



## TRANSFORMATION OF THE NARRATIVES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A THEMATIC, STRUCTURAL, AND THEORETICAL READING OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN TEXTS<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

Children's literature is not merely a collection of entertaining written narratives for children; it is also a powerful cultural form that enables the transmission of social values, ideological frameworks, and the construction of individual identities from childhood onwards. Generally considered "*the children's version of literature*," these texts actually offer direct clues about what adults want to teach children and what cultural codes they aim to transmit (Hunt, 1994: 3). The narratives underlying children's literature are significant not only in terms of individual consciousness but also in terms of collective consciousness and cultural memory. This study aims to reveal the transformation of narrative genres, themes, and structural patterns in classic and modern children's books. The analyses, conducted within the framework of action-oriented (Todorov) structuralist narrative theory (Propp) and cultural materialism (Zipes), utilize five classic and five modern children's books as samples. While classic children's literature, as an extension of the fairy tale tradition, generally aims to convey moral messages and shape children according to social norms, modern children's books emphasize themes such as individual awareness, freedom, multiculturalism, and critical thinking (Nikolajeva, 2005; Zipes, 2006). In particular, Vladimir Propp's (1928) structuralist approach, which reveals the morphological structure of folk tales, shows that classical narratives are shaped around universal structures such as hero, trial, return, and reward. In contrast, Jack Zipes' (2006) assessment, based on cultural materialism, argues that fairy tales and stories carry ideological functions not only on an individual level but also on a social level. Analyses conducted within this context show that in classical children's literature, functionality and thematic patterns are organized within the framework of collective values; while in modern children's books, the narrative takes on a more individual, yet pluralistic and critical framework. Analyses conducted particularly through character types, gender roles, the nature-human relationship, and the concept of authority reveal that classical children's narratives exhibit a normative idealization; and that modern children's literature opens a new literary path by breaking, questioning, and transforming these patterns.

<sup>i</sup> ÇOCUK EDEBIYATINDA ANLATI DÖNÜŞÜMÜ: KLASİK VE MODERN METİNLERDE TEMATİK, YAPISAL VE KURAMSAL BİR OKUMA

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In conclusion, this study demonstrates that children's literature is not merely a collection of entertaining or didactic texts, but also a crucial component of cultural transmission, ideological shaping, and individual development. A comparative examination of classical and modern narratives contributes to understanding both the historical transformation of these texts and the evolution of their pedagogical missions.

**Keywords:** children's literature, structuralism, cultural materialism, content analysis

### **Özet:**

Çocuk edebiyatı, yalnızca çocuklara yönelik eğlenceli yazılı anlatılar bütünü değil; aynı zamanda toplumsal değerlerin, ideolojik kalıpların ve bireysel kimlik inşasının çocukluk çağından itibaren aktarılmasını sağlayan güçlü bir kültürel formdur. Genel anlamda, "edebiyatın çocuklar için versiyonu" olarak değerlendirilen bu metinler, aslında yetişkinlerin çocuklara ne öğretmek istediğine ve hangi kültürel kodları aktarmayı amaçladığına ilişkin doğrudan ipuçları sunar (Hunt, 1994: 3). Çocuk edebiyatının temelinde yatan anlatılar, yalnızca bireysel değil aynı zamanda kolektif bilinç ve kültürel bellek açısından da anlamlıdır. Bu çalışma, klasik ve modern çocuk kitaplarında anlatı türlerinin, temaların ve yapısal örüntülerin geçirdiği dönüşümü ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Eylem odaklı (Todorov) yapısalçı anlatı kuramı (Propp) ve kültürel materyalizm (Zipes) bağlamında gerçekleştirilen çözümlenmelerde, beşer adet klasik ve modern çocuk kitabı örneklem olarak ele alınmıştır. Klasik çocuk edebiyatı, masal geleneğinin bir uzantısı olarak genellikle ahlaki mesajlar vermeyi ve çocukları toplumsal normlara göre şekillendirmeyi amaçlarken; modern çocuk kitapları ise bireysel farkındalık, özgürlük, çokkültürlülük ve eleştirel düşünce gibi temaları öne çıkarmaktadır (Nikolajeva, 2005; Zipes, 2006). Özellikle Vladimir Propp'un (1928) halk masallarının morfolojik yapısını ortaya koyan yapısalçı yaklaşımı, klasik anlatıların kahraman, sınav, dönüş, ödül gibi evrensel yapılar etrafında şekillendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Buna karşın, Jack Zipes'in (2006) kültürel materyalizme dayalı değerlendirmesi, masal ve hikâyelerin yalnızca bireysel değil aynı zamanda toplumsal düzlemde ideolojik işlevler taşıdığını ileri sürmektedir. Bu bağlamda gerçekleştirilen analizler, klasik çocuk edebiyatında işlevselliğin ve tematik örüntülerin kolektif değerler çerçevesinde örgütlendiğini; modern çocuk kitaplarında ise anlatının bir yandan daha bireysel, bir diğer yandan da çoğulcu ve eleştirel bir çerçeveye büründüğünü göstermektedir. Özellikle karakter tipleri, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, doğa-insan ilişkisi ve otorite kavramı üzerinden yürütülen çözümlenmeler, klasik çocuk anlatılarında normatif bir idealizasyon olduğunu; modern çocuk edebiyatının ise bu kalıpları kırma, sorgulama ve dönüştürme yönünde yeni bir edebi yol açtığını ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, çocuk edebiyatının yalnızca eğlence ya da öğretici metinler değil, aynı zamanda kültürel aktarımın, ideolojik biçimlenmenin ve bireysel gelişimin önemli bir bileşeni olduğunu göstermektedir. Klasik ve modern anlatıların karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmesi, hem metinlerin tarihsel dönüşümünü hem de pedagojik misyonlarının evrimini anlamaya katkı sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** çocuk edebiyatı, yapısalcılık, kültürel materyalizm, içerik analizi

## 1. Introduction

*"Studying children's literature is about understanding not only children, but also what kind of future a society envisions."* (K. Lesnik-Oberstein)

*"Fairy tales reproduce cultural norms, but they also open up ways to transform them."* (Zipes, 2006: 63)

The idea of childhood has been seen throughout history as a process of production influenced by social, cultural, and historical circumstances rather than as a set reality. The concept of "*childhood*" in the contemporary sense did not exist during the Middle Ages, and children were viewed as miniature versions of adults, as Philippe Ariès highlighted in his seminal study (Ariès, 1962). The infant started to be viewed as a symbol of "*unspoiled naturalness*" with the Enlightenment ideas of the 18th century, putting it at the heart of both literature and education. Childhood was institutionalized as a time that required special protection, teaching, and shaping, and literary materials intended for children multiplied, particularly starting in the 19th century. Due to this historical shift, children's literature must be viewed as both a textual and an ideological field. Because childhood is a cultural fantasy as well as a biological stage (Jenks, 2005).

Children's literature has a deep depth of meaning that both carries cultural codes and molds a person's interaction with the world, despite the fact that it is frequently characterized as an innocent, informative, and enjoyable field. In this sense, children's literature encompasses not just what kids "*read*," but all narrative genres that are deemed suitable for young readers. Many scholars who see children's literature as a social construction process contend that these works are fundamental in forming the idea of childhood (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1994; Hunt, 1994).

According to Peter Hunt (1994: 5), children's literature is defined as "*adult texts for children*" and highlights the fact that writing in this genre primarily entails an adult-child interaction. Because the author, publisher, and selector are all adults, children's books might be viewed as a form of "*cultural guidance*" practice. As a result, the selection of narrative genres, the way character types are presented, and the way messages are structured are not coincidental; rather, they are ideologically and culturally constructed (Zipes, 2001).

Examining the narrative forms, thematic structures, and narrative transformations employed both inside and outside of the text in both classic and contemporary children's books is the primary goal of this study. This analysis is based on two key theoretical stances: Jack Zipes's cultural materialism method and Vladimir Propp's structuralist narrative theory. Zipes's theoretical framework aids in understanding how these tales are entwined with social beliefs, while Propp's narrative functions are used to analyze the recurrent structural patterns in classic examples of children's literature. Fairy tales and stories from the late 19th and early 20th centuries largely influenced classical children's literature, whereas current children's literature is distinguished by an aesthetic and ideological approach that prioritizes individual subjectivity, difference, and critical thinking.

*"Classical children's narratives aim to prepare children for growth while shaping them in accordance with the normative codes of society." (Nodelman, 1992: 41)*

In this regard, the fact that contemporary narratives highlight individuality and uniqueness whereas classical narratives are typically founded on collective and universal principles demonstrates that the shift in children's literature is both formal and ideological. Five classic and five contemporary children's books make up the study's sample. The chosen books are notable not merely for their literary accomplishments but also for their broad readership, cultural influence, and ability to be passed down through generations. Literary theory, childhood studies, and cultural criticism can all benefit from such a comparative examination. Through the prism of children's literature, this conversation will also provide light on how society views childhood.

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

Any theoretical analysis of children's literature becomes meaningful only when it integrates not only the content of the texts themselves, but also the formal framework within which this content is structured, and the approaches to the social functions that this form serves. Accordingly, the theoretical foundation of this study is structured around structuralist narrative theory (Vladimir Propp) and cultural materialism (Jack Zipes). When these two theoretical approaches are considered together, they provide an opportunity to analyze both the internal structure of the narrative and its external ideological context.

#### 1.1.1 Structuralist Narrative Theory: Vladimir Propp and the Morphology of Fairy Tales

The methodology of structuralism is centered on identifying the universal structures that underlie language, culture, and story. In literary studies, the pursuit of structural order has gained impetus, especially with Claude Lévi-Strauss' anthropological research. \*Morphology of the Folktale\*, written by Vladimir Propp in 1928, is without a doubt the most significant example of structuralism in children's literature. After analyzing over a hundred Russian folktales, Propp concluded that the stories are organized around particular, recurrent "*functions*." Propp claims that while the stories' plots and characters may vary, the fundamental structural elements are always present. Propp identified a total of 31 functions and showed that each story had these functions in a similar order.

*"The surface of fairy tales is different; but in their deep structure lies a kind of dramatic abstraction: departure, help, trial, victory, and return." (Propp, 1968: 21)*

When analyzing the structure of classic children's novels, Propp's theory is especially helpful. Structures like the hero's "*departure from home*," "*passing a test*," "*the appearance of a helper*," and ultimately "*reward*" suit this model flawlessly in works like *Pinocchio*, *Peter Pan*, and *Tom Sawyer*. In children's literature, these structures serve as instruments for moral instruction, social norm compliance, and the transformation of the individual into an idealized hero model. Propp's method makes it possible to assess tales as functional patterns in addition to their

content. This theory can be used to concretize the cyclical structure (home-danger-return) that is particularly present in traditional children's stories. At the same time, the narrative's educational purpose is closely tied to this structural formula.

*"Every function nourishes the child's search for causality; because the child understands the narrative as a cause-and-effect chain." (Nikolajeva, 2005: 61)*

A more difficult framework for contemporary storytelling is provided by structuralist theory. This is due to the fact that contemporary children's books often stray from linear patterns, offer unclear examples of heroism, and create questioning structures devoid of answers. Propp's method offers a crucial basis for comprehending the evolution of contemporary narratives since even these aberrations arise from a "structural awareness" against the classical structure.

### **1.1.2 Cultural Materialism: Jack Zipes and the Ideology of the Fairy Tale**

Jack Zipes' cultural materialist approach is one of the most influential theories, contending that children's literature is both an aesthetic and an ideological weapon. Fairy tales and children's stories have been utilized historically to uphold social order, validate authority, and inculcate hegemonic values in people, according to Zipes. This method, which sees fairy tales as "ideological apparatuses," is closely linked to Louis Althusser's idea of the ideological apparatuses of the state. In order to absorb the ideals of contemporary civilizations, fairy tales have been molded and domesticated, according to Zipes:

*"Fairy tales first began to speak not from the mouths of the narrators, but from the mouths of power." (Zipes, 2006: 25)*

Even though they appear innocent at first, works like *The Little Prince*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales* include important ideological structuring regarding authority, discipline, gender roles, and individual-society relations. For instance, Zipes claims that *Pinocchio's "punishment of the disobedient child"* is a replication of the repressive moral code:

*"The narrative of Pinocchio teaches systematic intimidation and obedience in the name of self-discipline in the child." (Zipes, 1988: 114)*

Zipes's cultural materialism has a clear connection to both contemporary children's literature and ancient storytelling. Particularly, stories like *Matilda*, *Momo*, and *Harry Potter* exhibit signs of ideological change, this time as texts in which characters struggle against conventional roles and power is openly questioned. This demonstrates that fairy tales can include a kind of counter-ideological resistance in addition to reproducing preexisting ideology.

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*"While teaching the language of power, children's literature also demonstrates how to oppose that language."* (Zipes, 2001: 37)

From this perspective, Zipes positions children's literature not only as a means of cultural transmission but also as a field of political struggle. This shift is demonstrated by the fact that a large number of children's books released now address issues like gender equality, environmental awareness, and individual consciousness in an effort to create an alternative ethic outside of authoritarian culture.

## 1.2 A Bridge Between Theories: The Intersection of Form and Ideology

Cultural materialism focuses on the ideological substance of tales, whereas structuralist theory reveals their formal integrity. In order to assess how narratives are created and the functions they fulfill, this study looks at both ideas collectively.

**Table 1:** Two different approaches to the narratives

	<b>Structuralism (Propp)</b>	<b>Cultural Materialism (Zipes)</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Narrative structure, functions, character patterns	Meaning production, ideology, cultural codes
<b>Scope</b>	Intra-textual arrangement	Intra-textual arrangement; Extra-textual contexts (society, power, class)
<b>Object of Study</b>	Fairy tale morphology	Historical and ideological use of fairy tales
<b>Main question</b>	How is it told?	Why is it told this way?

Both the formal construction (Propp) and the socio-ideological function (Zipes) of narrative in traditional and contemporary children's books can be examined using this theoretical framework. While structuralism identifies the structures on which the story is based, cultural materialism allows for a study of the ideological implications of these structures and why they are chosen in this manner. The pedagogical and political aspects of children's literature become more complex when both ideas are taken into account.

## 2. Methodology

This study's primary goal is to compare how narrative genres, thematic patterns, and structural components have changed in works from ancient and contemporary children's literature. Numerous studies on children's literature either concentrate only on instructional purposes or on individual reading experiences. Children's books, however, are more than just literary works; they are also narrative spaces that show how "*childhood*" is culturally formed.

### 2.1 The Aim and Importance of the Study

The main aim of this study is to comparatively reveal the transformation of narrative genres, thematic patterns, and structural elements in classical and modern children's literature texts.

Many studies on children's literature focus either solely on individual reading experiences or on pedagogical functions. However, children's books are not only literary works; they are also narrative spaces that demonstrate how the concept of "*childhood*" is culturally constructed.

Children's literature reveals, through texts, how adults position children and what kind of societal ideals they present to them. According to Nodelman, children's books "*present a child with a map written by an adult showing how they should look at the world*" (Nodelman, 1992: 59). Therefore, children's literature should be evaluated not only in its textual dimensions but also in its socio-cultural dimensions.

The importance of this study lies in establishing a relationship between narrative structures (Propp) and ideological content (Zipes), examining not only what classical and modern narratives tell, but also how they tell them and why they are structured in this way. Especially in postmodern society, as the individual-society relationship, the ideal of childhood, and cultural norms transform, the position of children's books in the face of this transformation must be questioned.

*"Children's literature is not only a reflection but also a form of guidance."* (Zipes, 2006: 42)

## 2.2 Scope and Limitations

Five classic and five contemporary children's books written in English, French, German, and Portuguese and published in the West that have become cult classics are examined in this study. The narrative structure, topics, and ideological content of each work were assessed. The study only looked at the book texts; it did not look at movie or television adaptations. The theoretical framework was selected from Jack Zipes' cultural materialism and Vladimir Propp's structuralism.

In terms of the constraints, the chosen sample does not fully reflect the corpus of children's literature because it only includes ten works. The entire spectrum of contemporary examples is not included because modern literature was mostly selected from the post-1980 era. The analysis was based on Turkish translations because the books could not be read in their original language. Readings from various viewpoints (such as feminist theory or trauma theory) are not included in this study due to the restricted selection of narrative theories.

## 2.3 Research Questions and Research Methodology

The following are the primary research issues this project attempts to answer:

- What distinguishes the narrative structures seen in contemporary children's literature from those found in classic children's literature?
- What are the main differences between children's stories from the past and present?
- In what ways are the functions of Vladimir Propp's fairy tales depicted in classic works and dismantled in contemporary works?
- What ideological norms do children's books create or challenge within the context of Jack Zipes' theory of cultural materialism? What substitutes do contemporary children's books offer for traditional themes and structures?

This study was carried out as a comparative literature review using qualitative research techniques within the context of a methodological approach. Textual analysis techniques were used to examine both formal and thematic components. The narrative structure of each book was first retrieved, taking into account the analytical procedure (in accordance with Propp's 31-function model). The book's key ideals, character traits, and conceptual oppositions (good vs evil, growing versus staying, and conforming versus rebelling) were then found using theme analysis.

Lastly, the ideological reading approach was used to challenge social norms, cultural standards, and representations of authority.

*"Structural analysis provides the mathematics of the literary text; ideological reading reveals its spirit and politics."* (Eagleton, 2008: 134)

### 3. Findings

Based on the study's theoretical framework, the sample yielded the threefold structure shown below. The findings observed in the narrative structure (based on Propp). Propp's narrative structure of *"the hero leaving home, passing an exam, the appearance of a helper, and receiving the reward"* is directly applied in classic works like Pinocchio, Peter Pan, and Andersen's Fairy Tales. This structure is either disrupted or mocked in contemporary works (Matilda, Momo, Harry Potter). Particularly in Matilda, the heroine achieves the *"reward"* with her own cunning and self-reliance; no outside intervention is necessary.

Modern compositions tend to be more open-ended and questioning than classical narratives, which have a resolved and closed finale. There are also findings observed in thematic patterns. Truthfulness, bravery, moral development, growth, and social peace are the core themes of ancient literature. However, individuality, challenging authority, criticizing the system, and embracing diversity have become more prominent in contemporary literature. In contemporary works, nature serves as a haven and a place of resistance, but in classical works, the relationship with nature is a threat to be subdued.

The results found in Zipes-based ideological coding can be summed up as follows: First of all, traditional gender roles are prevalent in classic literature (for instance, in Pinocchio, the ladies are mother figures and the child is the active hero). Female characters are more active, independent, and subjective in contemporary literature (Matilda, Hermione, Mo). Modern narratives place more emphasis on the individual's self-realization than traditional tales, which aim to integrate the person into society.

**Table 2:** Ideological tendencies in relation to the various genres and their narrative structures

Book Title	Period	Narrative Genre	Main Themes	Narrative Structure (Propp)	Ideological Orientation (Zipes)
<b>Pinocchio</b>	Classic	Didactic	Honesty, Loyalty, Discipline	Classic Hero's Journey	Conformity to Social Norms
<b>Peter Pan</b>	Classic	Fantasy - Adventure	Growth, freedom, imagination	The hero's return, transitions between dream and reality	Romantic defense of the childhood ideal
<b>Alice Harikalar Diyarında</b>	Classic	Fantasy - Adventure	Identity, discovery, illogical universes	Surreal structures, episodic narratives	The questioning but conforming individual
<b>Andersen Masalları</b>	Classic	Classic Fairy Tale	Moral lessons, hope, self-sacrifice	Story within a story, fixed structures	Moral transmission of social values
<b>Küçük Prens</b>	Classic	Philosophical-Fantasy	Love, loneliness, and individuality	Allegorical structure, episodic narrative	The critical individual, self-awareness
<b>Matilda</b>	Modern	Fantasy - Drama	Intelligence, resistance, individual freedom	Broken classical structure, internal heroism	The anti-authoritarian child figure
<b>Momo</b>	Modern	Philosophical - Fantasy	Time, consumption, social awareness	Non-linear narrative, allegorical characters	Critical consciousness against capitalism
<b>Harry Potter</b>	Modern	Fantasy - Adventure	Friendship, courage, chosenness	Modern hero narrative, multi-layered structure	The search for freedom within the system, individual justice
<b>Sugar Orange</b>	Modern	Coming-of-age - Drama	Childhood, poverty, inner development	Narrative of individual development, external conflicts	Sensitivity to social class differences
<b>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</b>	Modern	Fantasy-Social Criticism	Class, justice, consumer culture	Parodic structure, critical approach to classical fairy tale elements	System critique of consumer culture and greed

### 3.1 Classical and Modern Children's Literature: A Comparison of Narrative, Theme, and Ideology

The following ideas may come up when looking into content analysis analyses. For instance, in terms of narrative structure, the great majority of classic novels either directly or indirectly use Propp's "hero's journey" style. The hero overcomes a threat, passes a test, and receives a reward (Pinocchio, Peter Pan). Modern works, however, defy this framework and occasionally even make fun of it (Charlie, Matilda). Specifically, Momo challenges the traditional framework by allegorically depicting the person's internal resistance against the deceptive nature of the era. Classical literature frequently focuses on virtues like honesty, loyalty, obedience, and the passage to adulthood, according to the themes in the texts under analysis. However, characters

in contemporary stories challenge, alter, or reinterpret these ideals. Momo draws attention to the time-theft that is a feature of the capitalist system, Matilda stresses defiance of authority, and Harry Potter offers an alternate conception of justice inside the conventional system. From an ideological standpoint, Jack Zipes contends that classical stories aid in children's internalization of societal norms within the context of cultural materialism (Pinocchio, Andersen). Modern texts, however, establish the child as an active subject and go beyond this internalization. The child is now a "resisting" and "reconstructing" individual rather than just a "growing" one.

*"The fairy tale's ideological power comes from knowing not just what the characters do, but also why and against whom they do it."* The Irresistible Fairy Tale by Jack Zipes (2012: 71).

**Table 3:** Character Development, Authority Relations, and Social Representation in Children's Literature

Book Title	Main Character Traits	Authority Relationship	Toplumla İlişki (Zipes)	Social Relationship (Zipes)
Pinocchio	Disobedient, mischievous but naive	Educated through discipline	Conformity to normative values	Male-centered, passive character → active hero
Peter Pan	Free-spirited, unwilling to grow up	Rejects authority (refusal to grow)	Alternative childhood utopia	Male character, leader but escapist
Alice in Wonderland	Curious, inquisitive but adaptable	Finds authority strange but passively resists	Alternative questioning of rationality	Female character, passive but open to learning
Andersen's Fairy Tales	Virtuous, self-sacrificing, often a victim	Obedience and devotion to authority	At peace with society, victim or rewarded	Gender roles are rigid, emotional intensity is high
The Little Prince	Naive, thoughtful, observant	Questions authority, high individual awareness	The individual's inner world is prioritized	Androgynous character, philosophical subject
Matilda	Intelligent, independent, strong sense of justice	Clashes with authority, resists	A child figure confronting the system	Female character, intellectual and active
Momo	Quiet, attentive, seeking the collective good	Overcomes authority through passive resistance	Questions the relationship between time and capitalism	Female character, appears passive but is transformative
Harry Potter	Brave, chosen, a seeker of justice	Opposes authority, creates transformation	Creates an alternative within the system	Male character, fights for social justice
The Orange Tree	Sensitive, observant, with deep emotional feelings	Subordinate to adult authority	Points out class differences through poverty	Male character, empathy is established through victimization
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	Quiet, moral, poor	Rewarded by authority	An exemplary stance against consumer culture	Male child, reproduction of the system's ideal

Characters in classical works are typically portrayed as "*children who need to learn*" (Pinocchio, Alice, Andersen), whereas in contemporary stories, child characters are either resilient and intelligent from the start (Matilda, Harry Potter) or they become the transformation itself (Momo), according to evaluations made from the prominent perspective of Character Building. In particular, the representation of female characters is passive and self-sacrificing in classical narratives, while in modern narratives, they become active, questioning, and transformative. From a different angle, authority is frequently portrayed in traditional children's stories as an absolute and didactic character. The young protagonist either "*learns*" from it or cooperates with it. However, modern narratives present a structure that questions authority and often places the child against it (Matilda, Momo, Harry Potter). According to Zipes, classical narratives serve a "*domesticating*" purpose when assessed in terms of their interaction with society. This is evident from the data: stories like those of Pinocchio, Andersen, and Charlie force the youngster to fit in. But in contemporary novels, the youngster either attempts to change the system from within (Harry Potter) or is outside of it (Matilda, Momo).

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that children's literature is not only a sphere of entertainment and education but also a very important ideological space in terms of how people form their identities, interact with cultural norms, and internalize the social structure. The structuralist narrative theory of Vladimir Propp and the cultural materialism of Jack Zipes have been used to evaluate the comparative analysis of the narrative structures, thematic depth, and ideological orientations of classic and contemporary children's books.

When it comes to the universal purposes and heroic patterns of classical narratives, structuralist theory's formal analysis possibilities are especially instructive. Propp (1968) listed 31 roles, many of which are readily found in classical literature. The main cycle in stories like Pinocchio, Peter Pan, and Andersen's Fairy Tales consists of the hero leaving a system, passing an exam, receiving a reward, and assimilating into society. These structures influence the individual journey inside normative norms and provide the young reader a sense of security. According to Nikolajeva (2005), this circumstance is "*allowing the child to perceive the world as an orderly, predictable, and controllable system.*"

However, these frameworks are either disturbed or ridiculed in contemporary children's literature; the kid character is reinterpreted in a way that is more nuanced, critical, and freeing. In stories like Matilda, Momo, and Harry Potter, the child not only develops but also becomes an actor who challenges the system, creates alternatives, and develops their own ideals. Character development and the narrative framework both exhibit this change. In contemporary narratives, the kid figure—particularly in female characters—becomes a subject who builds alternative values and transforms authority.

Within the context of Jack Zipes' theory of cultural materialism, the ideological ramifications of these structural differences take on significance. Internalizing current authority, reproducing conventional gender roles, and disciplining children in line with social standards are common goals of classic fairy tales and early children's literature. According to Zipes (2006),

"*fairy tales teach not only how to live a good life, but also what kind of life is good.*" As a result, classic children's literature typically upholds systemic values and seeks to transform the reader into a "good child."

Modern narratives, on the other hand, situate the child character either outside of the system or in an environment that provides an alternative. Momo starts a quest for wisdom against the exploitation of time, Matilda opposes the oppressive educational system, and Harry Potter changes the internal distortions of traditional power. The individual-society interaction is built in these works in a conflictual or dialectical manner rather than vertically. "*The subjectification of the child in children's literature is also a stance against the authority of the adult world,*" according to Nodelman (1992).

Both comprehensive tables show that modern narratives characterize children as "*self-aware subjects who produce alternatives,*" whereas classical narratives depict kids as "*passive beings who need to learn.*" This change signifies a profound change in both literature and how society imagines children. In this environment, children's literature becomes a potent narrative space that reconstructs the relationship between the person and society, going beyond its role as a vehicle for cultural ideals. This study's theoretical underpinnings and comparative analyses demonstrate that children's literature undergoes a rewriting that is not just formal but also ideological, cultural, and ethical. In order to provide a more thorough understanding of the complex nature of children's literature, future research could build on this transition using various theories (such as feminist theory, ecocriticism, or postcolonial views).

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares that, there is no conflict of interest regarding this study.

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