1933

Selecting Suitable Stories...

Elizabeth Foster
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation
Foster, Elizabeth (1933) "Selecting Suitable Stories..." The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 13 : No. 6 , Article 12.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol13/iss6/12

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Selecting Suitable Stories . . .

By Elizabeth Foster

CAN you remember you heard your first story? Few of us can. For when still in the cradle most of us were told tales, both real and imaginative. And ever since we have been progressing on the road of literature, through nursery rhymes and fairy stories to essays and treatises.

Children get many ideas from literature; in fact, their notions about nearly all of life are formed, at least in part, by reading and hearing stories. So it is important that the literature they read and hear is of the right kind. Good literature aids them in a spiritual, cultural and recreational way.

Great care must be used in choosing stories for a child, if he is to enjoy them and to get the most benefit from them. For the varying age levels, different types of reading are:

1. One to three years: nursery rhymes and picture books.
2. Three to five years: stories of real life; stories of trains and grocery stores; stories within the child’s own environment or the familiar; also nursery rhymes and picture books.
3. Five to seven years: stories of real life, especially of animals; some fairy tales, especially verses and poetry; folk tales like “The Three Little Kittens Who Lost Their Mittens” and “Billy Goat Gruff.”
4. Seven to nine years: imagination stories; fairy tales; folk lore; stories outside of the child’s own world.
5. Nine years and above: some history and biography; hero tales; stories about the world in which we live and of a more advanced type, and material from a good encyclopedia.

Miss Lorraine Sandstrom, instructor in child development, said recently, “Although there is an age level and an average child at eight enjoys fairy tales, often there is a particular interest which he will carry in all his reading through many age levels. For instance, a child may enjoy trains at all ages and never be particularly interested in fairies.”

In choosing a book it is best to find what the child’s interests are and what his experiences have been, instead of choosing a book for a 4-year-old or an 8-year-old. Then he will really enjoy the story, for it will be suited to his special likenings as well as to his mental age.

Little Red Riding Hood has been an old favorite for generations of children. Yet there is a reason for not using it. Joy is one of the best and most immediate results of stories and poetry. Since there exist so many other beautiful, educational and stimulating pieces of children’s literature, there is no special purpose in telling a story that has a gruesome element.

To condemn all stories with gruesome elements is unfair, for some story-tellers might be able to relate such tales in a way which would not produce fear in the child. Again, fear is often an individual matter. “Some children,” Miss Sandstrom related, “cry over ‘The Three Little Kittens Who Lost Their Mittens,’ while others think it is a good joke on the three little kittens that their mittens were lost. Rather than try to soften the terrifying, why not leave it out entirely? Yet it would be quite ridiculous to have only happy endings in our stories.”

Don’t we all like the story of “The Three Little Pigs,” though the wolf ate two of them up and was burned up himself in the end? If the story is presented correctly, children won’t be really worried about the three little pigs. With some stories it is often the pictures in the book which cause fear, rather than the story itself.

Morals pointing directly to the young reader arouse resentment. What we want in a story is the true and beautiful, as presented in the language of some great artist of words. If there is a lesson there, it probably shows up in its proper light anyway. The symbolistic story which is “woven around a road . . . and all along the way we plant our seeds of kindness” is not advised.

“Stories from the Bible cannot be matched in any literature in their power and dramatic quality,” stated Miss Sandstrom. “Their simple interpretation arouses great interest. Also, every child enjoys free, spontaneous poetry with its rhythmic chanting, and Mother Goose heads the list as the wisest selection for the very young child.”

Fairy tales, despite criticism against the fanciful and unreal, should not be left out entirely. Many children like a mixture of facts and fancy. Of course, they should be taught that fairy tales are not really true.

Here is one good rule to follow: The younger the child, the shorter and simpler the story. If the tale includes much repetition and deals with the familiar, it can be longer than usual, however. In poetry four, six, or eight lines comprise a good length, unless there is much repetition, in which case it may be longer.

And the last rule is to avoid the sentimental story. Children dislike being “talked down to.” Instead of an “itty-bitty shovel,” call it a spade. One finds the sentimental element in nature stories usually, but nature itself is so full of deep, fascinating facts that calling buds “dear little, pretty little petals” would create disgust. Almost any child prefers real facts in nature to hidden meanings.

A strip of unblacked muslin 12 to 18 inches wide sowed to the end of a short blanket, tucked in at the foot of the bed, helps to prevent cold toes.