johannes Goedaert's *Metamorphosis* was the first book on the subject to use the precision of engraving to illustrate his specimens in black and white. His meticulous observations—possibly enhanced by recent advances in the microscope—were significant, as they focused on heretofore neglected species and examined all growth phases, including metamorphosis. This copy has been colored by hand.



Johann Amos Comenius (Czech, 1592–1670, author)
Alexander Anderson (American, 1775–1870, illustrator)
Charles Hoole (English, 1610–1667, translator)

*Orbis sensualium pictus . . . or, A Nomenclature, and
 Pictures of All the Chief Things That Are in the World . . .*

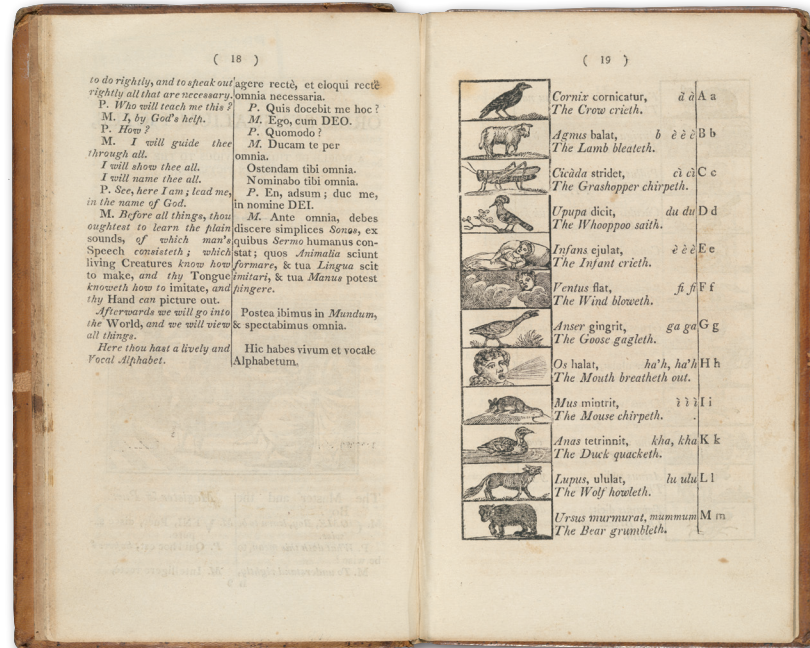
New York: T. & J. Swords, 1810

18 x 11 cm

Houghton Library, Educ 253.1.62.5*

By exchange, 1936

This is a later edition of the first illustrated book for teaching children, published in Europe in 1658. Comenius's child-friendly approach, marrying word and image, was innovative for the time. The book enjoyed enormous success, and numerous translations rapidly followed. The page on view in the first US edition shows some of God's inventory of the animal kingdom and the sounds they make. Humans and animals are integrated, and the latter demonstrate remarkably human attributes.



4

Charles Perrault (French, 1628–1703, author)

Unknown illustrator

Histoire ou contes du temps passé: avec des moralitez

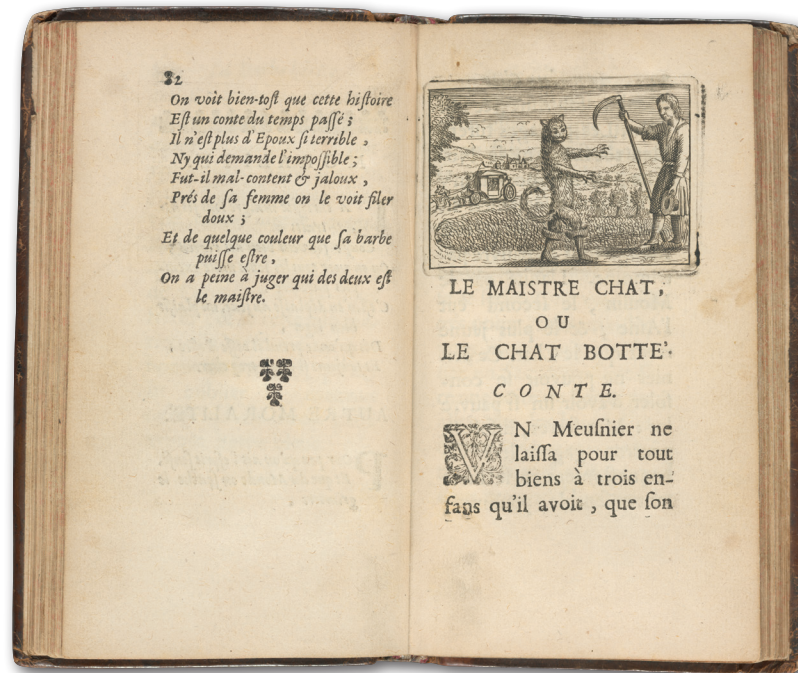
Paris: Chez Claude Barbin, 1697 (2nd edition)

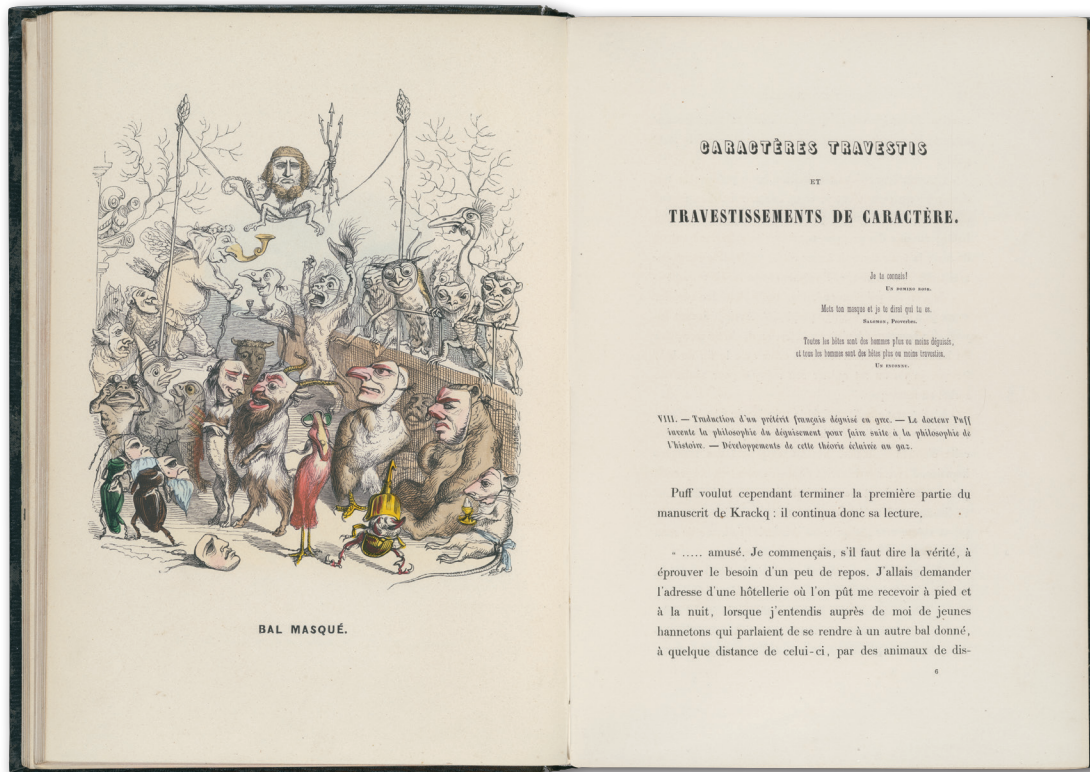
16 x 10 cm

Houghton Library, FC6.P4262.697hb2

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2019

Charles Perrault was not the first to publish fairy tales, but his were the most entertaining, ensuring longevity and influence. *Le Chat Botté*, or *Puss in Boots*, tells of an anthropomorphic cat who achieves power and wealth through manipulative trickery to arrange an advantageous marriage for his lowborn master. Perrault encourages boys to be heroic and witty despite their low social status. Using animals to convey such lessons became an important feature in future tales.





5

J. J. Grandville (French, 1803–1847, illustrator)
Taxile Delord (French, 1815–1877, [anonymous] author)

*Un autre monde: transformations, visions, incarnations . . .
 et autres choses*

Paris: H. Fournier, 1844
 27 x 20 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 815.44.4380
 Gift of Philip Hofer, 1942

CARACTÈRES TRAVESTIS
 ET
TRAVESTISSEMENTS DE CARACTÈRE.

Je te connais
 Et me connais aussi.

Mais ton visage et je te dirai qui tu es.
 Rousseau, *Emile*.

Tout ce blabla est des hommes plus ou moins déguisés,
 et tout les hommes sont des blabla plus ou moins travestis.
 Le roman.

VIII. — Traduction d'un précepte français déguisé en grec. — Le docteur Puff
 invente la philosophie du déguisement pour faire suite à la philosophie de
 l'histoire. — Développement de cette théorie éclairée au gaz.

Puff voulut cependant terminer la première partie du
 manuscrit de Krackq : il continua donc sa lecture.

« amusé. Je commençais, s'il faut dire la vérité, à
 éprouver le besoin d'un peu de repos. J'allais demander
 l'adresse d'une hôtellerie où l'on pût me recevoir à pied et
 à la nuit, lorsque j'entendis auprès de moi de jeunes
 hannetons qui parlaient de se rendre à un autre bal donné,
 à quelque distance de celui-ci, par des animaux de dis-

The caricaturist Grandville's career was defined by his psychological portraits of animals with decidedly human expressions and gestures. Invariably they carried biting social and political commentary. "Masked Ball" depicts a curious menagerie of animals, some evoking a seamless anthropomorphism while others are transformed by the wearing of human masks, reminiscent of Carnival in their troubling ambiguity.

6

Jacob Grimm (German, 1785–1863, author)

Wilhelm Grimm (German, 1786–1859, author)

George Cruikshank (British, 1792–1878, illustrator)

German Popular Stories, translated from the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

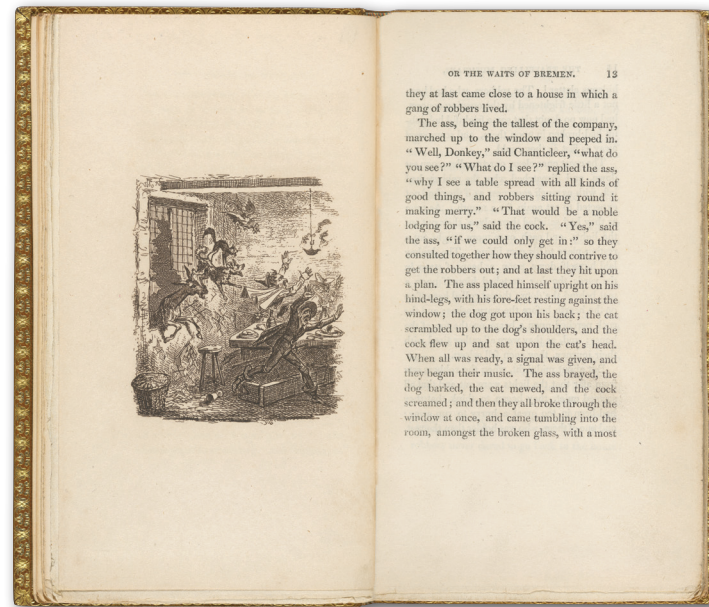
London: C. Baldwin, 1823

19 x 12 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 805.23.4360

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

The Brothers Grimm came of age in the decades following the unification of Germany and enthusiastically contributed to the mission of creating a national identity by gathering folktales celebrating the vernacular past. “The Bremen Town Musicians” captures the moment when four different sentient talking animals, unified by adversity, attack and overcome four sleeping robbers to gain their comfortable lodgings. The defining message of overcoming hardship through cooperation also had national implications.



Unknown author

Gustav Sigismund Peters (American, 1793–1847, illustrator)

The Courtship, Marriage, &c. of Cock Robin & Jenny Wren

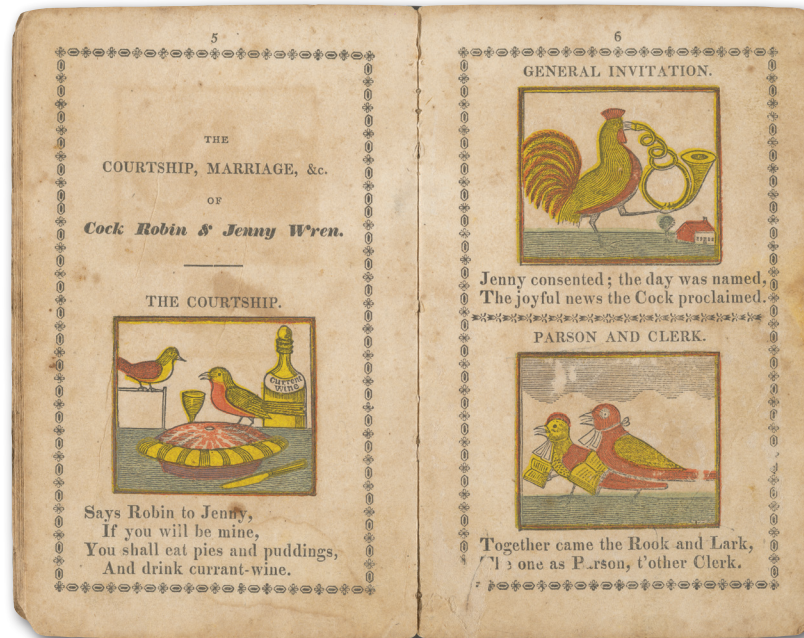
Harrisburg, PA: G. S. Peters, 1832

14 x 9 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 870.32.3017

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

The origins of Jenny Wren and Cock Robin are murky. The story of the courtship, marriage, and accidental killing of Cock Robin at the birds' wedding feast first appeared in 1744 in *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, the earliest known published compendium of nursery rhymes. By the early nineteenth century, this tragic rhyme enjoyed enormous popularity. Talking birds relate the story of romance and tragedy, conveying the most human of emotions: love and despair.



FABLES

Fables, tales with moral lessons typically conveyed through animal characters, represent an enduring literary format that engages readers of all ages. Philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) recommended *Aesop's Fables*, ideally in illustrated editions, as the optimal medium for storytelling, as they were “apt to delight and entertain a child, may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man.” His endorsement of anthropomorphic storytelling that encouraged fun in learning proved fundamental for children’s literature. This selection of fables demonstrates an evolution from the influential work of Jean de La Fontaine to an imaginative, wordless interpretation by Jerry Pinkney.

Jean de La Fontaine (French, 1621–1695, author)

François Chauveau (French, 1613–1676, illustrator)

Fables choisies, mises en vers

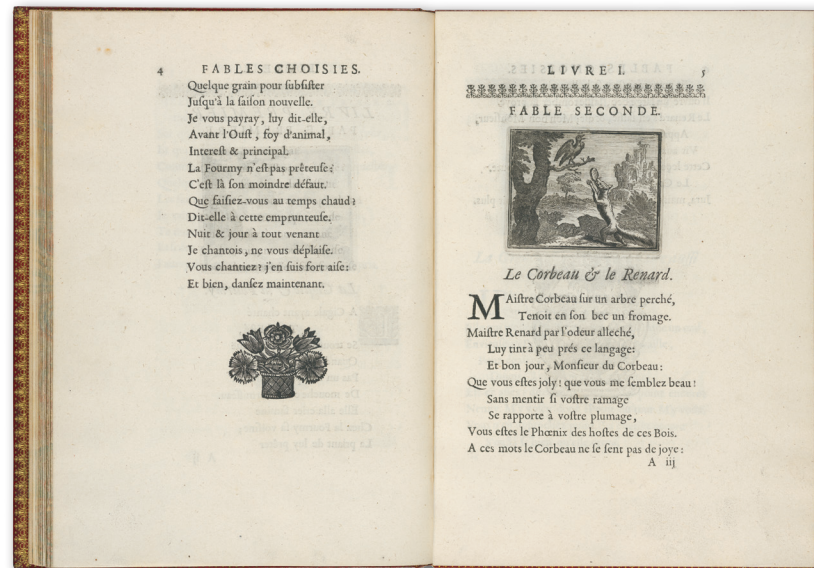
Paris: Denys Thierry, 1668

26 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 615.68.509 (B)

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

From 1668 onward, Jean de La Fontaine issued a series of fables that remain influential today. His first volume was dedicated to the young son of Louis XIV, but it was intended for an adult audience. La Fontaine's compilations of fables drew on storytelling traditions from around the world, including his homeland, where these fables are still included in primary school curricula. The poetic presentation of the fables facilitates memorization, reinforcing the underlying moral message.



9

Jean-Baptiste Oudry (French, 1686–1755)

Illustration for Jean de La Fontaine's fable "La chauve-souris, le buisson, et le canard," 1733

Ink, wash, and gouache, 31 x 26 cm

Houghton Library, MS Typ 674

Gift of Philip Hofer, 1979

La Fontaine's fables inspired artist Jean-Baptiste Oudry to create 276 highly finished ink, wash, and gouache illustrations over five years, a testament to the influence of the publication. Oudry's independent compositions, notable for their depth and tonality, inspired an illustrated edition of La Fontaine's fables in 1755. Here, Oudry eliminates any human element from the fable, representing only the three key figures of the bat, bush, and duck who failed in their collective business enterprise.



IO

Aesop (Greece, 620–564 BCE, author)

Glenway Wescott (American, 1901–1987, author)

Antonio Frasconi (Uruguayan-American, 1919–2013, illustrator)

12 Fables of Aesop

New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964

22 x 16 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.64.1242

Gift of Professor Paul A. Freund, 2001

Printmaker Antonio Frasconi credited the birth of his first son as the pivotal event that led him to children's-book illustration. He recognized the power of children's literature to "introduce a young mind to an understanding of our vast cultures." First published in 1954, this selection of Aesop's *Fables* was the first limited edition book published by MOMA, reinforcing the universal appeal of fables through a contemporary lens.



II

Sir Roger L'Estrange (English, 1616–1704, author)

Alexander Calder (American, 1898–1976, illustrator)

*Fables of Aesop According to Sir Roger L'Estrange with
Fifty Drawings by Alexander Calder*

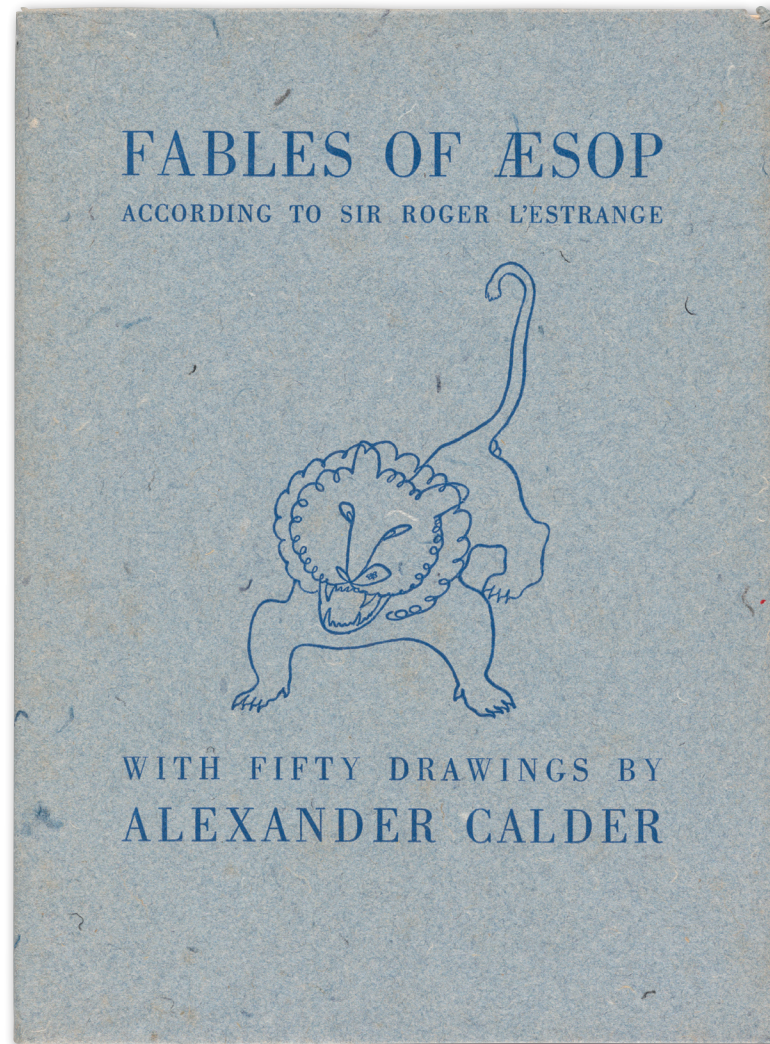
Paris: Harrison of Paris, 1931

26 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 915.31.1241

Gift of John McAndrew, 1959

Roger L'Estrange's fables, first published in 1692, included some of La Fontaine's tales, reflecting the international resonance of the *Fables choisies* within years of their publication. This playful but esoteric limited edition, illustrated by avant-garde sculptor Alexander Calder, is a reminder that children's literature is nearly entirely shaped by adults.



12

Alexander Calder (American, 1898–1976)

Drawing of a Lion

Published in *Fables of Aesop According to Sir Roger L'Estrange*
Paris: Harrison of Paris, 1931

Ink on paper, 46 x 36 cm

Houghton Library, TypDr 970.C258.31a (4) Sz 2

Bequest of Frances L. Hofer, 1978

Calder successfully transposes the look of his wirework sculpture to line drawing; the simplicity of the swirling lines imbues the animal characters with a playful energy, creating a humorous counterpoint to the weighty moral messages. In this cover illustration to the fable "The Gnat Challenges a Lion," it is difficult to discern the tiny insect on the lion's nose that is more readily visible on the cover of the printed edition (cat. no. 11).



13

Rudyard Kipling (British, 1865–1936, author-illustrator)

Just So Stories

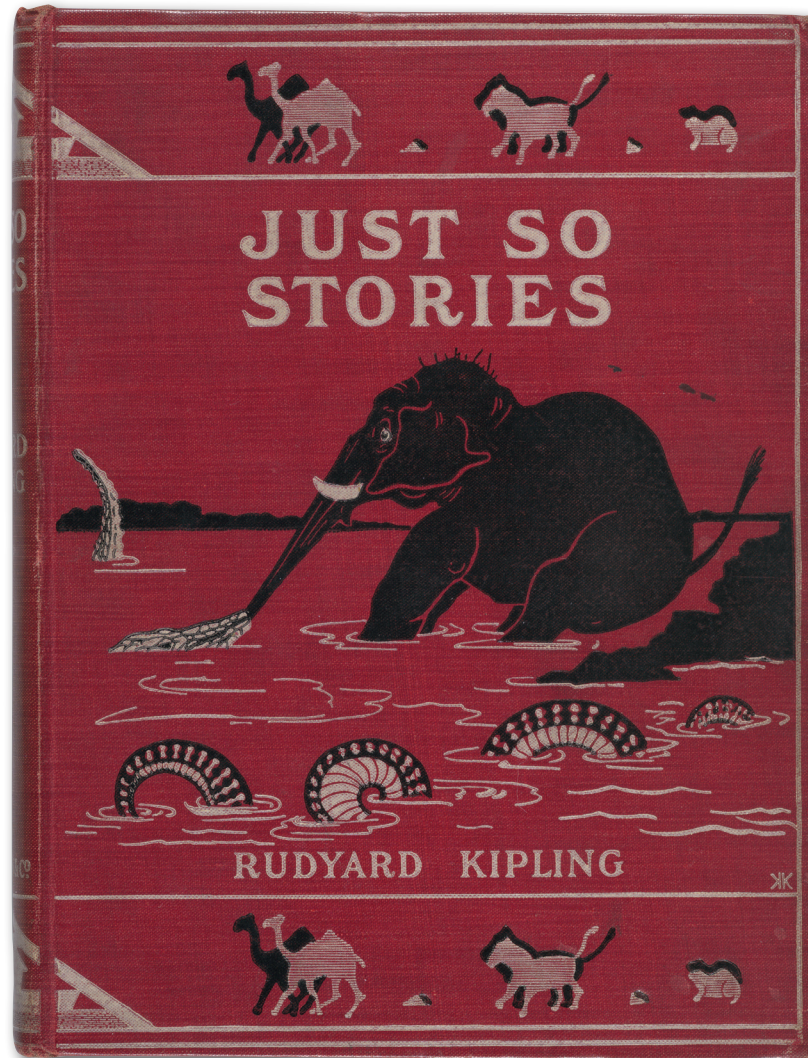
London: Macmillan & Co., 1902

24 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 905.02.4860 (B)

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

Kipling's creation fables were first told to his daughter Effie (1892–1899), who wanted them recounted in a certain way, that is, "just so." They are notable for capturing children's manner of speech and thought via the animals portrayed, but Kipling's colonialist viewpoint and reliance on cultural appropriation is problematic. The cover depicts his illustration for "The Elephant's Child, or How the Elephant Got his Trunk," with the snake rippling to the elephant's rescue.



— Боже мой! Вас-то мне и нужно! Я столько дней размышляю вас! Скажите мне, пожалуйста, поскорее, что вы кушаете за обедом?

— Полойди-ка поближе, малютка, я шепну тебе это на ушко.

Слонёнок тотчас преклонил своё ухо к дубастой, клякзастой крокодиловой пасти, и Крокодил схватил его за маленький носик, который до этой самой недели, до этого самого дня, до этого самого часа, до этой самой минуты был несколько не больше башмака.

— С нынешнего дня, — сказал Крокодил, сквозь зубы, — с нынешнего дня я буду кушать за обедом молодых слонят.

Слонёнку это страшно не понравилось, и он проговорил через нос:

— *Пустиде бедя, бля очедь болдо!* (*Пустите меня, мне очень больно!*)

Тут Двухцветный Питон, Скалистая Змея, кинулся со скалы и сказал:

— Если ты, о мой юный друг, тотчас же не отпрянешь назад, сколько хватит у тебя твоей силы, то мой мнение таково, что не успеешь ты сказать «Отче наш», как, вследствие твоего разговора с этим огромным кожаным мешком, (так он величал крокодила), ты попадёшь туда в ту прозрачную струю...

Двухцветные Питоны, Скалистые Змеи, всегда выражаются так.

Слонёнок послушался, сел на задние ноги и стал тянуться назад. Он тянулся, тянулся и тянулся, и нос его стал вытягиваться. А Крокодил отступил подальше в воду, всенни и замутил её всю ударами своего хвоста, и тоже тянул, тянул, тянул.

И нос у Слонёнка вытягивался, и Слонёнок растопырив все четыре ноги, такие прощечные слонопья ножки, и тянулся, и тянулся, и тянулся, и нос у него всё вытягивался. И Крокодил был хвостом, как веслом, и тянул, и тянул, и, чем больше он тянул, тем длиннее вытягивался у Слонёнка нос, и больно было этому носу — у-ж-ж-жасно!

И вдруг Слонёнок почувствовал, что ножки его раскозалили по земле, и он выринулся через нос, который был теперь у него чуть не в пять футов длиною.

— *Осажде! Доволодо! Осажде!*

Услыхал это Двухцветный Питон, Скалистая Змея, бросился вниз со скалы, обмотался двойным узлом вокруг задней ноги Слонёнка и сказал своим торжественным голосом:

— О, неопытный и легкомысленный путник! Мы должны понатужиться, сколько возможно, ибо мнение мое таково, что этот живой броненосец с брони-



14

Rudyard Kipling (British, 1865–1936, author)

Kornei Chukovskii (Russian, 1882–1969, translator)

Vladimir Vasil'evich Lebedev (Russian, 1891–1967, illustrator)

Slonenok (*The Elephant's Child*)

Petrograd: Ėpokha, 1922

28 x 22 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 958.22.486

Gift of Philip Hofer, 1942

Lebedev's illustration of Kipling's *The Elephant's Child*

depicts the key moment of the tale, his flattened

perspective dramatizing the stretching of the trunk by

a crocodile. Lebedev contributed substantially to the

modernization of children's literature, with his illustrations

reflecting avant-garde contemporary art in the context of

the internationally popular work of Kipling.

15

Jerry Pinkney (American, born 1939, author-illustrator)

The Lion & the Mouse

New York; Boston: Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers, 2009

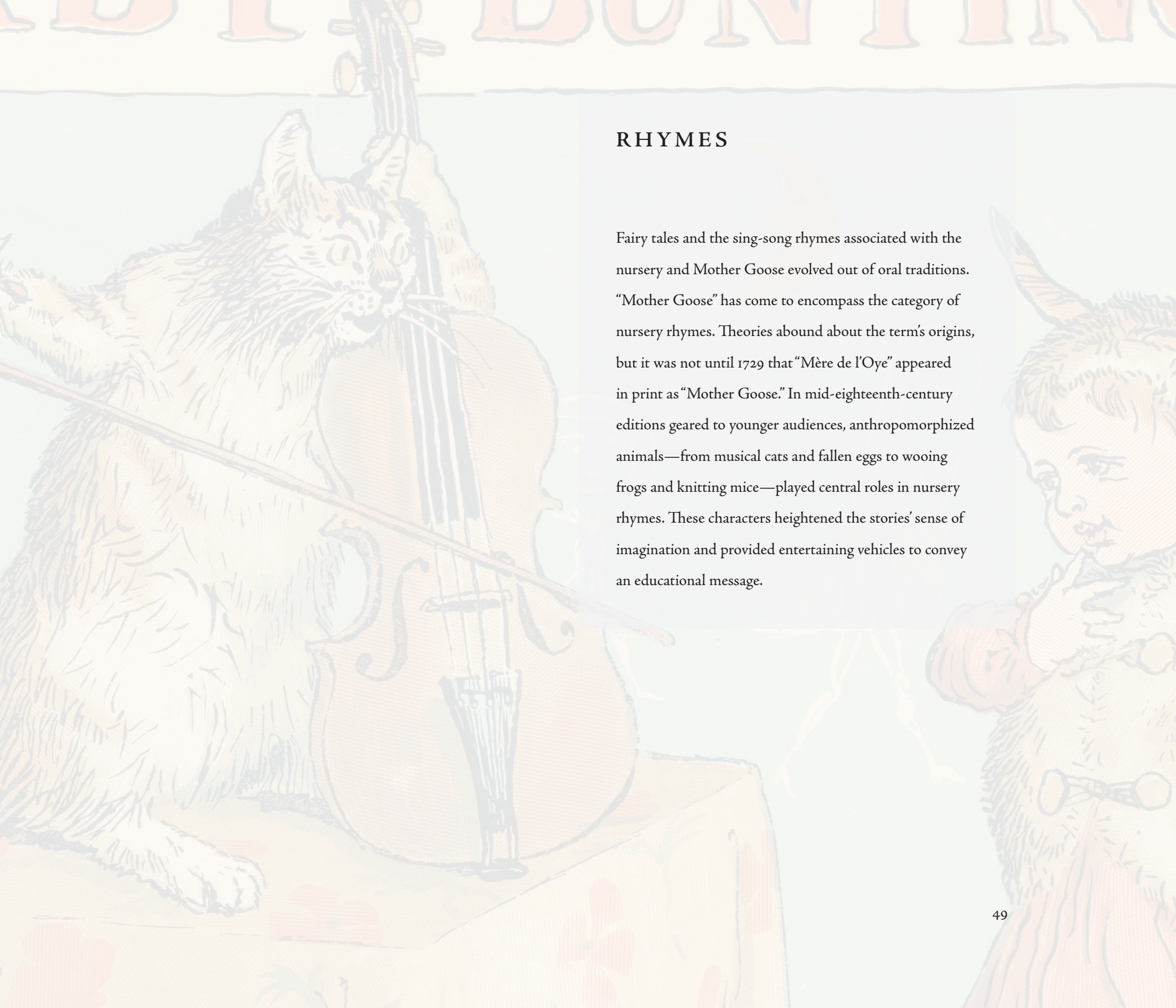
25 x 29 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 2070.09.6945

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2019

Pinkney's wordless interpretation of Aesop's "The Lion and the Mouse" is not without sound. While his animals don't speak, their highly expressive faces are exceptionally convincing in their anthropomorphism. The connection between the mighty lion and the tiny mouse is expressed powerfully by their mutual gaze. Having once set the mouse free, the captive lion now depends on his former prey to help him escape.





RHYMES

Fairy tales and the sing-song rhymes associated with the nursery and Mother Goose evolved out of oral traditions. “Mother Goose” has come to encompass the category of nursery rhymes. Theories abound about the term’s origins, but it was not until 1729 that “Mère de l’Oye” appeared in print as “Mother Goose.” In mid-eighteenth-century editions geared to younger audiences, anthropomorphized animals—from musical cats and fallen eggs to wooing frogs and knitting mice—played central roles in nursery rhymes. These characters heightened the stories’ sense of imagination and provided entertaining vehicles to convey an educational message.

Attributed to Oliver Goldsmith (Irish, 1728–1774, compiler)

Mother Goose's Melody; or Sonnets for the Cradle

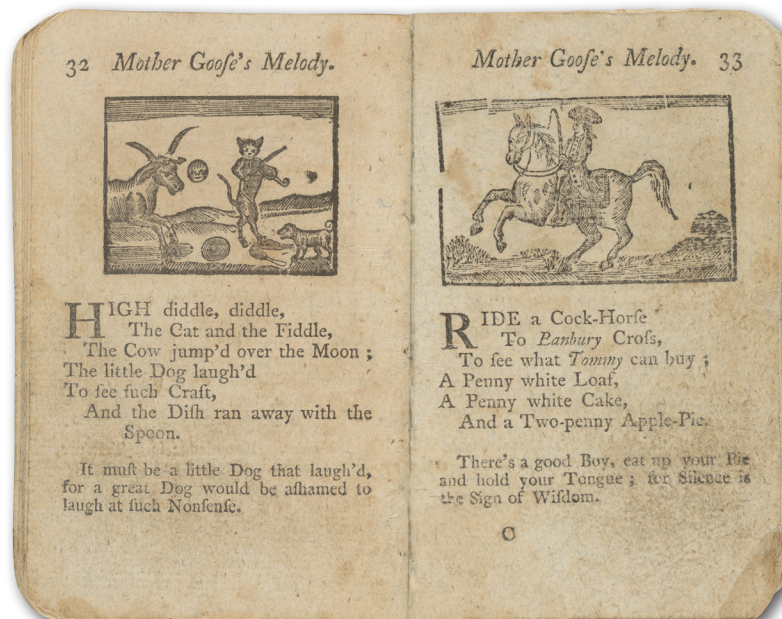
Boston: S. Hall, 1800

10 x 7 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 870.00.5815

Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation,
2020

By the mid-eighteenth century, Mother Goose had achieved widespread renown with a shifting focus from fairy tales to nursery rhymes. In 1786, American publisher Isaiah Thomas introduced John Newbery's pioneering *Mother Goose* book, in a child-friendly size, to the American market to great success. This version provides new illustrations, infusing a greater degree of active and visually complex anthropomorphism; the human physiognomy of the moon and the cat's fiddle performance underscore their human attributes.



She went to the Cobler's
To buy him some Shoes:
When she came back
He was reading the News.



She went to the Sempstrefs
To buy him some linen,
When she came back
The Dog was spinning.



17

Sarah Catherine Martin (British, 1768–1826, author-illustrator)

The Comic Adventures of Mother Hubbard and Her Dog

London: J. Harris, 1805

13 x 10 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 805.05.5607

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

Sarah Martin did not invent this story, but she augmented three existing verses, embellishing them with illustrations. Speaking to the strong bond between person and pet, Martin endowed the dog with amusing activities ranging from reading the paper to spinning yarn. The adept marketing skills of John Harris—successor to John Newbery, pioneering publisher of children's books—created an instant bestseller of “Old Mother Hubbard.” Harris recognized that playful books outsold evangelical tracts.

18

Charles H. Bennett (British, 1828–1867, author-illustrator)

Preparatory drawing for title page illustration for
The Frog Who Would A-Wooing Go

London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1865
21 x 17 cm

Ink, graphite, and watercolor on paper, 11 x 19 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

The tale of the courtship of Frog and Mouse goes back to the mid-sixteenth century. The characters are humble animals depicted in human clothes with very human desires. Bennett reinforced the story in explicitly Darwinian terms: savage cats shatter the genteel civility of the courtship; Frog escapes, only to encounter a predatory duck. A prolific cartoonist, Bennett's life was cut short at the age of thirty-eight by tuberculosis.



19

Randolph Caldecott (British, 1846–1886, author-illustrator)

Hey Diddle Diddle and Baby Bunting

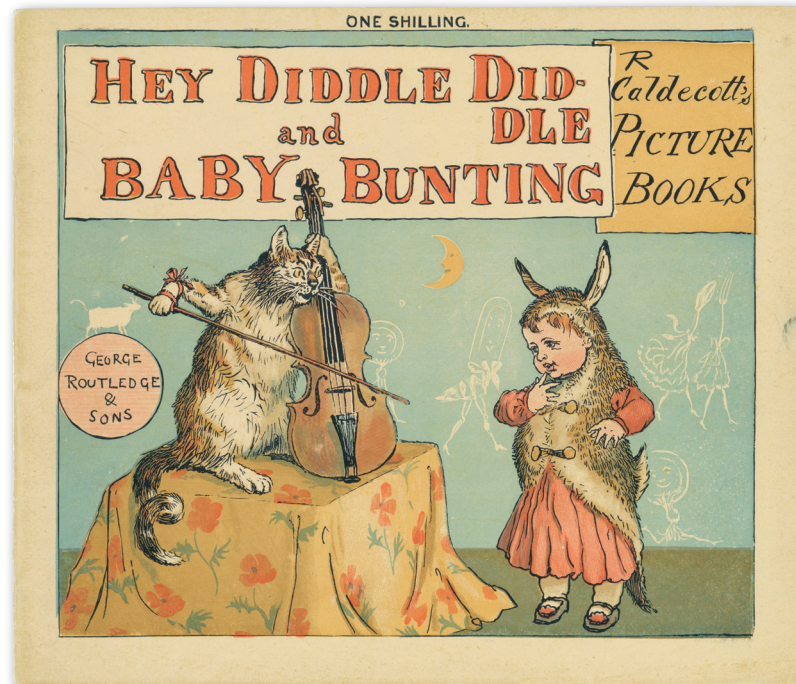
London: George Routledge & Sons, 1882

21 x 24 cm

Houghton Library, HEW 2.1.4

Bequest of Harry Elkins Widener, 1912

British illustrators Randolph Caldecott and Walter Crane pioneered the modern picture book. For this book, Caldecott adapted two spare texts, infusing them with innovative freedom and whimsy. The texts offer entertaining anthropomorphic elements, such as the cat playing a fiddle and the cow jumping over the moon. Caldecott rendered the animals convincingly, endowing them with persuasive human attributes and irresistible personalities. Conversely, Baby Bunting, by donning a rabbit skin, ambiguates the anthropomorphic process.



*Mother
Goose
in Prose*

some birds swimming in the water yonder. Let us go and look at them, for we also may be birds some day."

"True," answered Humpty, "but we are just as likely to be omelets or angel's-food. Still, we will have a look at the birds."

So they started to cross the drive on their way to the pond, never noticing that the King and his courtiers had issued from the palace and were now coming down the drive riding upon their prancing steeds. Just as the eggs were in the middle of the drive the horses dashed by, and Humpty, greatly alarmed, ran as fast as he could for the grass.

Then he stopped and looked around, and behold! there was poor Couthie-Coulou crushed into a shapeless mass by the hoof of one of the horses, and her golden heart was spreading itself slowly over the white gravel of the driveway!

Humpty sat down upon the grass and wept grievously, for the death of his companion was a great blow to him. And while he sobbed, a voice said to him,

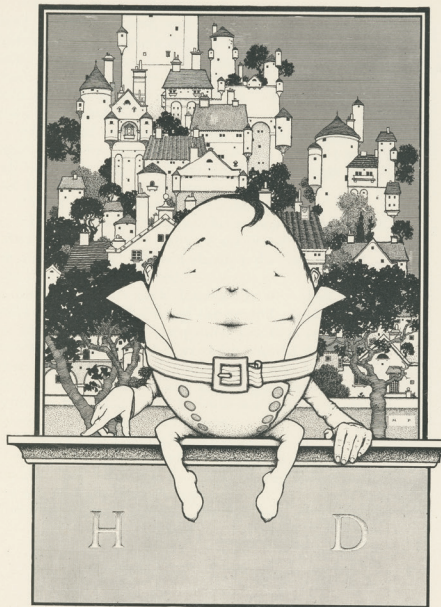
"What is the matter, little egg?"

Humpty looked up, and saw a beautiful girl bending over him.

"One of the horses has stepped upon Couthie-Coulou," he said; "and now she is dead, and I have no friend in all the world."

The girl laughed.

[212]



20

L. Frank Baum (American, 1856–1919, author)

Maxfield Parrish (American, 1870–1966, illustrator)

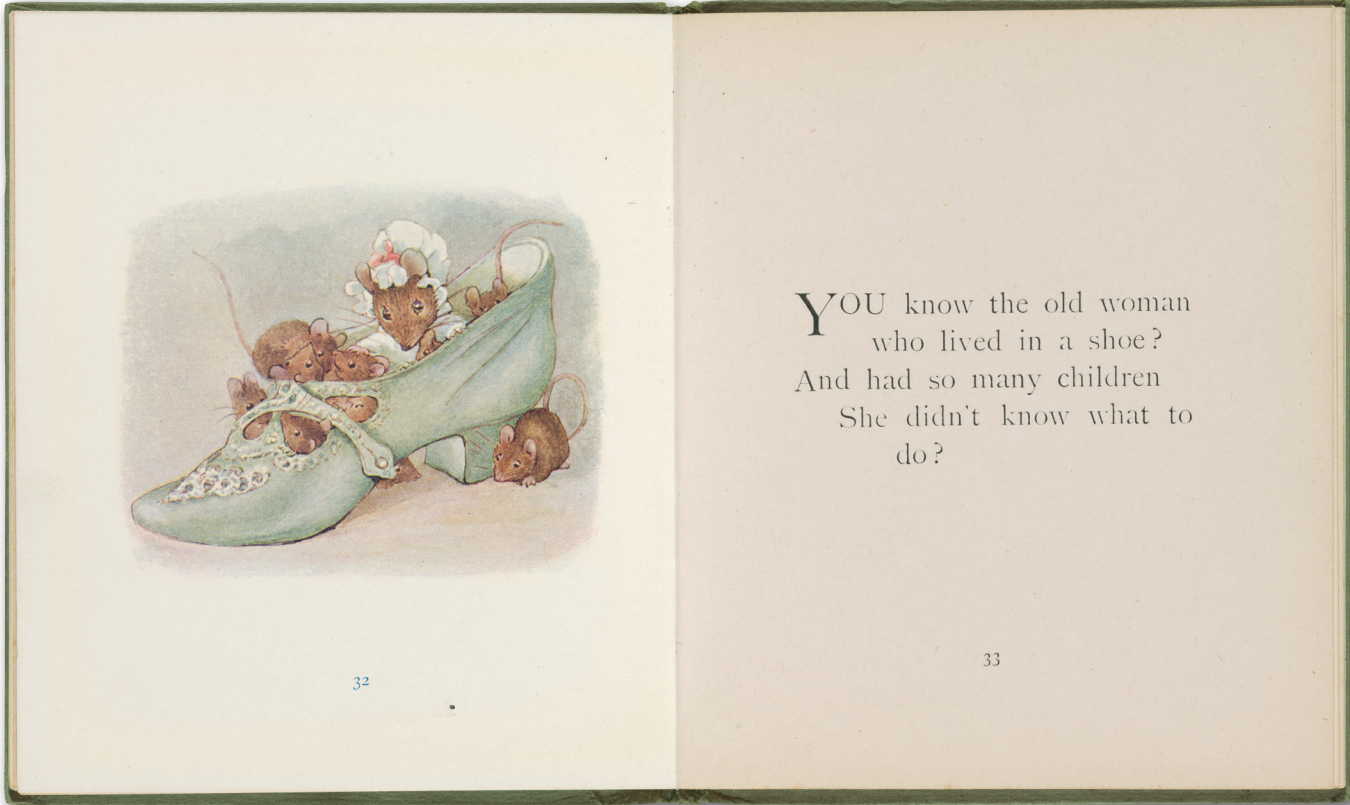
Mother Goose in Prose

Chicago: Way and Williams, 1897

29 x 24 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

The collaboration of L. Frank Baum and Maxfield Parrish was brief but potent: an imaginative narrative coupled with superb illustrations. In this undertaking, Baum and Parrish embellished a compilation of Mother Goose rhymes with extended stories that complement the original rhymes. "Humpty Dumpty" commences with the well-known verse, and the ensuing picaresque prose relates the egg's eventual demise. Parrish depicted him as fashionably dressed, thereby reinforcing the inherent anthropomorphism.



21

Beatrix Potter (British, 1866–1943, author-illustrator)

Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes

London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1917

13 x 11 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Beatrix Potter enjoyed rhymes, especially those of her childhood favorite Randolph Caldecott, with his prominent placement of animals. Here, she selected the old woman who lived in a shoe. While her original vision was for a large-format, elaborately decorated volume like those of Walter Crane, her publisher argued that her pocket-sized prose stories about animals would be more commercially successful. Ultimately, this book (written in 1904) was published to stave off her publisher's financial crisis.

Beatrix Potter (British, 1866–1943, author-illustrator)

Illustration for *Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes*

"I think if she lived / in a little shoe-house /
That little old woman / was surely a mouse!"

London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1917
Watercolor and ink on paper, 31 x 25 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Potter built on her existing rough drafts to create this book, her shortest, consisting of seven rhymes. The drawings span her stylistic evolution, from the early faithful precision on view here to a mature painterly fluidity. The inspiration for casting the old woman in the shoe as a mouse dated back to 1893. Potter's early desire to be a naturalist resulted in the creation of an extraordinary litany of anthropomorphic animal characters.



23

Willy Pogány (Hungarian, 1882–1955, author-illustrator)

Mother Goose

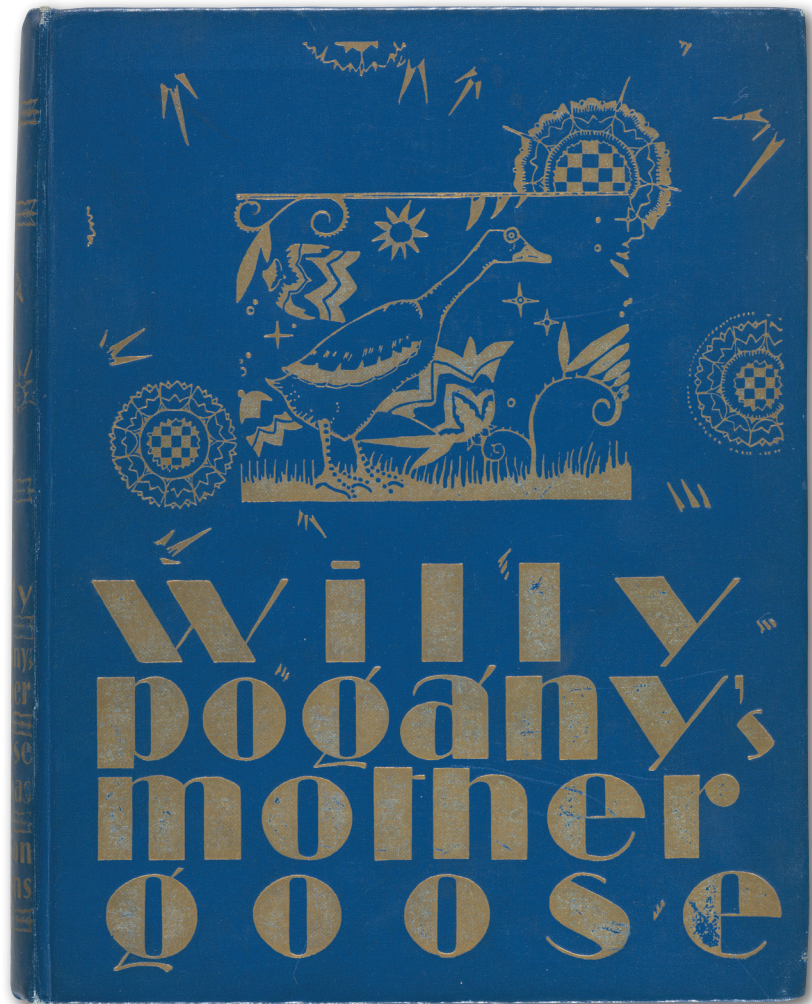
New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1928

24 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.28.8784

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

Willy Pogány enjoyed considerable success as a book illustrator. The art for his 1915 edition of *Mother Goose Rhymes* echoed Victorian imagery, while his celebrated 1928 version reflected the current Art Deco style. The typography was as important as the illustrations. The Mother Goose on the cover is simply a goose with no hint of anthropomorphism, and the surrounding art suggests the Pennsylvania Dutch “Fraktur” painting whose folk-art quality was fashionable at the time.



Three blind mice, see how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife.
Did you ever see such a sight in your life
As three blind mice?



24

Charles Addams (American, 1912–1988, illustrator)

The Charles Addams Mother Goose

New York: Windmill Books, 1967

31 x 24 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.67.5810

Gift of Daniel Myerson in honor of Melvin R. Seiden,
Class of 1952, 1995

A purveyor of the dark and macabre, cartoonist Charles Addams did not disappoint with his Mother Goose rhymes. He remained true to the gruesome details of the beloved texts. In this send-up of “Three Blind Mice,” the couple replicates the figures from Grant Wood’s *American Gothic* (1930), but Addams substitutes a modern electric knife for amputating the mice’s tails. The albino mice (perhaps from a lab?) wear round, opaque, wire-rimmed glasses to indicate their blindness.

58



25

Dan Santat (American, born 1975, author-illustrator)

After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again

New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2017

29 x 23 cm

Houghton Library, PS3619.S26 A38 2017

The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust, 2020

Like L. Frank Baum in 1897, Dan Santat used the traditional rhyme as a springboard. He created a tale of birdwatching, a fall (from a wall), the repair (at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, where all the doctors seem to be men), an ensuing fear of heights, overcoming this fear, and ultimately the protagonist hatching and taking flight. The author crafted a deft narration from an anthropomorphic viewpoint culminating in a transition to a conventional state of nature.



LITERACY

Mastering the letters of the alphabet is a critical step towards literacy. This learning process has long been made more engaging with clear visual aids. Children's affinity with the natural world has resulted in the consistent use of animal imagery in alphabet books, ultimately contributing to the prevalence of animals and anthropomorphism in juvenile literature. These notable books for early readers have all enlivened the genre in unique and memorable ways.

Thomas Bewick (British, 1753–1828, illustrator)

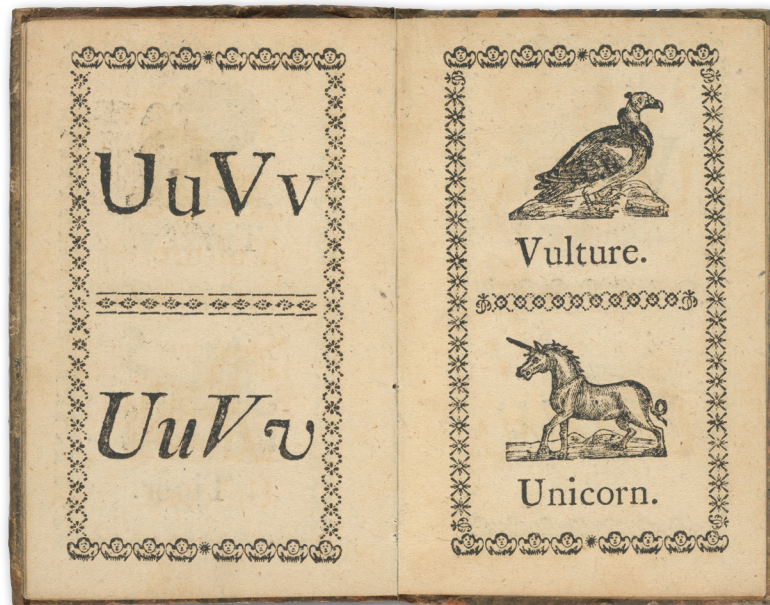
*A New Lottery Book of Birds and Beasts for Children to Learn
Their Letters by As Soon As They Can Speak*

Newcastle: T(homas) Saint for W. Charnley, 1771
11 x 7 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 705.71.208 (B)

Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation, 2020

Thomas Bewick's book appears to have been devised for toddlers, underscoring the long-held importance of early literacy. Small in format, ideally suited to small hands, and economical to produce, the book's bold woodcut images are eye-catching. Most books of this type were serious in tone, but the representations of animals, both real and imagined, inject an element of fun and visual interest for the budding reader.



Heinrich Hoffmann (German, 1809–1894, author-illustrator)

*Lustige Geschichten und drollige Bilder: mit 15 schön kolorierten
Tafeln für Kinder von 3–6 Jahren*

Frankfurt: Literarische Anstalt (J. Rütten), 1845

26 x 21 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 820.45.4545

Bequest of Philip Hofer, 1984

This series of moralizing tales in rhyme, notable for its grisly elements, was penned and illustrated by Hoffmann, a psychiatrist who was disappointed by then-contemporary children's literature. Created for his three-year-old son, these brightly colored illustrations and memorable content have amused and shocked generations of readers. Elements of Hoffmann's tales have found their way into twentieth-century popular culture: the rabbit stealing the hunter's gun and glasses may have inspired Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd.



Edward Lear (British, 1812–1888, author-illustrator)

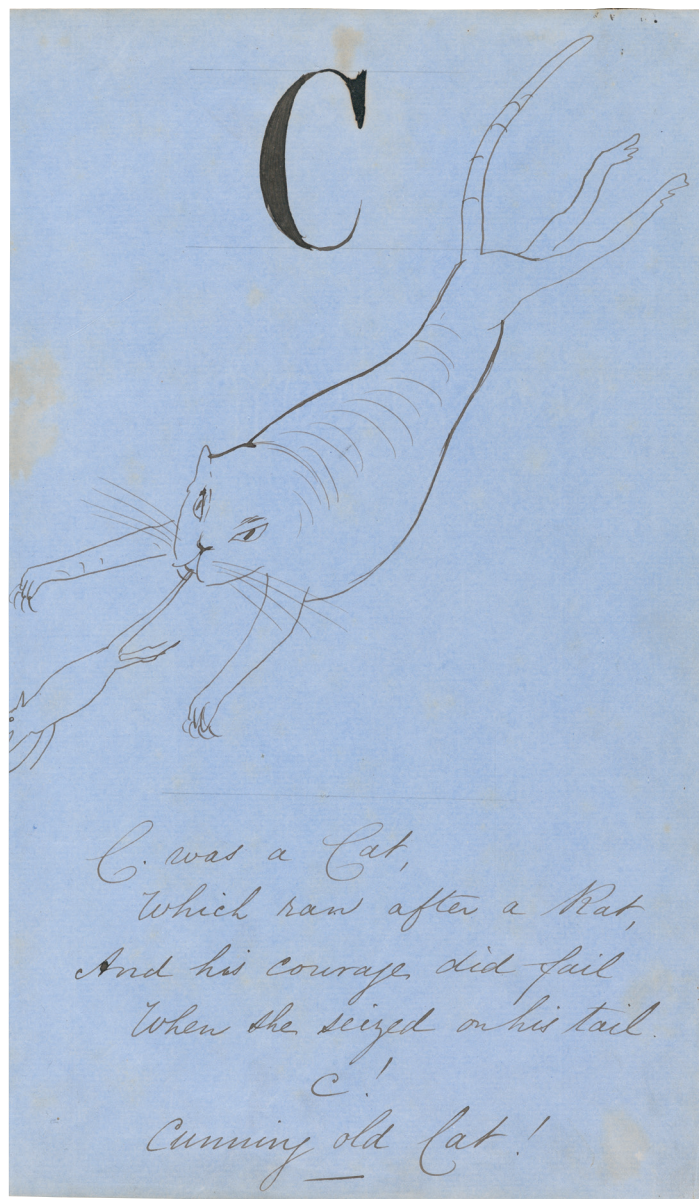
Autograph manuscript for a pictorial nonsense alphabet, 1857

33 x 21 cm

Houghton Library, MS Typ 1293

Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation, 2020

The whimsical writings and accompanying sketches of Edward Lear enlivened the often dull alphabet books available to children in the nineteenth century. He also contributed substantially to comical literature for adults. This manuscript for one of his many nonsense alphabets reveals that his concept evolved over time. Ultimately Lear's cunning cat became a crafty one, and the published illustration was more menacing than the pen and ink sketch seen here.



29A–B

Jean de Brunhoff (French, 1899–1937, author-illustrator)

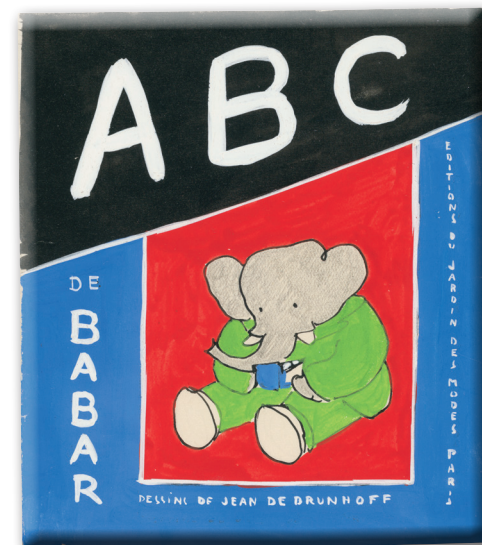
Preliminary sketches and cover study for *L'ABC de Babar*, 1934

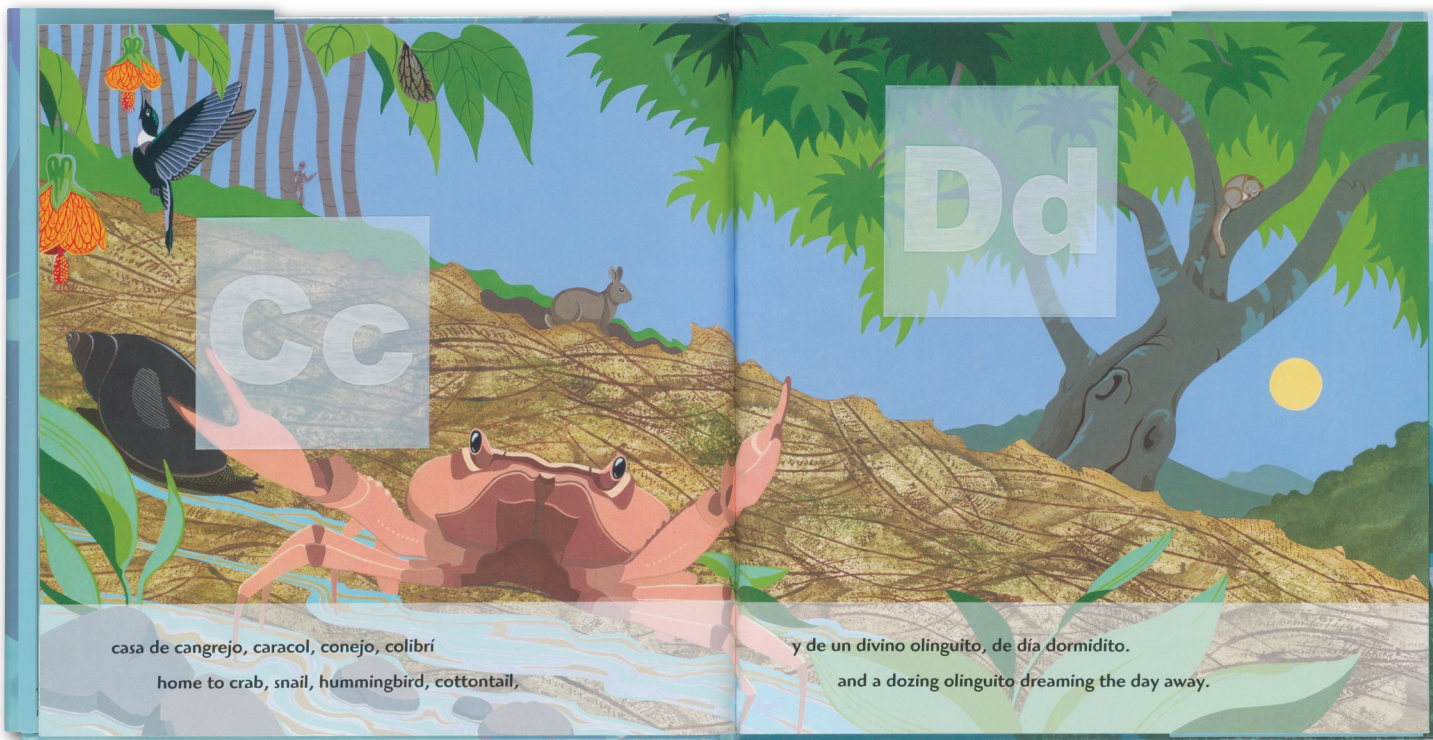
Graphite on paper, 12 x 9 cm; gouache on paper, 13 x 12 cm

Houghton Library, MS Typ 1186 (1, 7)

Bayard Livingston Kilgour and Kate Gray Kilgour fund and The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust, 2015

This book for early readers was published with a cover showing Babar writing the title on a blackboard with a piece of chalk in his trunk. These preliminary sketches reveal de Brunhoff's early thinking about the project. Ultimately his illustrations became more complex, packed with visual references to each letter of the alphabet. Are the stories of dapper Babar an endorsement of French colonialism that perpetuates demeaning stereotypes, or are they satires of imperial propaganda—and can a child tell the difference? The lasting impact of children's literature, no matter how young the reader or however entertaining the subject, is not to be underestimated. Books expand a child's vision of the world beyond their home. What is the world you want them to see?





30

Lulu Delacre (American, born 1957, author-illustrator)

¡Olinguito, de la A a la Z! descubriendo el bosque nublado
(Olinguito, from A to Z!: Unveiling the Cloud Forest)

New York: Children's Book Press, 2016

26 x 26 cm

Houghton Library, QL737.C26 D45 2016

The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust, 2020

Dual-language early readers are being published with greater frequency as the lifelong benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy are increasingly recognized. Broadening the range of bilingual children's literature is now seen as an imperative. Delacre's celebration of the natural world largely avoids anthropomorphism, yet the gaze of the crab who appears to have scuttled to the edge of the page to lock eyes with the reader creates an immediate sense of connection.

66

31

William Steig (American, 1907–2003, author-illustrator)

CDB!

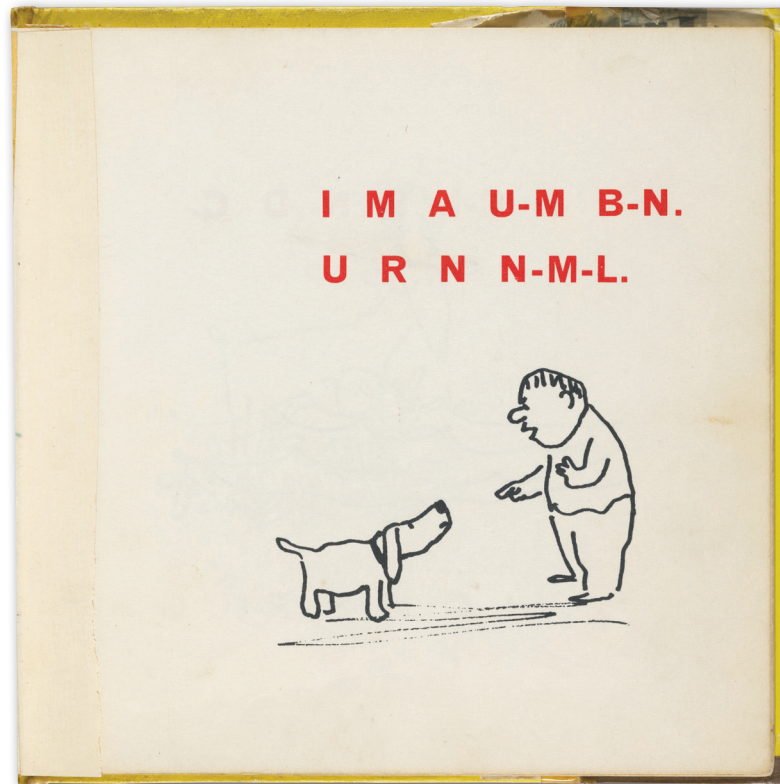
New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968

19 x 18 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.68.8084

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

Steig's unusual book dispenses with convention by reducing the text to the bare minimum to highly comic effect for budding and fluent readers alike. This page captures a particular element of anthropomorphism: the dog owner speaks to his pet about the differences between animals and humans while assuming comprehension by his pet. While the book is based on a witty literary concept, its text and images relating to Roma and Native Americans now read as culturally insensitive.





32

Innosanto Nagara (Indonesian, born 1970, author-illustrator)

A Is for Activist

New York: Seven Stories Press, 2013

24 x 24 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 2070.13.5951

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2019

A is for Activist reflects the broadening content and cultural diversification of children's literature. A primer on social activism in the United States, this early reader is a far cry from the simplistic model of "A is for Apple." Nagara highlights universal characteristics associated with animals across cultures and time: wisdom appears as the owl perched on the brash bull charging toward progress. First published in English, it is now also available in Spanish.

68



CONTROVERSY

The history of children's literature is fraught. Some of the works in this section, such as *Little Black Sambo* and *Uncle Remus*, are known for racist and culturally insensitive representations. Certain authors in the exhibition, including L. Frank Baum, Dr. Seuss, and Roald Dahl, have also been criticized for their racist views. This section, while not comprehensive, examines a range of issues affecting children's literature, including outsider status, cultural appropriation, racism, and religious proselytization.

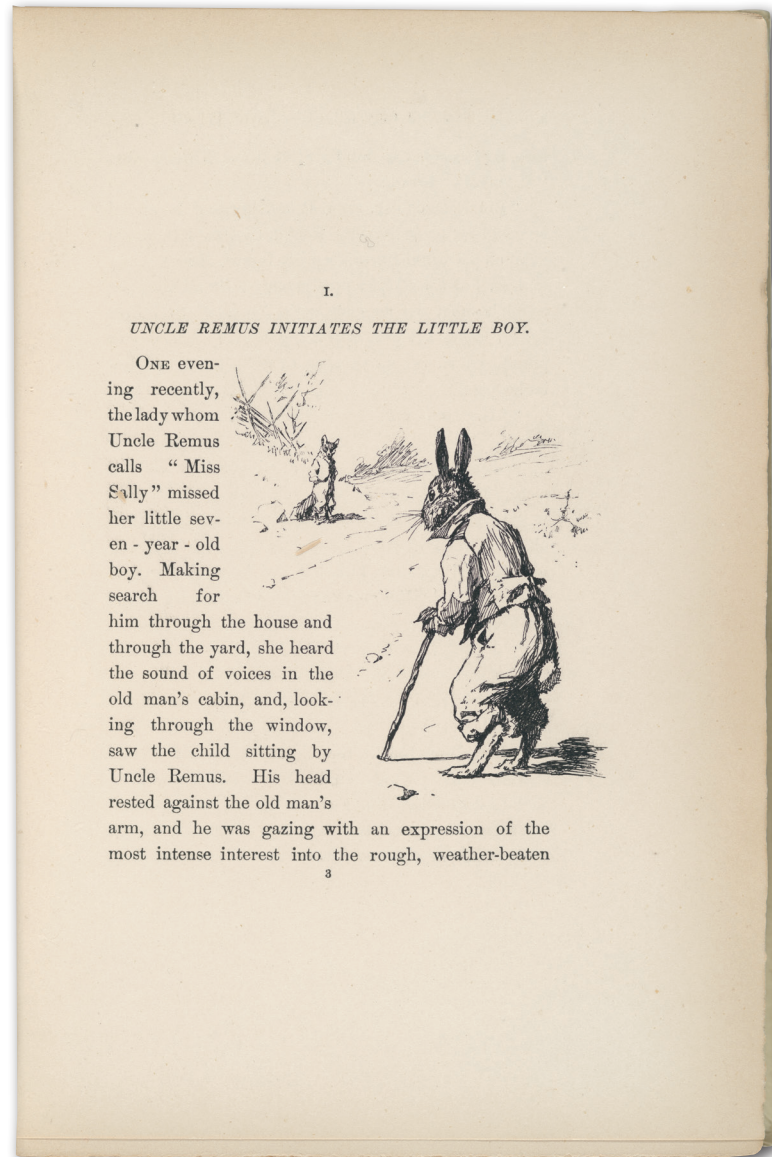
Joel Chandler Harris (American, 1848–1908, author)
 Arthur Burdett Frost (American, 1851–1928, illustrator)

Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings

New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1895
 24 x 17 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 870.95.4472
 Gift of Philip Hofer, 1942

Recent critical assessment of *Uncle Remus* ranges from adulation to condemnation. Some consider these adaptations, which were handed down orally by enslaved African Americans, to be revolutionary in their use of dialect. Their animal personages, whose vibrant personalities explore the full measure of human foibles, allow the reader or listener to connect directly. However, others see the *Uncle Remus* stories as harmful cultural appropriations by Joel Chandler Harris, whose attitudes toward slavery were often contradictory.



34

Helen Bannerman (British, 1862–1946, author-illustrator)

The Story of Little Black Sambo

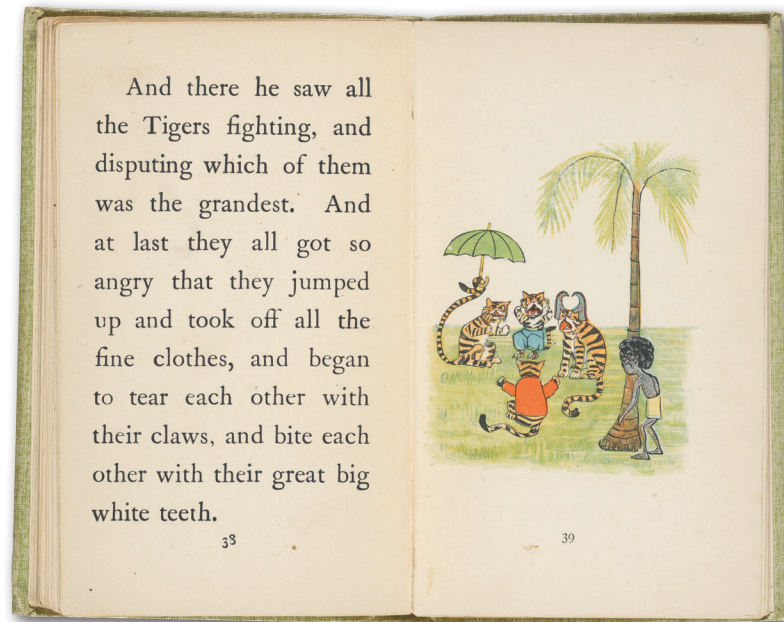
London: Grant Richards, 1899

13 x 8 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 805.99.1915

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

Children's literature has always represented the viewpoints of dominant cultural groups. Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) upheld the subjugation of Indians under the British Raj, which included colorism. While living in British India, Helen Bannerman wrote this story to amuse her two daughters. The dark-skinned Indian boy named Sambo (a pejorative term for an African dating back to the eighteenth century) outwits a succession of vain tigers, who eventually chase themselves into buttery oblivion.



35

Julius Lester (American, 1939–2018, author)

Jerry Pinkney (American, born 1939, illustrator)

The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit

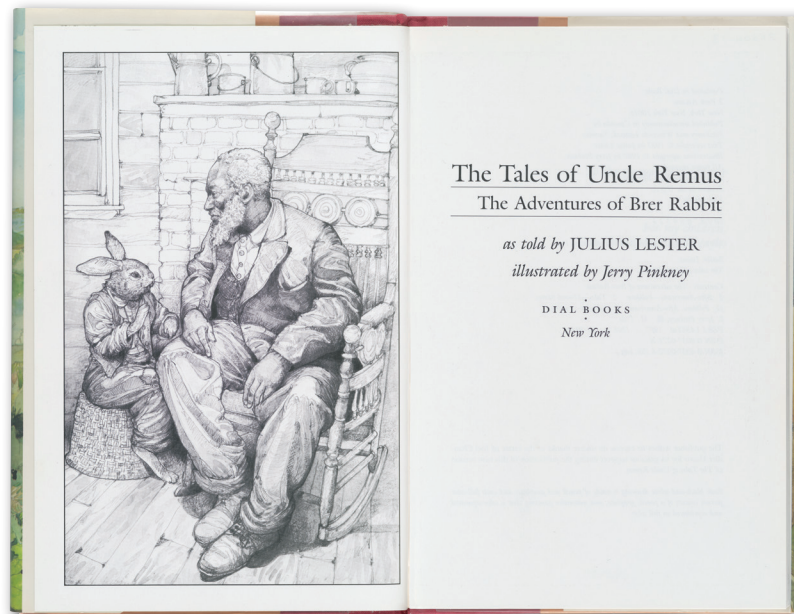
New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1987

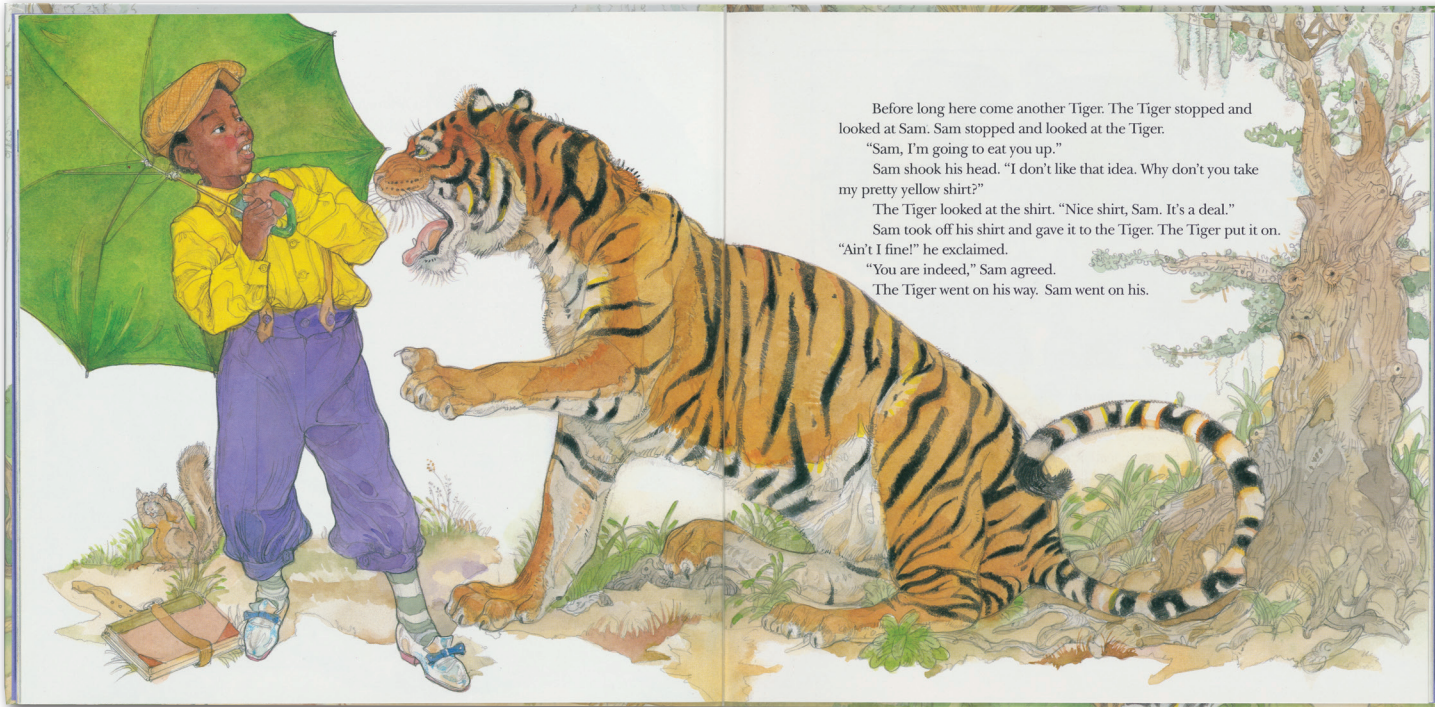
24 x 16 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.87.5188

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2019

Augusta Baker, a pioneering African American librarian who advocated for greater dignity in literature for children of color, wrote the introduction to Lester and Pinkney's *Tales of Uncle Remus*. Here, Pinkney's frontispiece depicts a dignified Uncle Remus conversing with Brer Rabbit. This interpretation constituted a profound departure from Frost's scene of Uncle Remus sharing the stories with his white master's young son, a scene long criticized for its antiquated depiction of Black subservience.





36

Julius Lester (American, 1939–2018, author)

Jerry Pinkney (American, born 1939, illustrator)

Sam and the Tigers: A New Telling of Little Black Sambo

New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1996

26 x 28 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.96.5188

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2019

After reclaiming *Uncle Remus*, Lester and Pinkney produced a radical makeover of *Little Black Sambo*, creating a utopian world where everyone is named “Sam”, and animals and humans coexist peacefully. Despite this harmony, Sam’s predicament endures, and the denouement echoes the original in highly entertaining dialogue. Lester believed the book transcended its stereotypes and admired its “truth of imagination.” Pinkney also inserted references to characters from *Uncle Remus* to discreetly connect the two controversial books.

E. B. White (American, 1899–1985, author)

Garth Williams (American, 1912–1996, illustrator)

Stuart Little

New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1945

21 x 14 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.45.8775

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

E. B. White's fascination with mice eventually led to a literary controversy. *Stuart Little* began with a dream in the mid-1920s, with the book coming out in print in 1945. The red flag appeared in the opening sentence: mouse Stuart was described as being "born" into the human Little family, a phrase that caused widespread consternation. Significantly, the offending word was changed to "arrived" in later editions, and the 1999 movie opens in an orphanage.



Chapter I

In the Drain

WHEN Mrs. Frederick C. Little's second son was born, everybody noticed that he was not much bigger than a mouse. The truth of the matter was, the baby looked very much like a mouse in every way. He was only about two inches high; and he had a

38

C. S. Lewis (British, 1898–1963, author)

Pauline Baynes (British, 1922–2008, illustrator)

The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe

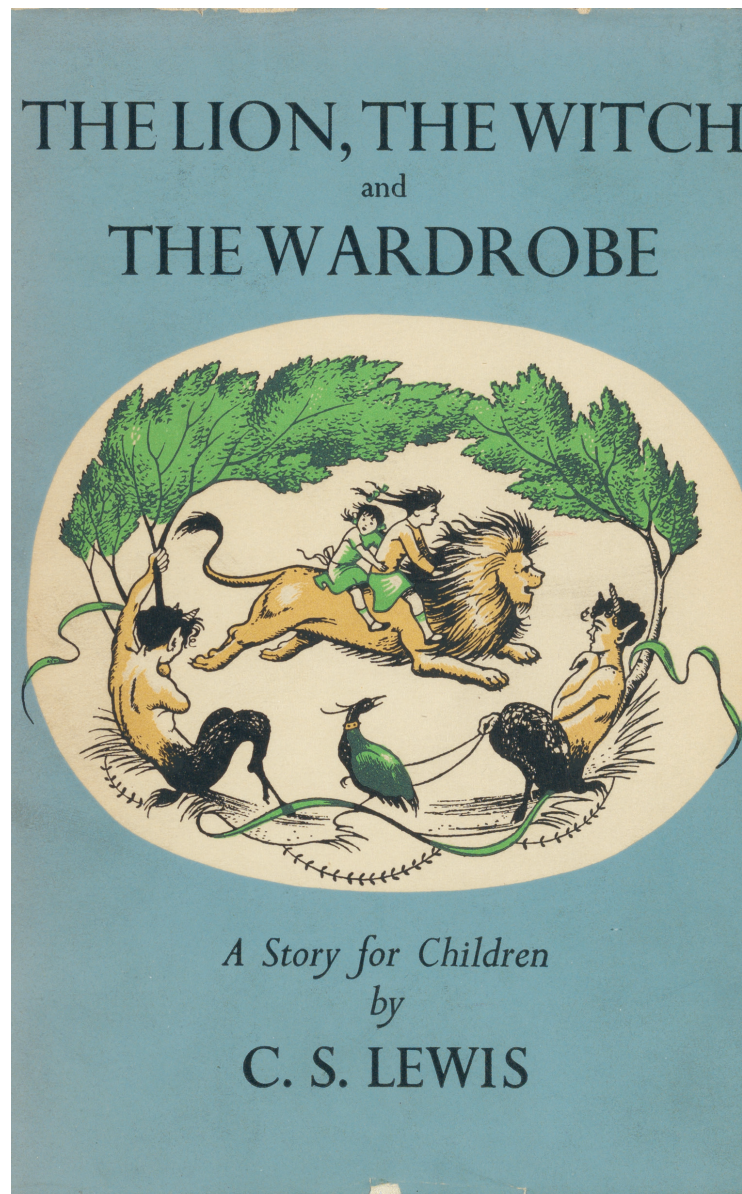
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950

21 x 14 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.50.5196

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe featured masses of talking animals overshadowed by a larger-than-life lion, Aslan, who suggests a Christ figure—a prevailing force of good over evil. Literary scholars have criticized the book for its not-so-subtle exhortation of Christian values, while schools have banned it on the grounds of graphic violence and mysticism. In one case, the state of Florida was subsequently challenged for overstepping the divide between church and state.



Dr. Seuss [**Theodor Geisel**] (American, 1904–1991,
author-illustrator)

The Cat in the Hat

New York: Random House, 1957

23 x 17 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.57.7827

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2020

To counter the tedium of early reader books, Dr. Seuss created an engaging and pioneering book using just 236 different words. *The Cat in the Hat* appeared to great acclaim, celebrating the mischief and mayhem wrought by an anthropomorphic feline. Recently, however, scholars have drawn attention to its use of racist imagery and stereotypes, pointing out that the Cat's outfit was inspired by blackface minstrelsy as well as the smile and the white gloves of an identifiable woman of color, Houghton Mifflin elevator operator Annie Williams.



ENDURANCE

Why are these books still in print, some more than a century after their publication? This selection considers the enduring popularity of certain children's books. Do familiarity and nostalgia override a desire in adults to read something new to the children in their life? What other factors influence the range of available literature? The business of publishing, historically dominated by men, shapes the impact and legacy of children's literature. Consumers also play a significant role in determining what gets published and what doesn't. The next time you buy a children's book, what kind of book will you choose?



40

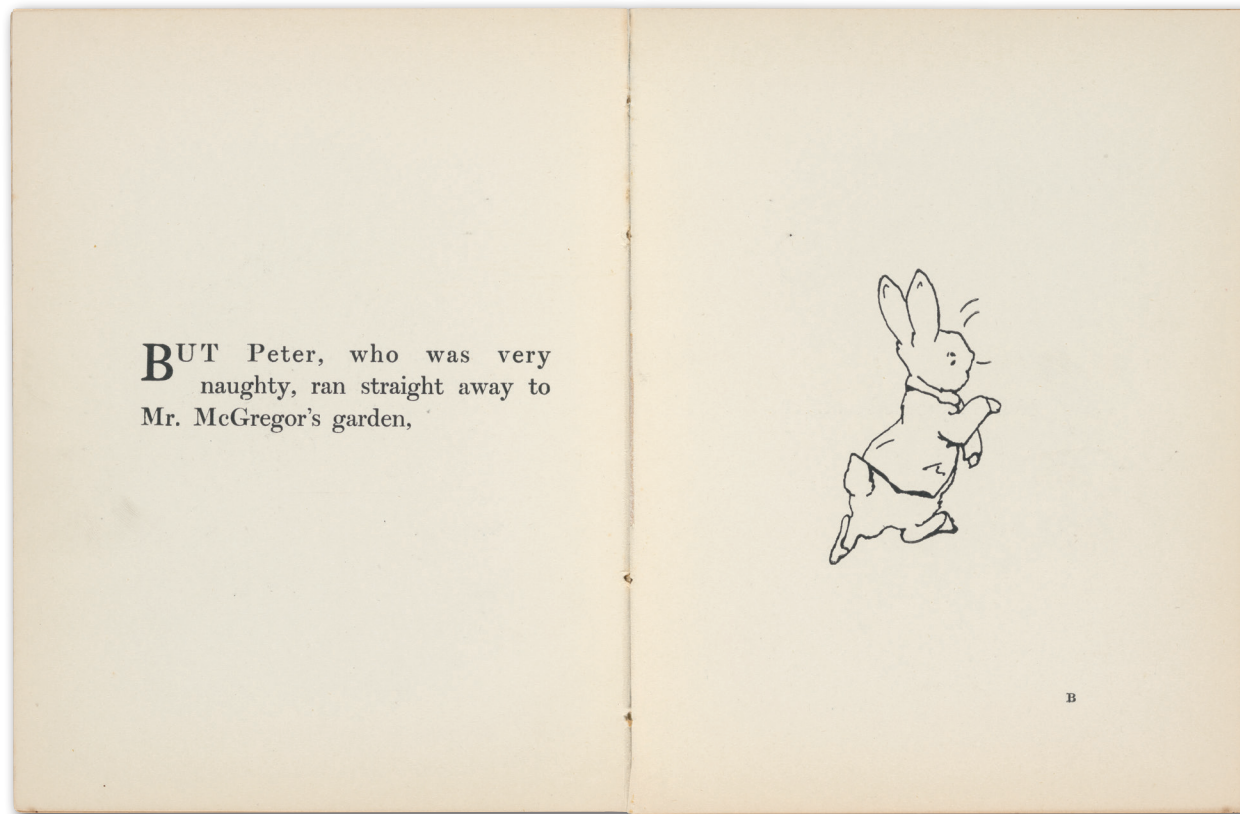
Photograph of Beatrix Potter as a child seated and holding her dog, October 1880

Albumen print, 16 x 10 cm

Houghton Library, TypPh 805.80.7087

Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation, 2020

The Solomon collection holds rare personal effects of celebrated author and illustrator Beatrix Potter, including this childhood photograph with her pet springer spaniel, a tangible reflection of her love of animals from a young age. Inspired by her own pets, the animal stories Potter would go on to write remain in print over a century after their publication.



41

Beatrix Potter (British, 1866–1943, author-illustrator)

The Tale of Peter Rabbit

London: privately printed, 1901
13 x 10 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 905.01.7087
Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

The character Peter Rabbit first emerged in letter stories sent by Beatrix Potter to young friends. Potter was encouraged to develop her charming tales into books, but repeated attempts to secure a publisher failed. Undeterred, Potter opted to self-publish. The enduring appeal of the feisty little rabbit is enhanced by the small size of the book. Based on observations of her own pet rabbit, Peter Rabbit was first illustrated through simple line drawings that capture his independent spirit.

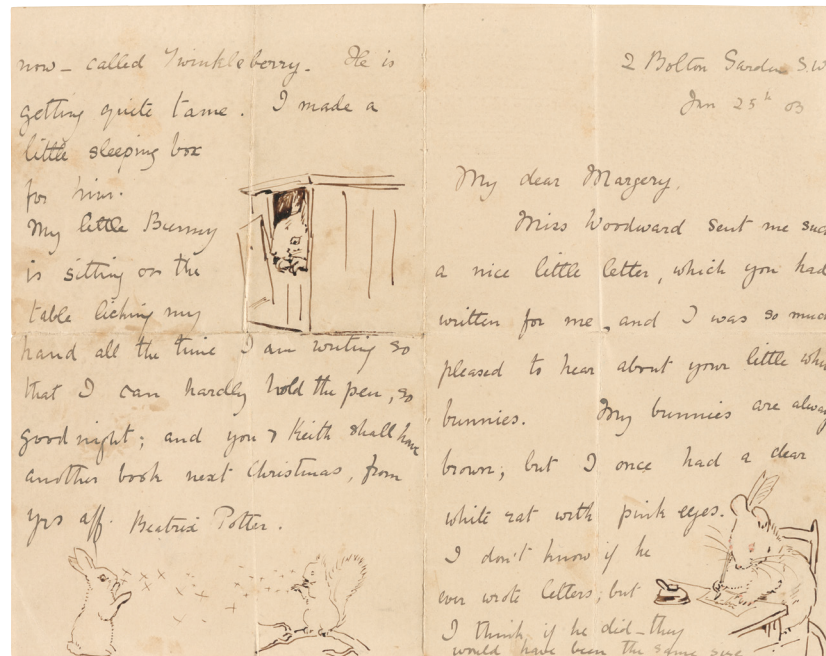
Beatrix Potter (British, 1866–1943)

Letter with six original ink drawings to Margery Spicer, January 25, 1903

Ink on paper, 41 x 34 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Beatrix Potter maintained an active correspondence with children; an illustrated letter of 1894 to the unwell son of her nanny was the catalyst for *Peter Rabbit*. In this letter, she engages her young correspondent with a discussion about bunnies, including charming independent visual vignettes of anthropomorphic bunnies and a squirrel holding a nut perched on a branch. The spontaneous medium of the written letter enabled Potter to create vivid portrayals of all the characters in her books.



43

Kenneth Grahame (British, 1859–1932, author)

W. Graham Robertson (British, 1866–1948, illustrator)

The Wind in the Willows

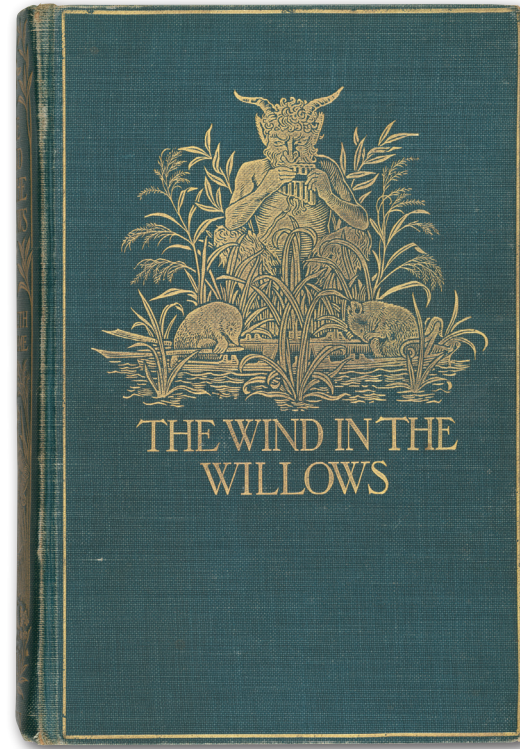
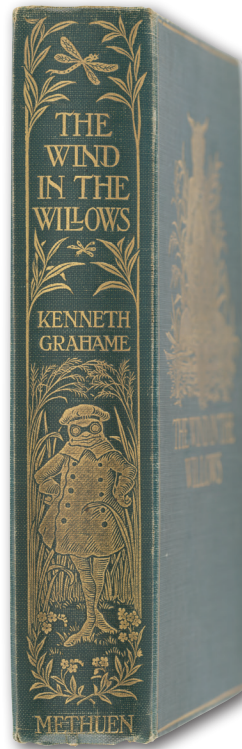
London: Methuen and Co., 1908

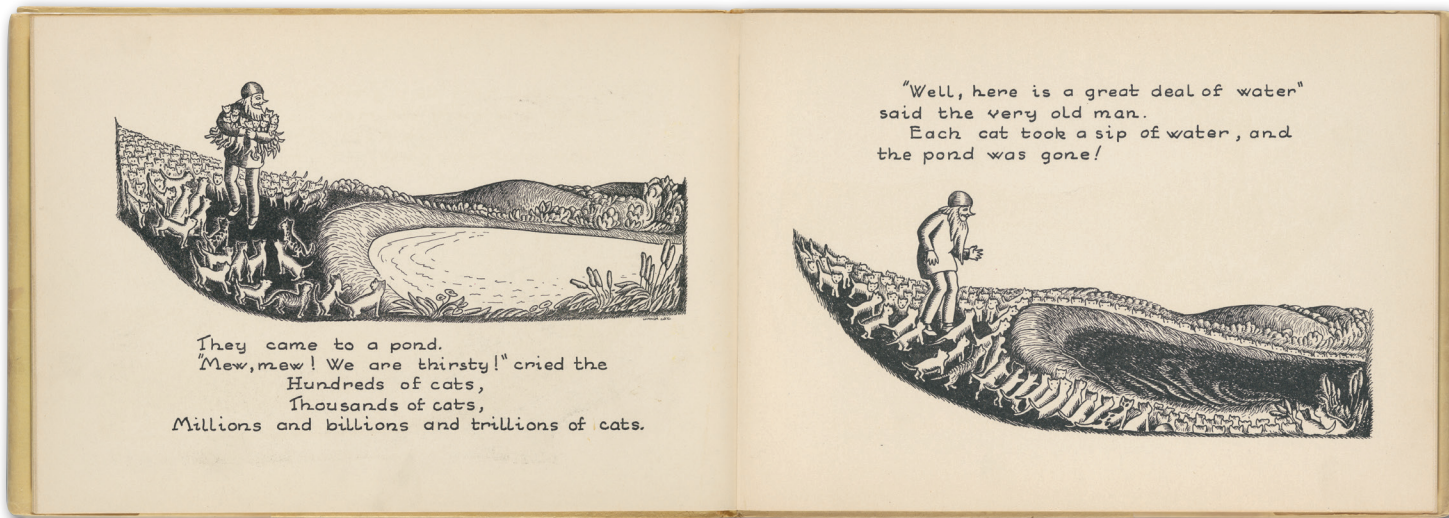
20 x 14 cm

Houghton Library, EC9.G7607.908w

Bequest of William B. Osgood Field, 1957

Grahame's tales of the adventures of Rat, Mole, Badger, and Toad were first recounted in stories and letters to his young son. The adventures of these thinly disguised gentlemen friends were intended as amusing life lessons for a privileged boy. This first edition had one frontispiece illustration; the wild antics of Toad were only hinted at through his depiction in motoring attire on the spine. The 1931 edition illustrated by E. H. Shepard of *Winnie-the-Pooh* fame contributed significantly to the book's popularity.





44

Wanda Gág (American, 1893–1946, author-illustrator)

Millions of Cats

New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1928

17 x 25 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.28.4150

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

Author-illustrator Wanda Gág was a successful contemporary artist invited to pursue a children's literary project. Her somewhat surreal creation about a lonely couple who long for a cat represents a turning point in the graphic design of children's literature. Note how the illustration evolves across the two pages. Gág's book paired innovative design with traditional elements of children's literature (love of animals, rhyming repetition, and a happy ending for the protagonists), with immediate influence.

45

Robert McCloskey (American, 1914–2003, author-illustrator)

Make Way for Ducklings

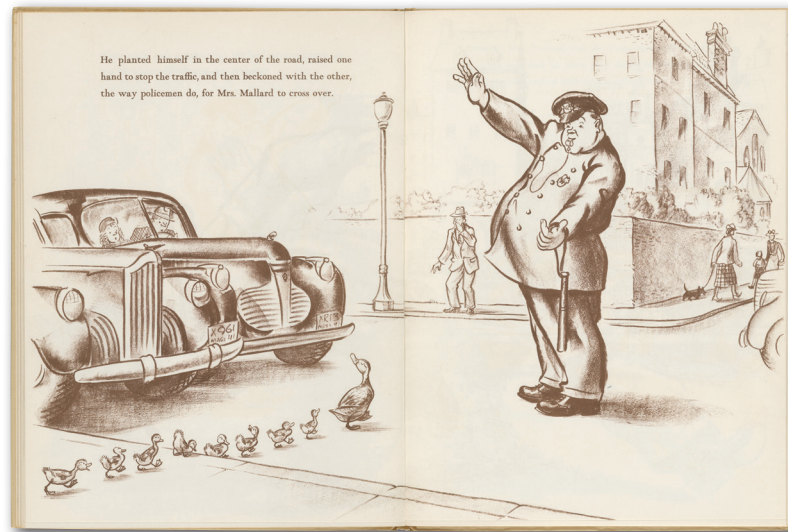
New York: The Viking Press, 1941

31 x 24 cm

Houghton Library, AC9.M1326.941m

Gift of William B. Osgood Field, 1944

This humorous tale about the challenges of raising a family of ducks in Boston remains one of the most popular children's books ever published, particularly in New England. The success of McCloskey's imaginary take on urban family life is rooted in careful observations of the city where he studied art and the extensive life drawing of ducklings he kept in his bathroom.





The next day the birds gathered. Blackbird stirred the blackening brew in his medicine gourd. He stirred it round and round.

Then he dipped his feather brush into the pot. With his free wing he spun Ringdove around, holding his brush to Ringdove's neck.

Ringdove sang, "Coo-coo-roo, Coo-ca-roo!
See what a swinging ring of black can do!"

46

Ashley Bryan (American, born 1923, author-illustrator)

Beautiful Blackbird

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2003
28 x 25 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 2070.03.2411

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2019

Ashley Bryan's celebration of beauty through a Zambian folktale about a blackbird sharing his unique qualities with others is a significant example of contemporary children's literature. Publishers are only slowly catching up to the imperative need for children's literature to reflect the diversity of society, creating a positive framework to promote respect for all.

E. B. White (American, 1899–1985, author)

Garth Williams (American, 1912–1996, illustrator)

Charlotte's Web

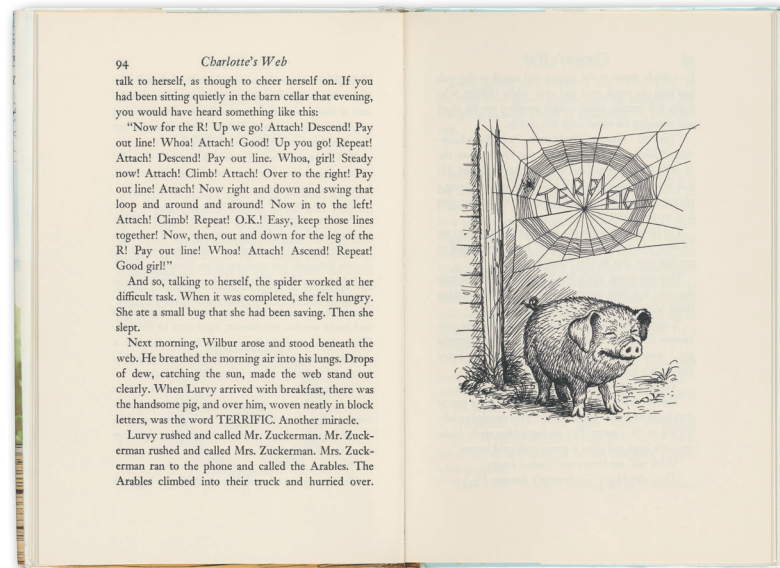
New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers,
ca. 1970; first published 1952

21 x 15 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.60.8775

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

E. B. White incorporated personal experiences into his story about the triumphant rescue of a pig from slaughter by a wise, literate spider. White inserted the human character Fern late in his writing and resisted his publisher's efforts to change Charlotte, the spider. While the animals in the story are fully anthropomorphic, illustrator Garth Williams wrestled with the depiction of Charlotte's face and ultimately reverted to a more scientific depiction, leaving her human qualities to the reader's imagination.



48

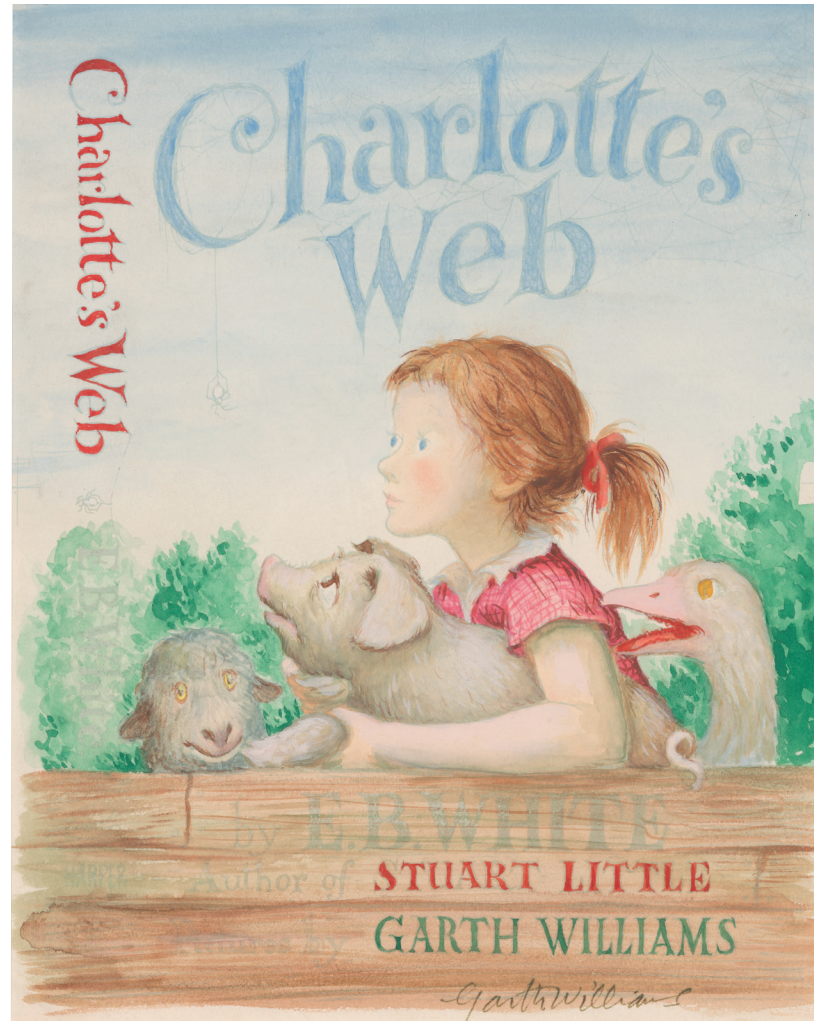
Garth Williams (American, 1912–1996)

Preliminary cover for *Charlotte's Web*, ca. 1951

Watercolor, 41 x 37 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Garth Williams's delicate and engaging illustrations for *Charlotte's Web* contributed significantly to the success of the book. This alternate version of the cover, possibly a preparatory study, reveals subtle differences. While it is more colorful than the published version, the most striking difference lies in the gaze of the animals.



ADAPTATION

Books adapted to the screen have appeared ever since the early days of film. Films featuring animals comprise a significant element of this genre, and the books in question enjoyed commercial success in both arenas. From a white rabbit, a downtrodden yet dignified horse, and a cowardly lion to a bear of little brain, a pacifist bull, and mutant insects, these characters are beguiling celebrities with animal identities. By suspending disbelief, the viewer magically connects to the personalities of these anthropomorphized creatures. Each conveys traits with which we share, emulate, and identify.

49A

**Silver pocket watch belonging to Charles Dodgson
[Lewis Carroll]**

Inscribed on the inner case “Rev. C. L. Dodgson/Christ Church Oxford”
A. Bach of London, hallmarked 1868
5 cm (diameter); 34 cm (chain & fobs)

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

Carroll intended *Alice* to amuse the young reader while also satirizing Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. He enlisted anthropomorphic animals such as the Cheshire Cat, Mad Hatter, and March Hare to enhance the narrative. The author’s pocket watch, though hallmarked three years after *Alice*’s publication, evokes the one the March Hare consults at the book’s outset, and suggests an animal’s ability to tell time and acknowledge tardiness. Tenniel’s drawing of “The Lobster Quadrille,” a song recited by the Mock Turtle, underscores the anthropomorphic sentiments in the quatrain where the lobster, inspecting himself vainly, turns out his toes.

The other two items offer insights into the book’s early history. John Tenniel insisted that the first printing be withdrawn due to the poor quality of the illustrations and typographical errors. This is one of just twenty-three copies known to have survived from



a print run of 2000. Carroll copied the woodcuts for Alice Liddell by hand as a preview of the illustrations in the book written for her. His adept drawings were mistaken for the Tenniel originals until the 1980s. Beginning in 1903, a parade of film adaptations (themselves a testament to its popularity) kept the book in the public eye, with Disney’s animation in 1951 cementing its mass appeal.

49B

Sir John Tenniel (British, 1820–1914, illustrator)

Illustration for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "Lobster Quadrille," ca. 1865

Graphite heightened with ink and Chinese white on paper,
26 x 20 cm

Houghton Library, MS Eng 718.6 (11)

Gift of Gertrude Amory, 1927



49C

Lewis Carroll [Charles Dodgson] (British, 1832–1898,
copyist)

Copies of woodcuts for *Alice, the “Cheshire Cat”* and
the “Mad Hatter’s Tea Party,” ca. 1865

Brown ink on paper, 26 x 21 cm

Houghton Library, TypDr 805.C260.60o

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020





perhaps as this is May it won't be raving mad—at least not so mad as it was in March." As she said this, she looked up, and there was the Cat again, sitting on a branch of a tree.

"Did you say pig, or fig?" said the Cat.

"I said pig," replied Alice; "and I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy."

"All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.



The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he *said* was, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"

"Come, we shall have some fun now!" thought Alice. "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles—I believe I can guess that," she added aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the

H

49D

Lewis Carroll [Charles Dodgson] (British, 1832–1898, author)

John Tenniel (British, 1820–1914, illustrator)

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

London: Macmillan and Co., 1865

20 x 14 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 805.65.2607

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2018

what made them; but Toto knew, and he walked close to Dorothy's side, and did not even bark in return.

"How long will it be," the child asked of the Tin Woodman, "before we are out of the forest?"

"I cannot tell," was the answer, "for I have never been to the Emerald City. But my father went there once, when I was a boy, and he said it was a long journey through a dangerous country, although nearer to the city where Oz dwells the country is beautiful. But I am not afraid so long as I have my oil-can, and nothing can hurt the Scarecrow, while you bear upon your forehead the mark of the good Witch's kiss, and that will protect you from harm."

"But Toto!" said the girl, anxiously; "what will protect him?"

"We must protect him ourselves, if he is in danger," replied the Tin Woodman.

Just as he spoke there came from the forest a terrible roar, and the next moment a great Lion bounded into the road. With one blow of his paw he sent the Scarecrow spinning over and over to the edge of the road, and then he struck at the Tin Woodman with his sharp claws. But, to the Lion's surprise, he could make no impression on the tin, although the Woodman fell over in the road and lay still.

Little Toto, now that he had an enemy to face, ran barking toward the Lion, and the great beast had opened



"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

50

L. Frank Baum (American, 1856–1919, author)

W. W. Denslow (American, 1856–1915, illustrator)

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

Chicago, New York: G. M. Hill Co., 1900

22 x 18 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.00.1950

Gift of Philip Hofer, date unknown

Anthropomorphism in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* spans the animal (the Cowardly Lion), the vegetable (the Scarecrow), and the mineral (the Tin Woodman). Over fifty cinematic versions of the various Oz books exist, but the 1939 movie starring Judy Garland brought cult status to the original publication and its author. Recently, L. Frank Baum's prominence in American literature has diminished due to his 1890s editorials advocating the genocide of all Native Americans. Whether his reputation suffers irrevocably has yet to be seen.

of something else, and when Piglet called to him, he just went on walking.

"Hallo!" said Piglet, "what are *you* doing?"

"Hunting," said Pooh.

"Hunting what?"

"Tracking something," said Winnie-the-Pooh very mysteriously.

"Tracking what?" said Piglet, coming closer.

"That's just what I ask myself. I ask myself, What?"

"What do you think you'll answer?"

"I shall have to wait until I catch up with it," said Winnie-the-Pooh. "Now, look there." He



pointed to the ground in front of him. "What do you see there?"

"Tracks," said Piglet. "Paw-marks." He gave a little squeak of excitement. "Oh, Pooh! Do you think it's a—a—a Woozle?"



51

A. A. Milne (British, 1882–1956, author)

Ernest H. Shepard (British, 1879–1976, illustrator)

Winnie-the-Pooh

London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1926

23 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, EC9.M6357.926wa

Gift of William B. Osgood Field, 1944

Milne was inspired by the stuffed animals of his son Christopher Robin to weave this beloved narrative. Stuffed animals universally embody a young child's tenuous distinction between fact and fantasy, and the bonds between Christopher Robin and Pooh are powerful and endearing. Disney expressed interest in acquiring the rights as early as 1938 but didn't succeed until 1961. The first animated Pooh film appeared in 1966, and a host of them have followed.

52

Munro Leaf (American, 1905–1976, author)

Robert Lawson (American, 1892–1957, illustrator)

The Story of Ferdinand

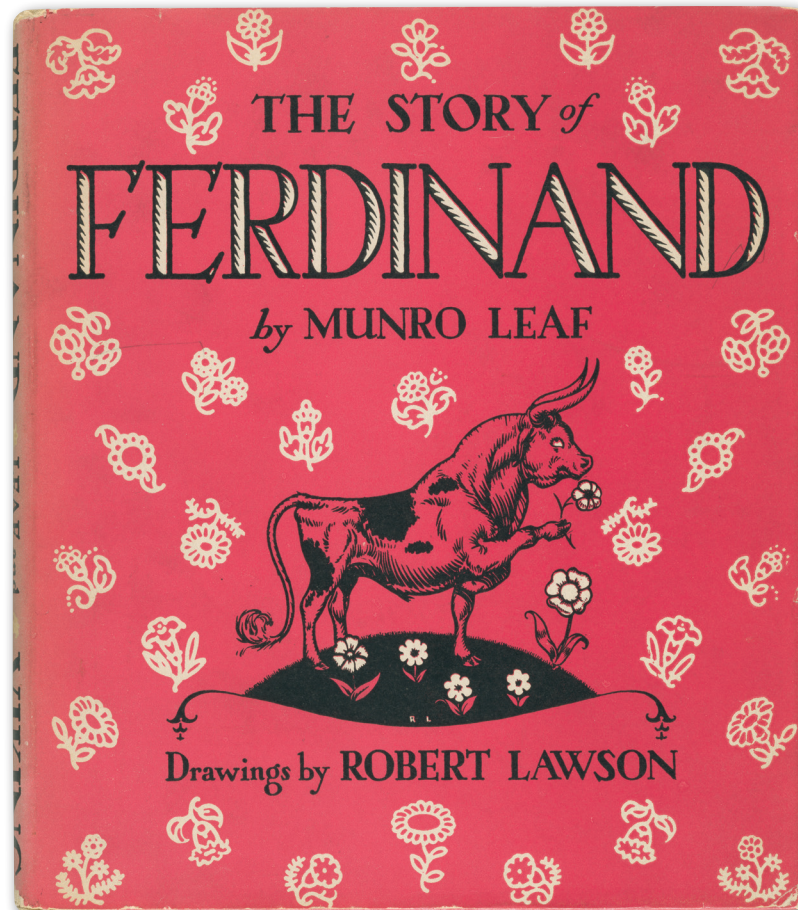
New York: The Viking Press, 1936

21 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.36.5138

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

To provide an opportunity for his impoverished friend Robert Lawson, Munro Leaf created a benign bull who would rather smell flowers than fight in the bullring, thereby avoiding the convention of dogs, cats, and horses. Published in the era of civil war in Spain and Nazism in Germany, the book was condemned by Franco and Hitler for criticizing fascism. *Ferdinand* enjoyed increased popularity as Walt Disney's 1938 Oscar-winning animated film. Ferdinand's humanity continues to resonate.



He started to stand up, but his knees were shaking so much he had to sit down again on the floor. He glanced behind him, thinking he could bolt back into the tunnel the way he had come, but the doorway had disappeared. There was now only a solid brown wall behind him.

11

James's large frightened eyes traveled slowly around the room.

The creatures, some sitting on chairs, others reclining on a sofa, were all watching him intently.

Creatures?

Or were they insects?

An insect is usually something rather small, is it not? A grasshopper, for example, is an insect.

So what would you call it if you saw a grasshopper as large as a dog? As large as a *large* dog. You could hardly call *that* an insect, could you?

There was an Old-Green-Grasshopper as large as a large dog sitting on a stool directly across the room from James now.

And next to the Old-Green-Grasshopper, there was an enormous Spider.

And next to the Spider, there was a giant Ladybug with nine black spots on her scarlet shell.

Each of these three was squatting upon a magnificent chair.



53

Roald Dahl (British, 1916–1990, author)

Nancy Ekholm Burkert (American, born 1933, illustrator)

James and the Giant Peach

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961

26 x 19 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.61.3155

The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust, 2005

James and the Giant Peach constituted debuts for both Roald Dahl and Nancy Ekholm Burkert in children's literature. Like *Alice and Oz*, the narrative employs the conceit of a journey or quest: James escapes his wicked aunts in a mutant peach inhabited by equally enormous insects. His journey takes him to New York and a ticker-tape parade. Dahl repeatedly declined overtures to translate his books into film; his widow authorized the first (1996) cinematic version of this book.

Nancy Ekholm Burkert (American, born 1933)

Finished drawing for *James and the Giant Peach*, 1961

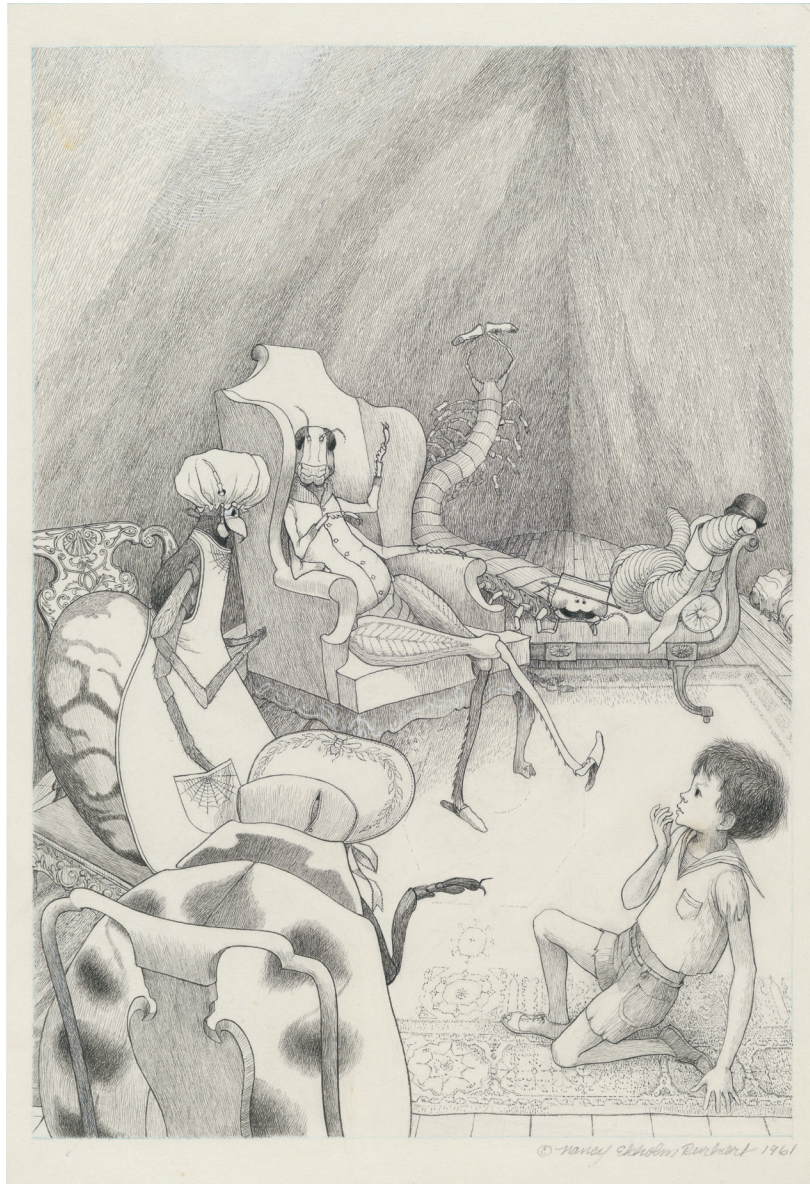
“James’s large frightened eyes traveled slowly around the room. The creatures, some sitting on chairs, others reclining on a sofa, were all watching him intently.”

Ink and graphite on illustration board, 36 x 27 cm

Houghton Library, TypDr 970.B247.61j (21) Sz 2

The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust and Betty McAndrew funds, 1997

Burkert carefully researched her participants, studying specimens in entomology books on species that inhabited the story’s initial setting in the south of England. These renderings also reflect Burkert’s admiration for the anthropomorphic creatures of J. J. Grandville. They sit and lounge on equally accurate Chippendale and Sheraton furniture. This domestic environment further reinforces the credibility of their anthropomorphic identities.



55

Anna Sewell (British, 1820–1878, author)

C. Hewitt (British, life dates unknown, illustrator)

Black Beauty: His Grooms and Companions. The Autobiography of a Horse. Translated from the Original Equine

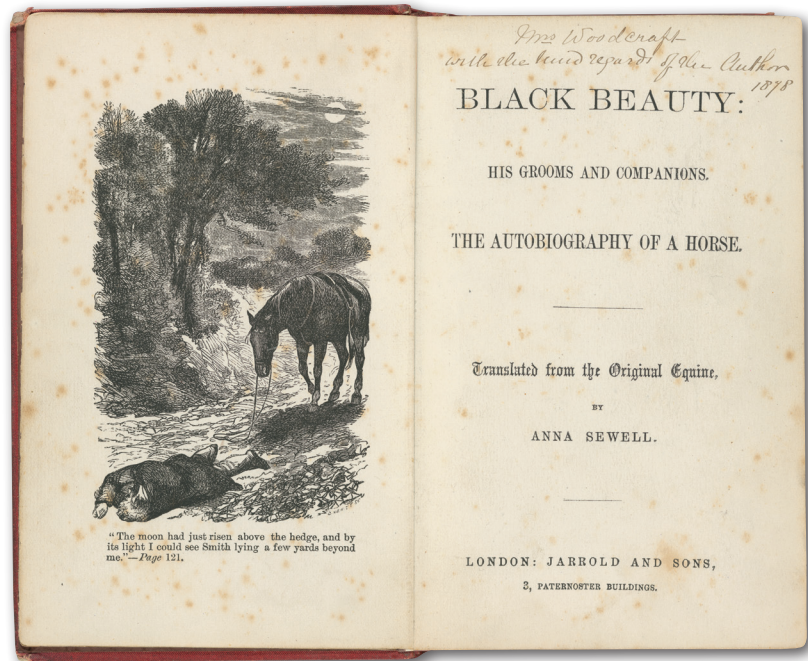
London: Jarrold and Sons, 1877

17 x 12 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 805.77.7826

Gift of Peter J. Solomon, 2020

This book appeared during an upsurge in animal welfare advocacy. Beauty, as narrator, relates the story of his life under different owners—good and bad—and establishes a close bond with the reader. The anticruelty message resonated deeply with Victorian audiences. The bearing rein, which painfully constricted a horse's head, was never outlawed, but Sewell's narrative curtailed its use. There have been over nine film adaptations of *Black Beauty*, the first with sound in 1946.





INNOVATION

Necessity, creativity, commerce, and emerging technologies were key components in the development of a broad spectrum of formats for children's books. Through all these permutations, anthropomorphism in characters continually played a significant role. As artists strove to push creative boundaries, they needed to convince their publishers of financial returns. Not surprisingly, they met with mixed results.

Beatrix Potter's accordion book met with meager sales, while Eric Carle was gratified by the success of his die-cut book. Robert Sabuda achieved financial security through extraordinary paper engineering, and David Wiesner traded on his unparalleled success in print media to cross the digital divide. Whether a mischievous rabbit scampering across fourteen panels, a caterpillar progressing through holes in increasingly large pages, or a ladybug descending electronically into various app-driven worlds, the bottom line was always a key determinant.

Park Benjamin Jr. (American, 1829–1922,
author-illustrator)

“The Revenge of the Little Hippopotamus,”
published in *St. Nicholas Magazine* IV, no. 12
(October 1877)

26 x 18 cm

Houghton Library, AP8.St8628

The Bayard Livingston Kilgour and Kate Gray
Kilgour fund, the James Duncan Phillips Endowment
fund, Books for Houghton fund, and unrestricted
acquisitions funds, 2001

“The Revenge of the Little Hippopotamus” combines
Benjamin’s talents as author and illustrator in comic
verse to narrate a hippo’s revenge attempt upon a
crocodile. Depicted rearing up on his hind legs—
impossible in life—the hippo glares with intense rage,
illustrating the biblical dictum of “an eye for an eye.”
The story appeared in the *Saint Nicholas Magazine*,
published by Scribner & Co. debuting in 1873 as an
innovative periodical targeting children.





57

Beatrix Potter (British, 1866–1943, author-illustrator)

Final study for *The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit*, ca. 1906

Ink and watercolor on paper, 11 x 9 cm; 11 x 268 cm (open)

Houghton Library, TypDr 905.P708.06f

Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation, 2020

Having successfully published seven books in the format of the original *Peter*, Potter wanted to explore a new design. She turned to the accordion format for *The Fierce Bad Rabbit*, producing these original watercolor washes that determined the printed version. Potter created two other accordion books that year, and none succeeded commercially; booksellers, and perhaps children, found them too awkward to handle.

Beatrix Potter (British, 1866–1943)

Letter from 1940, published in *The Horn Book* (May 1941)

Ink on paper, 33 x 20 cm

Houghton Library, TypZ.905.41.7088

Gift of the Peter and Susan Solomon Family Foundation, 2020

Potter wrote this letter for publication in *The Horn Book*, an

American magazine dedicated to children's literature, toward

the end of her life to answer the perennial question about

Peter's origins. She suggested that her animals live their lives

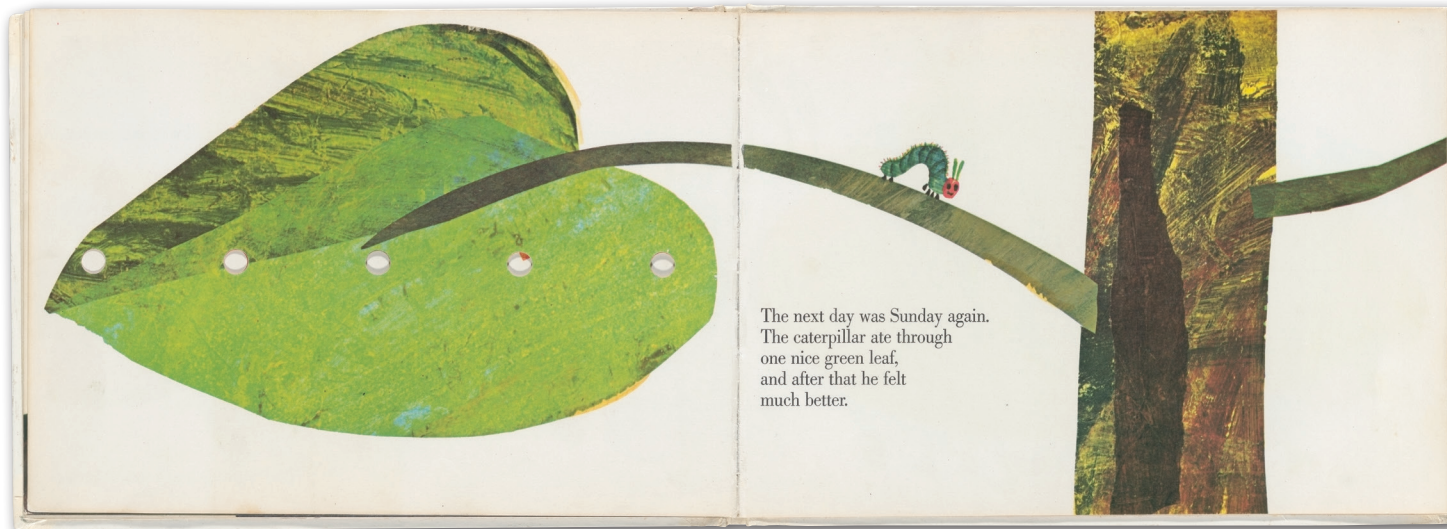
like humans, allowing young readers to identify with them as

characters.

I have been asked to tell again how Peter Rabbit came to be written. It seems a long time ago; and in another world. Though after all the world does not change much in the country, where the seasons follow their accustomed course — the green leaf and the snow — and where Nature, though never consciously wicked, has always been ruthless. In towns there is change. People begin to burrow underground like rabbits. The same may be said for Blom Peter was invented more than forty years ago as was an air warden in a bombed London parish.

I have never quite understood the secret of Peter's perennial charm. Perhaps it is because he and his little friends keep on their way, briskly, absorbed with their own doings. They were always independent. Like a poppy — the first "poppy" — their names especially seemed to be inevitable. I never knew a gardeness named "Mr. Greps." Several bearded horticulturalists have recounted the "nick-name"; but I do not know how it came about; nor why "Peter" was called "Peter". It is regrettable that a small boy once inquired audibly whether the Apostle was Peter Rabbit? There is great difficulty in finding, or inventing, names void of all possible embarrassment. A few of the characters were hamelin skits or caricatures; but "Mr. Greps" was not one of them, and the backgrounds of Peter Rabbit are a mixture of locality. "Squirrel Nutkin" lived on the shore of Deerpark Lake near Keswick, and Mrs. Tiggy Winkle in the nearby valley of Newlands. "Jemima Puddle-duck", "Johnny Turkey" and others lived at Sawrey, in the southern part of the English Lake District. The earlier books, including the later printed "Mr. Robinson", were written for real children in picture letters of scribbled pen and ink. I confess that after words I painted most of the little pictures to please myself. The more spontaneous the pleasure — the more happy the result. I do not remember a time when I did not try to wood pictures and make myself a fair land amongst the wild flowers, the animals, fungi, mosses, woods and streams, all the thousand objects of the country side; that pleasant in changing world of realism and romance, which in our northern clime is stiffened by hard weather, a tough ancestry, and the strength that comes from the hills.

Beatrix Potter



59

Eric Carle (American, 1929–2021, author-illustrator)

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1969

21 x 29 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 970.69.2604

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2020

This beloved book addresses the young child's first steps toward independence. Through the metamorphosis of the modest caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly, Carle introduces the days of the week, fruits, colors, and even the dangers of overindulgence. The book's innovative design with stepped pages and punched holes necessitated its being printed in Japan. Shipping logistics delayed its US distribution; once available, it immediately enchanted children. To date, there are seventy translations, most recently Mongolian, Armenian, and several indigenous Australian languages.

Maurice Sendak (American, 1928–2012, illustrator)

Study for poster *Reading Is Fundamental*, ca. 1979

Graphite on paper, 66 x 53 cm

Loan from Peter J. Solomon

In his poster art for the nonprofit Reading is Fundamental, which works to put books into the hands of the underserved, Sendak enjoyed creating visual impact through the marriage of typography and image. In his iconic book *Where the Wild Things Are*, Sendak depicts Max reading in his wolf suit while the Wild Things (inspired by Sendak's own family members) exhibit a less informed approach to literature. Zoomorphism and anthropomorphism converge to dominate the visual narrative.



61

Lewis Carroll [Charles Dodgson] (British, 1832–1898, author)

Robert Sabuda (American, born 1965, paper engineer and
illustrator)

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

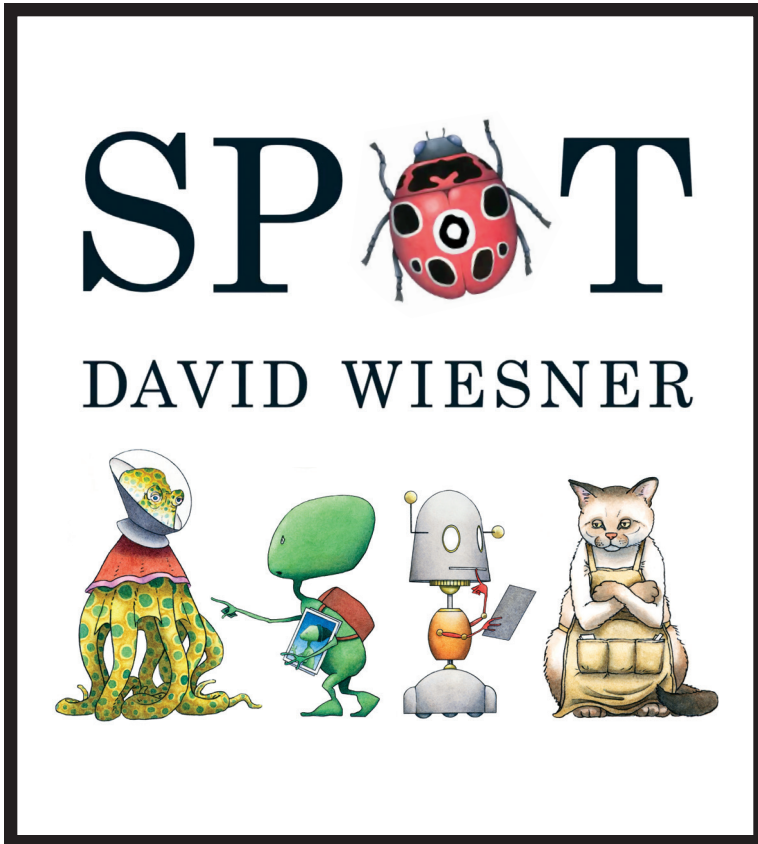
New York: Little Simon, 2003

26 x 22 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 2070.03.7636

Gift of W. H. Bond, 2004

Robert Sabuda's vulnerable, intricately constructed pop-up books are intended more for adults than children. Sabuda credits the volvelle, one of the earliest known paper formats with movable parts, and *Cinderella* by the Czech artist Wojtech Kustaba as formative influences. Like his other adaptations, notably *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Sabuda's *Alice* is a tour de force. By bringing Tenniel's illustrations into the third dimension, he reinforces their sense of life, making the anthropomorphic aspect even more convincing.



62

David Wiesner (American, born 1956, author-illustrator)

SPOT

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015

Application and e-book

David Wiesner is a devoted advocate of wordless books tinged with the surreal, who pushes boundaries with his postmodern approach. *Spot*, like Carroll's *Alice*, takes the reader down a digital rabbit hole, but this time the reader is led by a ladybug. The reader enters five worlds within worlds and encounters bugs, robots, fish, and aliens, all brimming with humanoid vitality. Due to his sales track record, publisher Houghton Mifflin took a chance on Wiesner's technological experiment.

GAME CHANGERS

Published almost two centuries apart, this board game and book reflect cultural shifts in publishing for children in different ways. *Julián Is a Mermaid* was groundbreaking in its imaginative and accessible celebration of gender nonconformity, while the dynamic visual concept of the *Royal Game of the Dolphin* was decades ahead of contemporary children's literature in terms of scale and use of color. The colorful look of children's literature was only made possible by radical advances in affordable color print technology in the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, the board game industry, like children's book publishers, is beginning to address the lack of cultural representation in its products.

63

Unknown creator

The Royal Game of the Dolphin: An Elegant, Instructive, and Amusing Pastime

London: William Darton, 1821

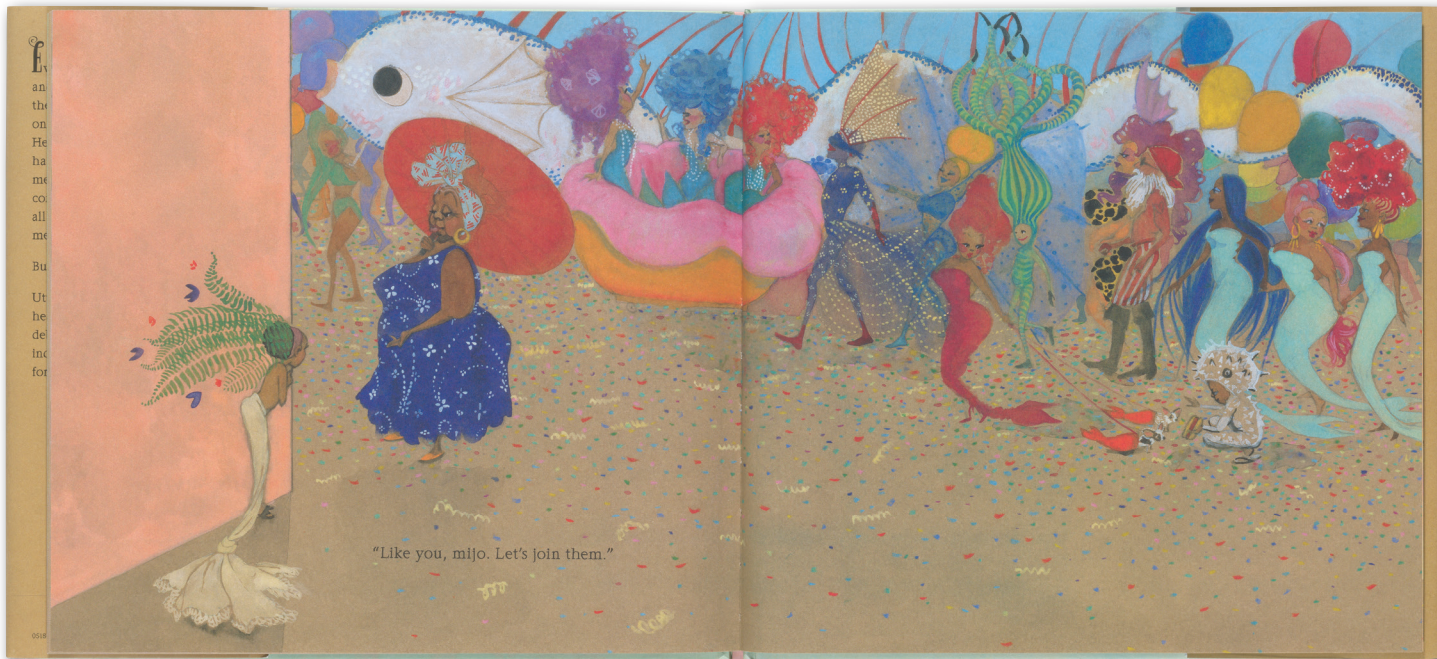
Board game: 9 hand-colored plates mounted on linen, 40 x 50 cm; folded, in publisher's slipcase, 14 x 17 cm

Houghton Library, MS Eng 1749 (15)

Unknown source and date of acquisition

The deep connections between education, literacy, and entertainment extend beyond the realm of literature. The title of this knowledge game spells out its merits, reinforcing fun in learning. Colorful board games centered on animals were a popular pastime, suited to a broad but necessarily literate audience, as indicated by the detailed accompanying instructions. Nominally scientific, the descriptions of the animals include some personal human-like qualities: the fidelity of a dove, the sagacity of an otter.





64

Jessica Love (American, born 1982, author-illustrator)

Julián Is a Mermaid

Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2018

24 x 26 cm

Houghton Library, PS3612.O945 J95 2018

The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust, 2019

Jessica Love's recent award-winning book about a boy and his grandmother, Latinx of African descent, taps into the imaginary worlds of children where they develop their sense of self and identity. Julián's grandmother embraces his longing to be a fantastical creature and brings him to the Coney Island Mermaid Parade. Love's illustrations capture the joy of the gender-nonconforming boy whose daydream of personal transformation comes true. Picture books and young adult fiction representing LGBTQ persons are still relatively rare.

An illustration in the background shows a group of anthropomorphic dogs in military-style uniforms. One dog in the foreground is wearing a beret and sunglasses, holding a flag with a bone-shaped cutout. Another dog is holding a spear. A third dog is sitting in a wheelchair, also in uniform. The scene is set against a light, hazy background.

RESTORING DIGNITY

Indigenous peoples have a long history of disenfranchisement, including being described in stereotypical and demeaning terms. For too long, children's books and games reinforced these indignities. Thanks to the work of Indigenous authors, illustrators, advocates, publishers, and scholars such as Dr. Debbie Reese, whose website discusses Native Americans in children's literature, children's books that allow the reader to experience North American history through the lens of Indigenous people are replacing traditional, racist narratives.

Maurice Sendak (American, 1928–2012, author-illustrator)

Alligators All Around: An Alphabet in Nutsbell Library

New York: Harper & Row, 1962

10 x 7 cm

Houghton Library, PS3569.E6 N88 1962

Gift of H. Nichols B. Clark, 2020

Maurice Sendak is beloved as the most significant children's book author and illustrator of the twentieth century.

Alligators All Around teaches the alphabet through letter-inspired activities with alligators full of personality and human behaviors. Cherished for decades, in recent years this book has been criticized for its stereotypical representation of Native Americans. For example, "I imitating Indians" reflects a long European-American tradition of appropriating Native American dress and "playing Indian."



66

Brenda J. Child (Red Lake Ojibwe, born 1959, author)

Jonathan Thunder (Red Lake Ojibwe, born 1977, illustrator)

Gordon Jourdain (Lac La Croix First Nation, born 1960, translator)

Bowwow Powwow (Bagosenjige-niimi'idim)

Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2018

26 x 27 cm

Houghton Library, E98.P86 C58 2018

The Philip Hofer Charitable Trust, 2019

Dogs play the role of counterparts to the human protagonists in this indigenous story written in English and Ojibwe. The story chronicles the sharing of traditions throughout the powwow. A lyric from one of the tribal songs, "We are like dogs," recognizes the important connection between humans and animals. The author, illustrator, and the translator are all from Native American and First Nations communities, giving the book a dignified representation of indigenous culture that the Sendak *Alphabet* lacks.



67

Julie Flett (Cree-Métis, born 1964, author-illustrator)

We All Count: A Book of Cree Numbers

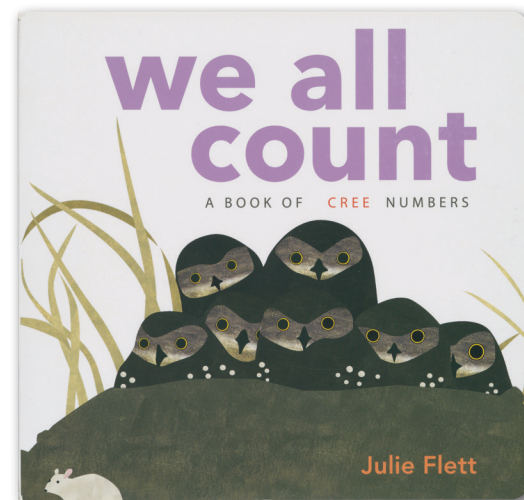
Vancouver: Native Northwest, 2014

19 x 20 cm

Houghton Library, Typ 2077Ca.14.3977

Gift of Meghan C. Melvin, 2020

This bilingual (Cree and English) counting book is designed to help readers learn the Cree words for numbers one through ten. Being from the hands and mind of an indigenous illustrator, author, and artist, Flett's board book provides an all-too-rare opportunity for readers to encounter and celebrate aspects of Cree culture through words and images. Flett's subtle observations of animal and human behavior invite reflections on harmony in nature and the significance of community.



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