

CRITICAL ZONE: Books for children

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Some still continue to underestimate those who write for children, but that literature has excellent exponents in Cuba.

Good literature for children and youngsters do not need complementary defenses or labels: it is just good literature. Those who think that child readers must be treated from the affability and superiority of the adult who spoils and scolds are wrong. Authors like José Martí showed that it is possible to write for that public without making concessions before the alleged “inferiority” of children’s understanding.

The Golden Age (La Edad de Oro), for example, was a children’s magazine. There are no stylistic complexities or doctoral analyses. Its prose and verse are diaphanous; its metaphor is lavished with simplicity and without affectations... But be careful, it does not renounce to the language and depth of the discourse. That’s why, those articles, poems, stories... have mesmerized readers from all ages and times... Starting, of course, from children.

In Cuba, right now, there are excellent writers writing for children and youngsters. Some of the classics are still active and followed by very young creators. For some time the thematic field is broad and children’s stories not include princesses, wolves and little toads. And nobody should think that I am against the ever fairy tales and fables. But it’s very healthy to show the beginning reader the complexities of the world, of course, without forgetting the characteristics and specificities of that public.

Children's stories from centuries ago could be frightening, but modernity helped them become simpler, less aggressive, so they had more to do with the conceptions prevailing in the education and formation of children.

But that process led to one extreme: the empire of foolishness, that spoiling and silly literature, which is too simple in its form, with very little aesthetic language and reduced conceptual and philosophical horizon.

Fortunately, many writers rebelled and rebel at present. And in Cuba, for example, excellent short story books, poetry books and novels are published every year... In general, the catalogs of the publishing houses are good. *Gente Nueva*, for example, has several collections for different ages and offers interesting novelties every year.

However, we need more effective promotional plans; reading campaigns in schools that reach the family, theoretical sessions and workshops for writers; contests and festivals...

The publishing industry is not living its best years... and some books (the book as an object) do not have the required quality. But the literary basis is solid.

There are books for our children to learn, but they need to be encouraged.

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