Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society annual convention / March 25-27, 2021

Roundtable on "Physical Transformation in Children's Media"

A convention roundtable is part presentation and part group discussion. Roundtable topics compete for acceptance, and accepted roundtable participants present some findings and then facilitate a discussion among all attendees. They are lively events and supplement formal paper presentations at the annual English Honor Society conventions.

TCNJ Participants:

Avina Sharma, English Secondary Education, 2023, Chapter Treasurer 21-22

Zoe Talbot. English Secondary Education, 2023

Angie Tamayo, English Secondary Education, Social Justice Studies minor, 2023 Chapter Treasurer 20-21, Chapter Publicist 21-22

Jared Woods, English Liberal Arts and Philosophy double major, 2023

Courtney Polidori, Moderator & part-time faculty in the department of English

Participants will present a very short version of their conference presentation and attendees will have a chance to join in the discussion of their topic as if they themselves were conference attendees.

THE ENTANGLED RELATIONSHIP OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND TRANSFORMATION

What is Anthropomorphism?

- Assigning human characteristics to nonhuman entities such as animals or inanimate objects
- Appears in tales old and new
- Ex: Greek myths, Aesop's Fables, Winnie-The-Pooh

1840   Reality is harsh. Adults need to take a didactic stance in instructing children to take their appropriate place in society. "Thou Shalt Not" is the message.
- Morals & Responsibilities

- Power vs. Weakness

- Personal relationships
- The School Experience
- Animal Rights

- Race & Social Class
- Ecology
- Respecting Difference
- Feminist Issues
- War

- Gay Rights
- Gangs
- Drugs

2003   Children are active, lifelong learners who need to adapt, contribute to change, and to critically explore issues and options.

Timeline: Transformation of trends, topics, and issues exemplified through anthropomorphism in children's literature

Anthropomorphism vs. Personification

Personification: implementing figurative language to give inanimate objects humanlike characteristics

Anthropomorphism: non-human things displaying human traits and emotions, as well as being capable of human behavior

Three Factor Theory

Explains when and the extent to which people are likely to anthropomorphize based on three psychological determinants

Elicited Agent Knowledge: Elicitation of knowledge itself
Effectance Motivation: The need to interact effectively with one's environment
Sociality Motivation: The need and desire to establish social connections with other humans

Influences of Anthropomorphism

Dispositional: Need for cognition
Situational: Perceived Similarity
Developmental: Acquisition of Alternate Theories
Cultural: Experiences, Norms, Ideologies

BIPoC Erasure in Children's Media Through Transformation

Princess and the Frog (2009)   Soul (2020)

Character: Tiana
Voiced By: Anika Noni Rose

Character: Joe Gardner
Voiced By: Jamie Fox

Brother Bear (2003)   Emperor's New Groove (2000)   Spies in Disguise (2019)

Character: Kenai
Voiced by: Joaquin Phoenix

Character: Kuzco
Voiced By: David Spade

Character: Lance Sterling
Voiced by: Will Smith

- These decisions peg the questions: Why aren't BIPoC characters allowed to learn and grow in human form?
- Is it due to the majority of producers and directors being white men who fail to write and produce enriching stories of color and find it easier to transform characters into animals/others?
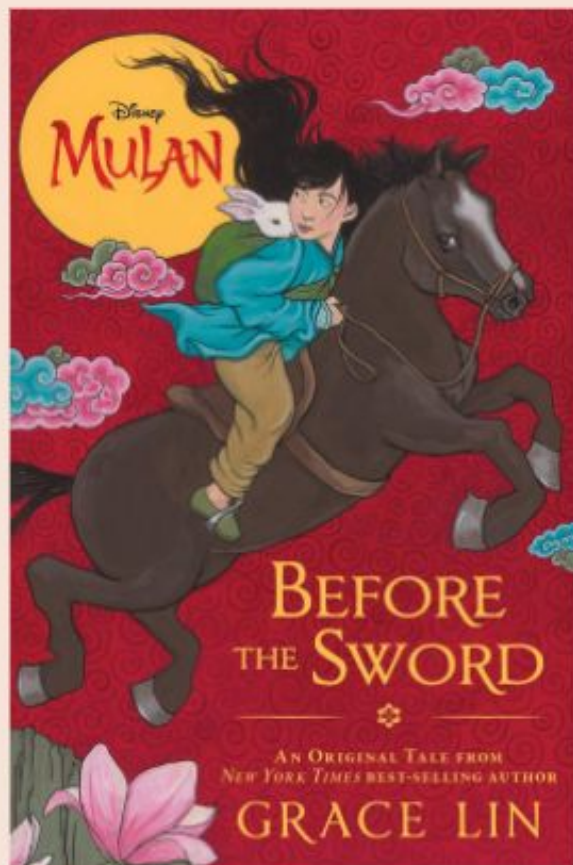- Or is it a blatant excuse to continue the racially white hegemony?

ANGIE TAMAYO LEON

Anthropomorphism and its Use to Represent and Reflect Culture in Children's Literature

JARED WOODS

With a focus on Grace Lin's *Mulan: Before the Sword*

Anthropomorphism as Representing Culture

Grace Lin adapts this popular figure of
Lord Rabbit from Northern Chinese
mystic folklore.

Lord Rabbit

The Jade Rabbit

The Jade Rabbit

In children's literature, anthropomorphism allows
for the utilization of complimentary traditional
folklore to highlight its own cultural significance
for those children previously unexposed.

Anthropomorphism as Reflecting Culture

Grace Lin converts the historical personage of Daji into a literary character through anthropomorphism.

Again, anthropomorphism allows for the complimentary embodiment of these culturally significant figures to be made into palatable allegorical characters for children.

Anthropomorphism, Children's Literature, and Culture

[In more broad terms...]

For children's literature, anthropomorphism can act as the intersection where cultural representation can meet these palatable animalistic characters that offer allegorical lessons.

Children who are not familiar with such stories will get a broader sense of the world and the many different diverse and beautiful traditions, literature, and folklore that they have never experienced.

Children who are familiar will these stories, especially if it is through their own family and culture, will get to see their traditions being highlighted and embraced. This is quite an important aspect, especially in the classroom setting for children still socializing and growing into empathetic and global thinkers.

Zoe Talbot

Human Nature Through Things That
Are Not Human

ANTHROPOMORPHISM VS. METAMORPHOSIS, ADAPTING AND HUMANS' RELATIONSHIPS

Human nature takes on many forms.

How does our understanding of human nature differ between the two?

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Summary:

Avina: Describes the theories and motives behind anthropomorphism and its influences

Angie: A focus on transfiguration of BIPoC characters as a form of erasure of racial identity.

Jared: Anthropomorphism can act as the intersection where cultural representation can meet these palatable animalistic characters that offer allegorical lessons.

Zoe: Characters learn about human nature through their animal counterparts and other humans

Returning to Our Goals:

Come to understand why creators use anthropomorphism in children's media to convey lessons and ideas

Determine why or why not this method is an effective way of portraying human nature and life lessons

Discuss why a creator would make the deliberate decision to make the human something else to learn a lesson before they are able to return to their life or change their trajectory

Discussion Questions:

- What intentions might creators have making the deliberate decision to have characters undergo transformation?

- Is there a more efficient or effective way to convey these ideas? Why or why not?