



From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature

By Maria Nikolajeva

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From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature By Maria Nikolajeva

Now available in paperback! In this radically new approach to text typology, Maria Nikolajeva examines the depiction of time in literature for children. Nikolajeva identifies a continuum of texts ranging from those that depict non-linear time, typical of archaic, or mythical, thought, to those that express linearity, typical of contemporary mainstream literature. The author argues that literature is a deconstruction, a displacement, of myth, and that it depicts a symbolic coming-of-age process rather than a strictly representational reflection of a concrete "reality." The texts are categorized by the degree to which the coming-of-age process is accomplished; the movement is from an initial condition of primary harmony (Arcadia, Paradise, Utopia) through different stages toward either a successful or a failed passage.

From Mythic to Linear is a broad study, encompassing a number of children's novels from different epochs and countries: Scandinavian, British, American, Canadian, Australian, South African, and East European. The international character contributes a better knowledge of children's literature from different parts of the world?widening the horizons of children's literature research too often confined to one particular country.

Nikolajeva's unique approach allows her to disregard the traditional, and some would argue obsolete, division of children's novels into realism and fantasy.

With its unique approach and broad international scope, *From Mythic to Linear* will be of interest to all those interested in children's literature and in comparative literature in general. Includes bibliography and footnotes.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a work for those who are interested in a new and interesting slant on the nature of children's fiction. Despite its theoretical basis the book is straightforward to read, and the author's breadth and depth of knowledge of her subject, together with her often perceptive insights into it, make it rewarding reading. (*Orana*)

...a well researched and thorough book...From *Mythic to Linear* crosses many boundaries in order to broaden our view of both time and children's fiction. Nikolajeva gives scholars from a variety of different areas of literary study food - and time - for thought. (*The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*)

The organizing principle of time allows Nikolajeva to work with a broad range of concerns. She often considers specific works with depth - highlighting how the plot fits her scheme, while at times considering linguistic markers to make her point. Throughout she makes the case that the theoretical distinction between "realistic" and "nonrealistic" children's books is not helpful. She also grapples with the complex relationship between myth, folktale, and children's literature, relying on a Jungian framework (though Nikolajeva takes pains to make connections between her framework and other literary and psychological theories). The book's index of titles is a valuable resource. (*Journal of Folklore Research*)

...Nikolajeva clearly explains the theoretical bases of her analyses and provides an admirably accessible, intelligent, and stimulating study of children's fiction. (*CHOICE*)

About the Author

Maria Nikolajeva is Professor of Comparative Literature at Stockholm University in Stockholm, Sweden. She was the president of the International Research Society for Children's Literature 1993-97. She has also been member of the North American Children's Literature Association since 1985 and has served on its International Committee.

Users Review

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