Informative Reading Stimulates Youthful Minds

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Marabeth Paddock describes the changing trends in children's books as affected by current happenings.

Children's books echo the trends in every phase of American living. This year, especially, they show the influence of the present world war.

Strangely enough, there are almost no current stories about Europe except those which come from England or Ireland. Two stories on war are *Left Till Called For*, by Mary Treadgold, a story of two English children who were supposedly on Channel Island when the Nazis attacked, and *The Stranger in Primrose Lane*, a story of espionage in Britain, by Noel Streatfield.

The presence of refugee children interests youthful readers in pictures and stories concerning the European countries. A book which is both humorous and serious is Pamela Travers' *I Go By Sea, I Go By Land*, which views a trip to America through a diary of an English girl.

For several years interest in our South American neighbors has been steadily rising. Children get vivid pictures of these countries from parents and teachers who have traveled there. More time has been given in schools to the study of Mexico, the West Indies and Central and South America. All Latin American reading material from both home and library has been employed to complete project and reading lists.

Reflecting this interest are the quantities of children's readings about the other Americas making their appearance this fall. *Wings Around South America* by Alice Dalgliesh and *South American Roundabout* by Agnes Rotherey are entertaining geography and travel books.

Our own country shares the spotlight of interest. A tremendous new desire has arisen for knowledge concerning past and present history of our native land—its frontier wars and colonial days. Children will be the busiest readers of these new books depicting our country's past. Grace Curl's *Young Shannon* is an animated story of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and *Nathaniel's Witch* by Katherine Gibson tells of colonial New England. Frontier life is portrayed in *The Matchlock Gun*, written by Walter Edmonds.

Interest is mounting, too, in the resources and industries of our country. Books in color and photography give information about our mines, crops, factories, ships and fields.

Aviation for commerce and defense is the subject of many of the new children's readings because of the important position it holds in the life of the present generation. Also showing the effects of the present world situation are the increasing number of books that are being written on the army and navy, on our flag, and on patriotism and democracy. In a detailed description accompanied by pictures *Defending America*, by Creighton Peet, tells about the army, navy and air forces, their equipment and activities.

A book which children want to own after having read it in school is Carleton Washburne's *The Story of Earth and Sky*. *Harper's Book of Electricity*, by Joseph Adams is an excellent scientific reference for young readers.

Books dealing with social problems have become more numerous recently. In *Blue Willow*, Doris Gates describes the life of a transient family; *The Moffats*, by Eleanor Estes, is an account of a job-holding mother and her family of children.

History books this year are in the form of biographies. Two good ones are *Clara Barton*, by Mildred Pace, and *Howard Fast's Haym Salomon*, which gives a first-rate picture of America in Revolutionary times.