



## **Interrogating the Dynamics of Children's Literature in response to Childhood**

**Shubhneet Kaur Kharbanda**

Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi, India

---

### **Abstract**

*'Children' and 'childhood' are cultural concepts and adult construction that change over time and place. As suggested by social historians childhood is not fundamentally biological. Instead, it is socially and historically constructed. Defining children's literature is an equally slippery terrain since concepts of childhood and the texts written for them changes with time, place, and gender. Some of the obvious questions that one asks about these texts are whether these texts are simply directed towards children, are about children or are they written by children. No matter how one answer these questions, one must remember that since childhood is not a stable concept, therefore, the supposed relationship of these texts with its audience, i.e., children is also a dynamic one. This paper is an attempt to discuss the vast and porous genre of children's literature, its fluctuating definitions and complex dynamics of the adult narrator and the child reader, the implied reader and real reader that make children's literature an important genre to be studied not only for its literary value but to trace its changing contours in response to changing attitudes to childhood.*

---

**Keywords:** children, childhood, children's literature, genre

---

### **Introduction:**

Several attempts have been made by authors and critics to define children's literature, since the terms, children as well as literature "cover a huge range of possible meanings, synchronically and diachronically" (Hunt, 2011, p. 42). In order to understand what children's literature entails, it is important to look at the constituents of the term, i.e. 'children's' and 'literature'.