


# Introduction to Children's Literature

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MIT HSSP

# Class Overview

1. Brainstorming
2. History of (Western) Children's Literature
3. Discussion - Modern Works and Adaptations



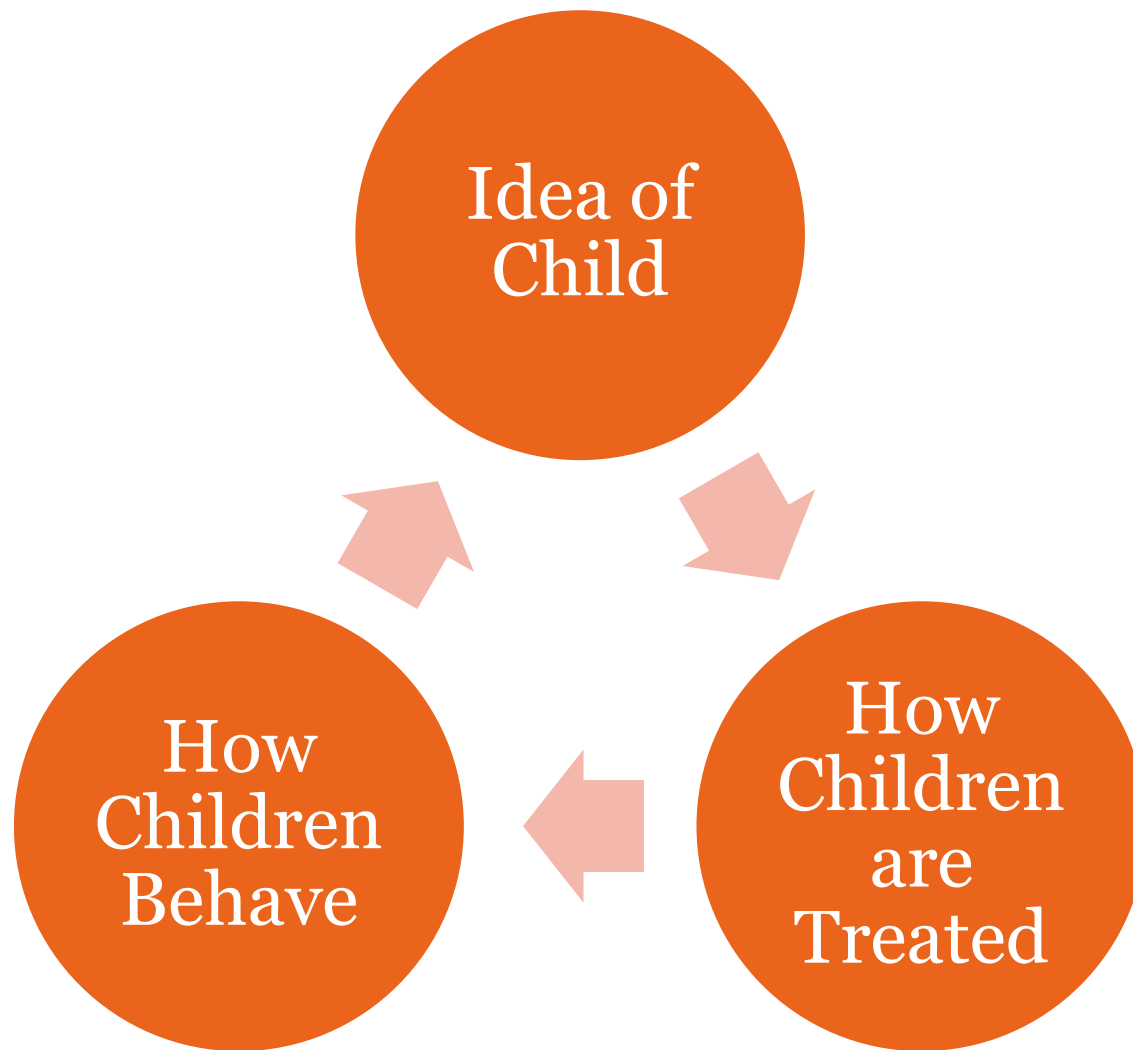
What Were Your Favorite Stories  
Growing Up?



What Does Children's Literature Mean  
To You?



What Does Childhood Mean To You?





# Original Sin

(way back– 1800s)

# Original Sin



<http://uglyrenaissancebabies.tumblr.com/>



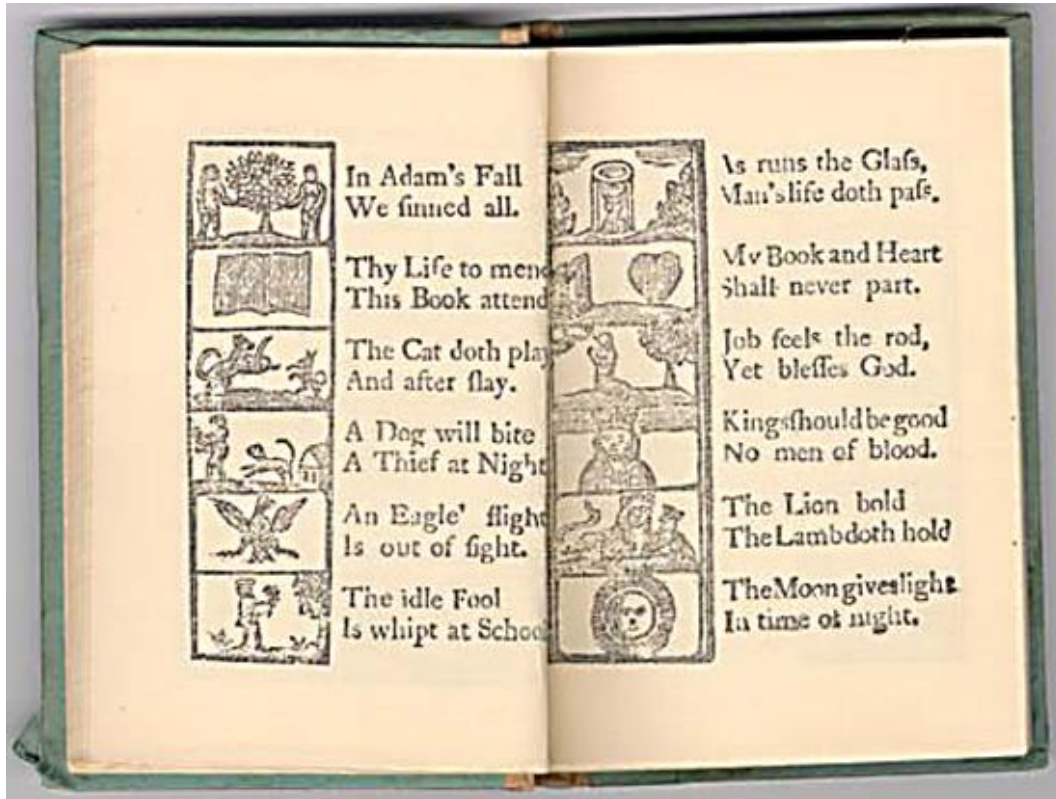
# Original Sin

**“[Children] are young vipers—and are infinitely more hateful than vipers—and are in a most miserable condition [...].”**

**“they are naturally very senseless and stupid”**

**- Jonathan Edwards**

# Original Sin

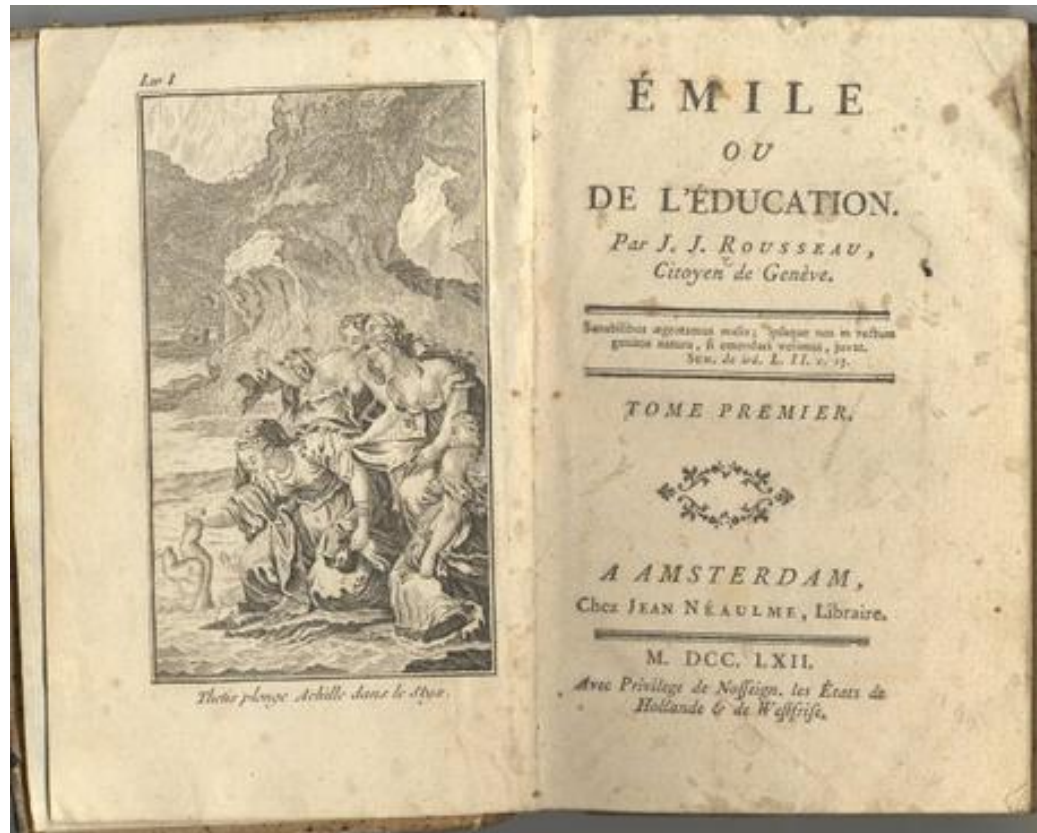




# Original Innocence

(1800s– 1850s)

# Original Innocence



# Original Innocence

“But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
**Shades of the prison-house begin to close**  
**Upon the growing Boy,**  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, **still is Nature’s priest,**  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.”

- William Wordsworth  
Ode: Intimations of Imortality

# Original Innocence





# Original Sin vs. Innocence



STAMP8.COINPLACE

# Alice in Wonderland (1865)





# Alice - Poems

AND FAMILIES.

23

Time is passing swift away;  
Earthly joys will soon decay;  
May we have, prepared on high,  
Pleasures that will never die.

16.

HOW doth the little busy bee  
Improve each shining hour,  
And gather honey all the day  
From every opening flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!  
How neat she spreads her wax!  
And labors hard to store it well  
With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labor or of skill,  
I would be busy too;  
For Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do.

In books or works, or healthful play,  
Let my first years be past:  
That I may give for every day  
Some good account at last.

17.

LET dogs delight to bark and bite,  
For God has made them so;  
Let bears and lions growl and fight,  
For 'tis their nature too.

## HOW DOTH THE LITTLE CROCODILE

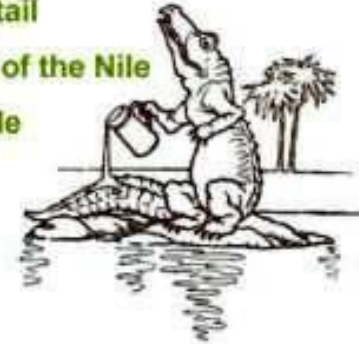
Poem by Lewis Carroll, Illustration by Charles Folkard

How doth the little crocodile

Improve his shining tail

And pour the waters of the Nile

On every golden scale



How cheerfully he seems to grin

How neatly spreads his claws

And welcomes little fishes in

With gently smiling jaws.





# Cult of the Child

(1850s – 1900s)

# Cult of the Child

"there is no more distinctive feature of the age than the **enormous importance which children have assumed**"

- Ernest Dowson

"to forget to act as reasonable men and women, nor suffer their fondness for their children to degenerate into a blind and stupid **babyolatry**"

- *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*

# Cult of the Child

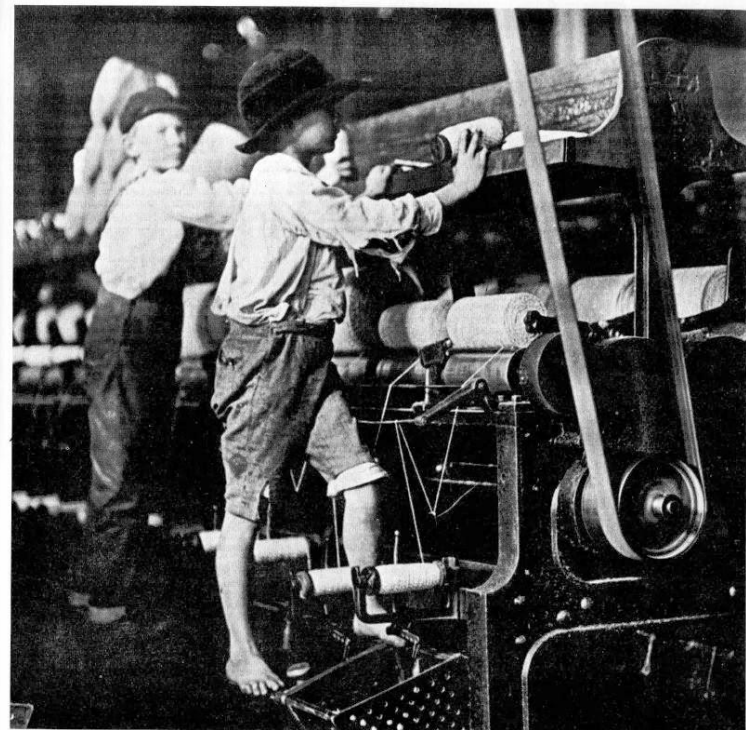
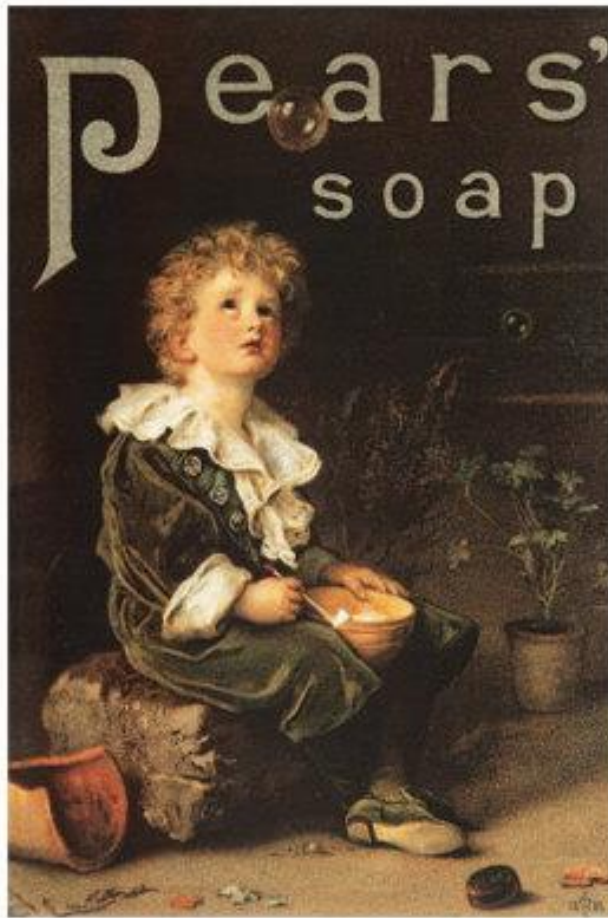




# Innocence vs. Cult



# Cult of the Child - Contradictions



Child Labor in the Textile Mills

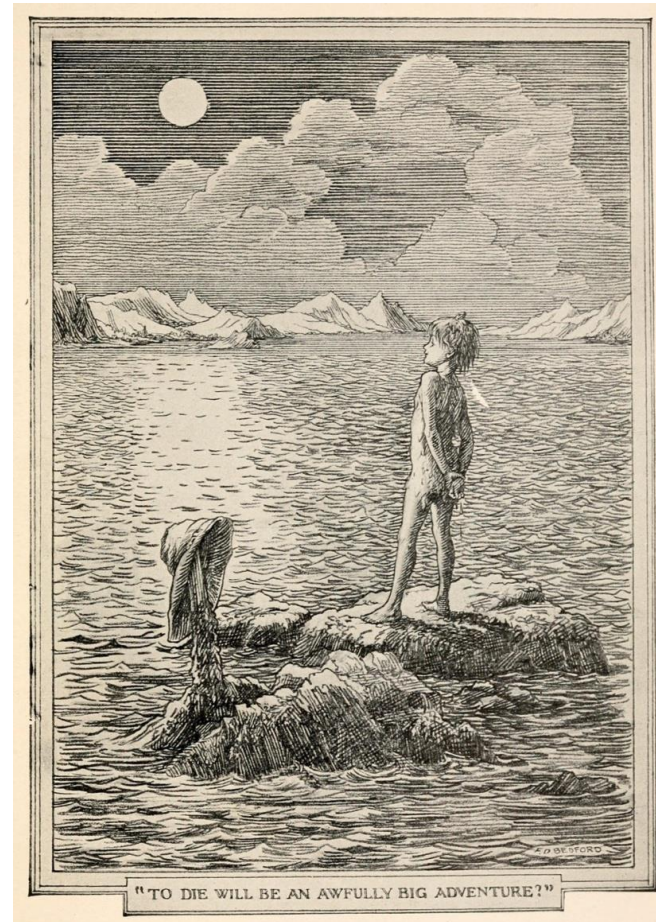
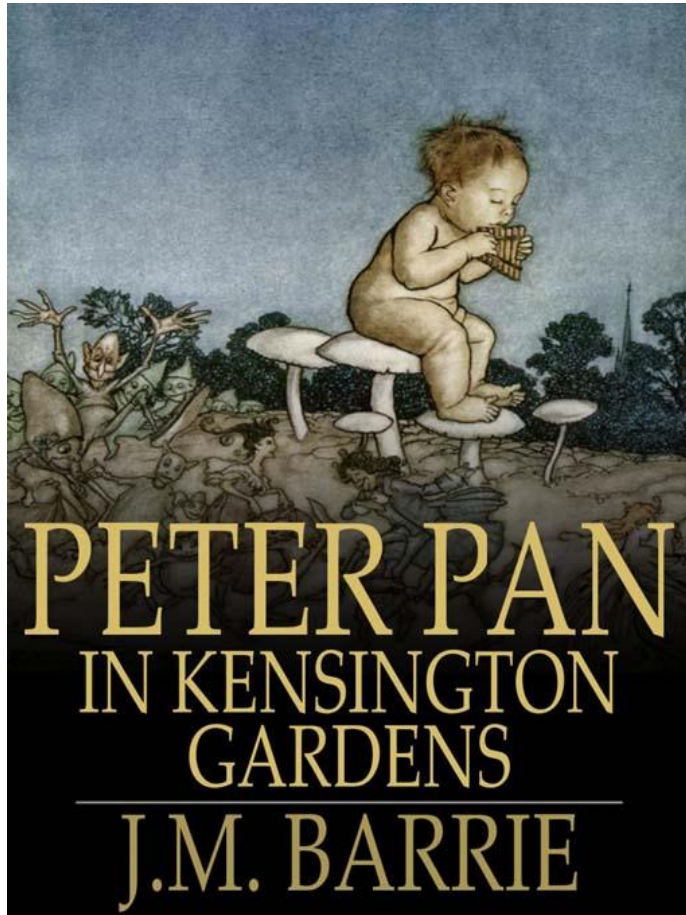
Courtesy Pictures



# Cult of the Child - Contradictions



# Peter Pan (1902 - 1911)







# Exploitation of Cute

(1930s? – 1970s?)

# Exploitation of Cute



# Exploitation of Cute



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsCQ0t-3t1I>

# Exploitation of Cute

“[‘War Babies’] was a cynical **exploitation of our childish innocence**”

- Shirley Temple

“Because the **oppression of women and children** is couched in the phraseology of “cute”, it is much harder to fight than open oppression”

- Shulamith Firestone

# Exploitation of Cute



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=776oLm9GXxQ>

# “Shirley Temple, The Youngest, Most Sacred Monster of the Cinema in Her Time”



# Little Orphan Annie

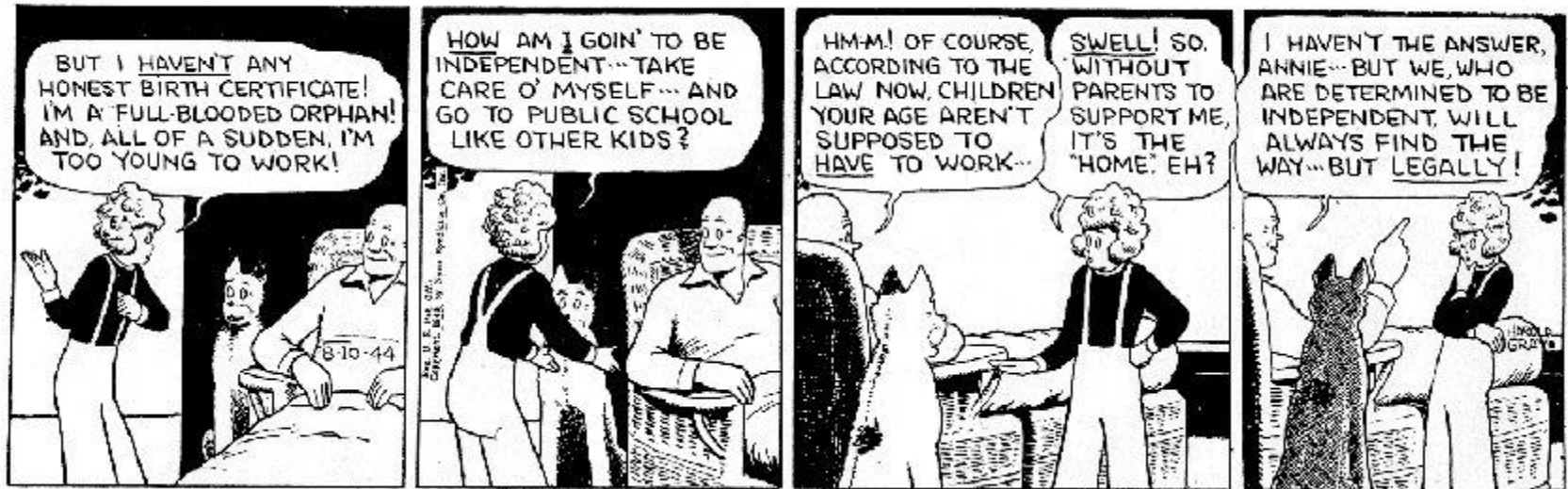




# Little Orphan Annie

**Thurs., Aug. 10, 1944**

**Orphan Annie—Show Her The Way—But No “Home”**







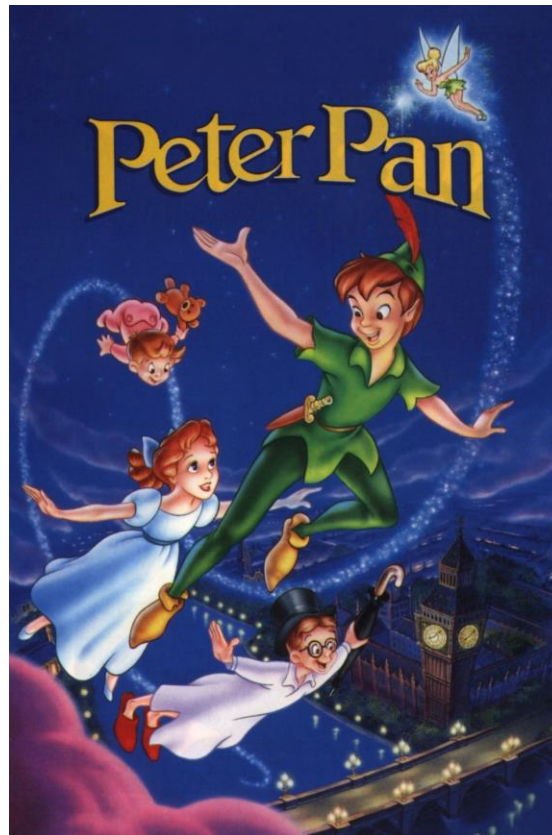
# Modern Day?

(1970s - now)

# Adaptations



# Adaptations





# Adaptations



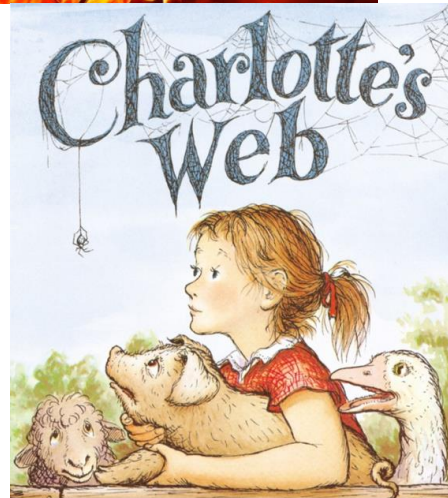
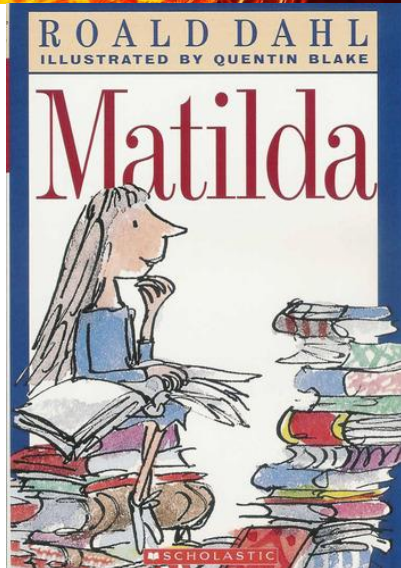


How do the Disney versions differ from the original source material?

How do the modern adaptations change / reflect our understanding of childhood?



# Modern Day



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What do new children's literature have to  
tell us about childhood now?