



**Marina Ž. Semiz<sup>1</sup>,**

**Mirjana M. Čutović**

**University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Education in Užice, Serbia**

**Original  
scientific paper**

Paper received: Feb 4 2020  
Paper accepted: Aug 18 2020  
Article Published: Oct 1 2020

## ***Notions of the Child in Basal Readers for the Third and Fourth Grades of Primary School***

### **Extended summary**

This paper presents the results of a study which aimed to identify and interpret notions of the child in the basal readers for the third and fourth grades of primary school and their compatibility with modern notions of childhood and child. The theoretical approach will include the existing conceptualisations and operationalisations of the said notion; we will present the knowledge and insights derived from the existing studies of childhood (anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, pedagogy, etc.); and finally, present the pedagogical significance of children's literature, primarily prose as a major source of information about the notions of the child. Notions of the child as inherently human creations and cultural and historical artefacts represent a multidimensional phenomenon that needs to be approached in an interdisciplinary way. Social sciences and the humanities (psychology, anthropology, history, sociology, philosophy, pedagogy, etc.) that deal with the studies of the child and childhood establish different conceptions and notions of childhood. The pedagogical significance of the literary texts for children is reflected in the fact that these texts represent a significant and inexhaustible material for interpreting the notion of the child as an interdisciplinary phenomenon with numerous pedagogical implications. Apart from the fact that they provide specific notions of the child and childhood, literary texts are at the same time a territory where children's ideas of childhood collide with the ideas of childhood constructed by adults, neither being fully articulated or univocal.

---

<sup>1</sup> [marinailic@hotmail.rs](mailto:marinailic@hotmail.rs)

Copyright © 2020 by the authors, licensee Teacher Education Faculty University of Belgrade, SERBIA.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original paper is accurately cited.

---

The general objective of this research is to identify and interpret the notions of the child in basal readers for the third and fourth grades of primary school and examine their compatibility with modern conceptions of the child and childhood. Given the specific nature of the research subject, primarily the multidimensionality and complexity of the notion of the child, we singled out two research tasks: (a) first, to analyse and interpret the notions of the child related to the understanding of the children's nature, their needs, methods of solving problems, peer relations, relationship of adults towards the child, and the parenting methods of the adults based on the literary texts in basal readers; and (b) second, to examine the compatibility between the identified notions of the child and modern conceptions of the child and childhood. Content analysis was based on the assumption that there are different notions of the child in the readers, ranging from a puritan to a postmodern conception, as well as that there is a certain level of compatibility with modern conceptions of the child and childhood. The research is based on the descriptive method and the content analysis technique. We used literary texts where a child is the main protagonist or one of the characters, i.e. the basic text in the system of textbook didactic apparatus as the analysis unit. The notion of the child was co-constructed by means of induction and operationalised through six components: a) nature of the child; b) needs of the child; c) children's way of solving problems; d) peer relations; e) relationship of adults toward the child; and f) parenting methods and actions of the adult. The sample comprised eight basal readers for the third and fourth grade within which we managed to identify 32 pieces of literary prose suitable for the analysis and interpretation of the notion of the child.

Concerning the first research task, which implies identification of different notions of the child in literary texts found in basal readers, we determined the existence of several different notions with regard to all the categories analysed (views on children's nature, their ways of solving problems, peer relations and relationship with adults, as well as parenting methods and actions of the adults). Understanding children's nature as inherently good, understanding their imminent needs, specific ways of solving problems, a belief that children establish quality relationships with their peers and adults, and that adults in turn implement different affirmative parenting methods is the prevailing view in the analysed readers. When it comes to the second research task, we discovered a certain level of conformity between the notions of the child identified in the readers on one hand, and the modern conceptions of childhood, on the other. The notions found in the readers markedly coincide with the romantic and postmodern conceptions of childhood and the child, especially in terms of understanding children's nature, their ways of solving problems and their relationship with the adults.

The notion of the child has numerous pedagogical implications, and we will single out two. The first implication is the possibility of literary texts to instrumentalise the popular notions of the child in direct instruction, which obligates education professionals to continuously re-examine the notions of the child that could be used as system solutions in direct instruction. The second implication points out the need to adjust the notions of the child with regard to the standpoint of different participants whose primary function is education of children in order to minimise the gap between the family, social, and school environment.

**Keywords:** notion of the child, childhood, basal reader, literary prose.

---

## References

- Arijes, F. (1989). *Vekovi detinjstva*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike.
- Archard, D. (2015). *Children: Rights and childhood*. New York: Routledge.
- Boakye-Boaten, A. (2010). Changes in the concept of Childhood: Implications on Children in Ghana. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 3 (10), 104–115.
- Cucić, S. (1951). *Iz dečje književnosti*. Novi Sad: Matica srpska.
- Hant, P. (2013). Uvod: izučavanje sveta književnosti za decu. U: Hant, P. (ur.). *Tumačenje književnosti za decu* (7–26). Beograd: Učiteljski fakultet.
- James, A. & Prout, A. (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press.
- King, M. L. (2007). Concepts of childhood: What we know and where we might go. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60 (2), 371–407.
- Lesnik Oberstajn, K. (2013). Osnovi: šta je književnost za decu? Šta je detinjstvo. U: Hant, P. (ur.). *Tumačenje književnosti za decu* (27–46). Beograd: Učiteljski fakultet.
- Ljuštanović, J. (2009). *Princeza luta zamkom: teorijska misao o književnosti za decu iz okrilja Zmajevih dečjih igara*. Novi Sad: Zmajeve dečje igre.
- Marinković, S. (2004). *Dečja prava i udžbenik*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva.
- Marinković, S. (2013). Viđenje deteta i detinjstva iz ugla narodne pedagogije. *Zbornik radova*, 15, 23–36.
- Marjanović, S. (1962). *Moje dete i knjiga*. Beograd: Narodna knjiga.
- Marković, Ž. S. (1973). *Zapisi o književnosti za decu*. Beograd: Interpres.
- Marković, Ž. S. (2003). *Zapisi o književnosti za decu III*. Beograd: Beogradska knjiga.
- Milinković, M. (2012). *Književnost za decu i mlade: poetika*. Užice: Učiteljski fakultet.
- Milutinović, Lj. (2016). *Književnost za djecu*. Banja Luka: Filozofski fakultet.
- Morrow, V. (2011). *Understanding Children and Childhood*. Lismore: Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University.
- Nikolić, M. (1992). *Metodika nastave srpskog jezika i književnosti*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva.
- Opačić, Z. (2015). Pretpostavljeni čitalac (kulturni i ideološki kontekst književnosti za decu). *Inovacije u nastavi*, 28 (4), 18–28.
- Opačić, Z. (2017). Vidovi ideološkog diskursa u književnosti za decu i mlade. *Inovacije u nastavi*, 30 (3), 117–128.
- Petrović, T. (2011). *Uvod u književnost za decu*. Novi Sad: Zmajeve dečje igre.
- Petrović, T. B. (2016). Vaspitno-obrazovna i idejna funkcija književnosti za decu. *Detinjstvo*, 42 (1), 120–128.

- 
- Purić, D. (2016): Čitanka i mogućnosti tumačenja književnog teksta u nastavi. U: Pešikan, A. (ur.). *Nastava i učenje – udžbenik u funkciji nastave i učenja* (75–90). Naučni skup *Nastava i učenje – udžbenik u funkciji nastave i učenja*, 4. novembar 2016. Užice: Učiteljski fakultet.
  - Qvortrup, J. (1987). Introduction. *International Journal of Sociology*, 17 (1), 1–26.
  - Sarlend, Č. (2013). Nevinih nema: ideologija, politika i književnost za decu. U: Hant, P. (ur.). *Tumačenje književnosti za decu* (61–86). Beograd: Učiteljski fakultet.
  - Stevanović, J., Dimitrijević, M. (2013). Podsticanje inicijative, saradnje i stvaralaštva u nastavi jezika i književnosti. *Zbornik Instituta za pedagoška istraživanja*, 45 (2), 381–403.
  - Stojanović, B. D. (2013). Dete u književnosti za decu – most koji spaja. *Detinjstvo*, 39 (1), 107–112.
  - Stojanović, B., Zdravković, D. (2019). Književni junak i socijalno odgovorno ponašanje pojedinca u čitankama za mlađe razrede osnovne škole. *Teme*, 43 (4), 1247–1264.
  - Todorov, N., Cvetković, S. i Plavšić, M. (2015). *Trešnja u cvetu: Čitanka za četvrti razred*. Beograd: Eduka.
  - Trebješanin, Ž. (1991). *Predstava o detetu u srpskoj kulturi*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruka.
  - Trebješanin, Ž., Jovanić, G. (2014). Promene u shvatanju deteta u srpskoj kulturi u poslednjih dvadeset pet godina. *Primenjena psihologija*, 4, 549–563.
  - Votkins, T. (2013). Kontekst književnosti za decu: istorija i kultura. U: Hant, P. (ur.). *Tumačenje književnosti za decu* (47–60). Beograd: Učiteljski fakultet.
  - Vranješević, D. J. (2008). *Razvojne kompetencije kao osnova prava deteta na participaciju* (doktorska disertacija). Beograd: Filozofski fakultet.
  - Vuković, N. (1996). *Uvod za književnost za djecu i omladinu*. Podgorica: Unireks.