Narrative Politics in Historical Fictions for Children

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Abstract

In "Narrative Politics in Historical Fictions for Children," John Streamas points out that narrative theory and ethnic studies need to ask each other basic questions before a reading of race in children's literature can be useful. Is the literature merely a reflection of the experience of adult writers and parents? That is, must we read the literature as nostalgic, reflecting a developmental bias? Or does it engage children on their own contemporary terms? Are children themselves capable of racism, even if only as extensions of adult racial imaginations? Certainly the growing number of children's books written by writers of color promises progress, Streamas writes, but the constraints of Western narrative traditions, especially the centering of individual characters and the decentering of setting, may thwart that progress. Critics who would dodge the trap of essentializing in analyses of adult culture still fall into the trap when discussing children's narratives. Streamas argues that children's culture cannot aim for enlightenment until their stories replace narratives of individual development with narratives of cause and context.

Recommended Citation


This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

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