

The Role of Anthropomorphism in Developing Social Skills in Children: A Study of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*

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Abstract

This study explores the role of anthropomorphism in the development of social skills in children, using Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* as a central case study. Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human traits, emotions, and intentions to non-human entities, is a literary device frequently employed in children's literature to bridge the gap between young readers and complex social concepts. Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, with its rich tapestry of animal characters embodying distinct human qualities and societal roles, provides a compelling framework to examine how children can learn and internalize social behaviours. Through a close analysis of key characters and their interactions, this study investigates how Kipling's anthropomorphized animals serve as relatable figures that model essential social skills such as empathy, cooperation, leadership, and moral reasoning. The research examines the narrative strategies employed by Kipling to convey social lessons, such as the use of dialogue, conflict resolution, and the depiction of hierarchical social structures within the animal kingdom.

Keywords: Anthropomorphism, Child psychology, Social learning, Emotional intelligence and Empathy

Introduction: Rudyard Kipling is one of the best known for the late Victorian poet and story-teller. Although he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907, his unpopular political views caused his work to be neglected shortly after his death. Critics, however, recognize the power of his work. "His unrelenting craftsmanship, his determination to be 'master of the bricks and mortals of his trade', compels respect and his genius as a storyteller and especially as a teller of stories for children." (Carpenter 99)

He is one of the most favourite English writers of all times, amongst the first master of English short stories and also the first to use cockney dialect in serious poetry. His early stories about life in colonial India were highly appreciated by readers. In 1894, he wrote his very famous story called *The Jungle Book*. This story is full of fascinating animal characters, a fearless young boy and an action of packed plot. It was a collection of short stories. Kipling wrote while he lived in India. He wrote about Mowgli, a man-cub raised by wolves in the jungle. Mowgli arrives at a wolf pack's home on top of a mountain where he meets Akela, the wolf pack's leader. The mother and father wolf take in Mowgli as one of their own like a parent. Shere Khan, a tiger wants to capture Mowgli and eat him. Finally, the entire wolf pack accepts Mowgli after a bear named Baloo speaks for him and a panther named Bagheera bribes the pack with food. Mowgli learns how to live in the jungle with the help of all his animal family, but he still watches the people in the nearby village, who are living normal human lives.

"It was well done", said Akela. "Men and their cubs are very wise. He may be a help in time. Truly, a help in time of need, for none can hope to lead the pack forever", said Bagheera. (*The Jungle Book* 21)

This paper represents children's love of animals and provides several explicit and implicit messages about animal-human interaction. I aimed to investigate how children's books may help youngsters improve their social abilities. Furthermore, the objectives were to describe the role and meaning of anthropomorphism in children's literature using *the jungle book* as well as to integrate the impact of anthropomorphized characters

on children's behaviour while examining how the author uses the anthropomorphized characters to develop children's social skills. This paper highlighted the value of anthropomorphism in children's literature as well as how discussing societal concerns from a non-human perspective allows children to learn and develop their social skills appropriately. It employs a narratological analysis for examining the short stories by Rudyard Kipling. The short stories educate kids about societal concerns that help shape their values by allowing them to independently analyse various notions of good and bad interactions with others. Children can discover more about social issues, particularly complicated ones, via their exposure to anthropomorphized children's literature and the societal values. Children's literature is fundamentally established in moral and cultural values and principles.

According to Reynolds, a fact that has been recognized by literary scholars is that the books that children are exposed to as they grow up contribute to their social and emotional development as well as socializing them to their culture and the culture that surrounds them. Numerous works in children's literature have addressed various thematic issues such as love, obedience, trust and others ones. The current study argues that animal stories for children might have positive impacts on children's behaviours and activities, which assists in the development of their social skills. Anthropomorphized characters such as cars and trains and animals have been used to convey messages to viewers and readers of literature. This research paper examines how these characters are employed to mimic various human qualities to shape children's actions and attitudes so that they become acceptable to society. This paper investigates how the usage of anthropomorphism in children's books has aided in the development of their social skills. In relation to *The Jungle Book*, the importance of anthropomorphism, the influence of anthropomorphism on children's social skill development and related problems such as animal portrayal in children's literature is studied. This text clearly indicates how anthropomorphized animal characters may be used to build children's social abilities, which is the study's major objective. Kipling's most of works are replete with autobiographical elements. His bereaved and dismal childhood led to his career as a writer. We can see his sardonic feelings in his writings. He spent his childhood with caretaker Rosa aunty and without his parents. He could feel prettily about life and the arduous of children not having their parents with them. According to Sue Walsh:

“His fame as both a much read and well-loved author and as a politically controversial figure much of his work remained un-discussed in any detail, largely it has been assigned to a category labelled children's literature.” (Walsh 45)

The Jungle Book was published in 1894, Contains poems that are related to the stories. The majority of the stories revolve around Mowgli, an Indian child raised by wolves; he learns self-reliance and wisdom from the jungle's animals. The short stories described the wolf pack's social life as well as, more fancifully, the justice and natural order of life in the jungle. Akela the wolf, Baloo, the brown bear, Shere Khan, the boastful Bengal tiger, who is Mowgli's enemy, Tabaqui, the jackal (Shere Khan's obedient servant), Kaa, the python and Bagheera, the panther is among the animal characters in the book. “Bagheera stretched himself at full length and half shut his eyes. “Little Brother”, said he, “feel under my jaw.” (*The Jungle Book* 28)

The unusual factors in *The Jungle Book* largely serve as a technique to help the child associate with Mowgli, because the child is not familiar with living in the jungle and being surrounded by animals. In contrast to real-life teachers, Mowgli's teacher, Baloo, is a kind bear who provides enjoyable lessons. He is not a traditional teacher in the story. The young reader would definitely love to acquire the master words of how to speak all the other animal languages, even though Mowgli doesn't always seem to appreciate them. Due to its full focus on children, these aspects strengthen *The Jungle Book's* effect as a children's book. According to Bertrand Russell,

“The affection of parents makes infants feel safe in this dangerous world and gives them boldness in experimentation and in exploration of their environments.” (Russell 60)

Likewise, literary works feature animal characters, which is the primary subject of this paper. The text analysis focuses on the animal characters and what they depict or represent in society, whether positive or negative behaviour and the effects it has. In addition, the internet, journals and critical works on literature in the form of secondary sources will be read to bring to light the perspectives of other academics in this field. Secondary texts address the issue of anthropomorphism in children's literature and how it aids in the development of social skills and include published articles and other resources that describe anthropomorphism as a universal approach. These will aid in the collection of information and the formulation of well-informed views. *The Jungle Book*, namely the three Mowgli stories with an emphasis on

anthropomorphism and how it promotes children's social skills development, i.e. the narration of roles played by anthropomorphized characters in their depiction of society. Narratology is the study of narrative or the ordered recount of a story. Rudyard Kipling's short stories from *The Jungle Book* under the lens of analysis, it dissects and evaluates the use of animal characters to establish social consciousness and their interaction in society, by discussing the literary techniques that Kipling used in his work, explaining the anthropomorphic positions, the themes presented in the stories and the role played by animal characters in the development of children's social behaviour.

“Akela! Akela!” said Mowgli, clapping his hands. “I might have known that thou wouldst not forget me. We have a lot of work in hand. Cut the herd in two, Akela. Keep the cows and calves together and the bulls and the plough buffaloes by themselves”. (*The Jungle Book* 134-135)

The researcher will try to define children's literature from different points of view of scholars and theorists. In the process, show the historical development of children's literature from its emergence until the present day. Then, we will conduct a classification of the various genres of children's literature and provide simplified definitions for each genre. Furthermore, the researcher will narrow down the different literary elements that are used in children's literature and the way these elements distinguish children's literature from other kinds of literature. Moreover, we will study the function of children's literature and its importance for young readers. Finally, we will discuss the use of talking animals and their importance in children's literature. Children's literature must contain all elements that interest the child and that gives literature the strength to be a source of encouraging kids to read more and more books, not only in their childhood but even when they get older. From that literature, children can learn how to progress in a good manner. Literary works for children should be renewed, in order to be able to keep up with the changes that may happen in “childhood” or “children” concepts. Children’s literature, also known as juvenile literature, is a literary genre targeted at children and one that primarily caters to the interests of children. It employs the use of storybooks, stories and poems to explain the teleology of children and how these can be intensified in stimulating the child and society they find themselves in. As argued by McGill, children’s fiction is a fiction inevitably conflicted between a series of binaries such as child or adult, knowledge or innocence, home or away, and safety or danger.

Children’s literature initially appeared in the eighteenth century. When writers influenced by Lockean philosophy created literary works specifically for children, which were completely didactic and instructional in form and content, and their chief goal was religious, in order to educate children on the fundamentalist basics, to save their beliefs and to grow their morals, behaviours and values. Children at the time were expected to act and behave responsibly, the significance of animals in literature aids authors in underlying common concepts that are vital to literary works. A number of animals are widely used to portray various subjects and distinctive symbols based on their biological activity. Many human traits and attributes are represented by these animals in line with their actual or natural modes of existence.

The Jungle Book focuses on society through the use of anthropomorphized animal characters. The paper reveals that the use of anthropomorphism in children’s literature helps in developing children’s social skills and morals. Children are presented with societal issues from a non-human fictional animal point of view, whereas human interactions and relationships in society are represented through the use of anthropomorphized animals. As argued by Airenti animals fully or partially anthropomorphized are used in teaching children different aspects of mental, social life and moral rules. In *The Jungle Book*, the attitudes portrayed by the animal characters in the story represent particular individual behaviour that can be encountered daily in society, the attitudes, the characters possess, good or bad are there to encourage children and to develop their social skills and morals. For instance, Mowgli represents an individual with a good heart, who is brave, spunky, loyal, and helpful without thinking of receiving any reciprocal reward from his family or Pack. He was a man-cub considered to be very different from all the creatures in the jungle. Rudyard Kipling used Mowgli’s characterization to teach children that everyone in life, irrespective of their condition, should not be maltreated by society but accepted regardless of their differences. The author uses his behaviour to teach morals and demonstrate acceptable behaviour that is worth emulating in society by young readers. Shere Khan, on the other hand, is used to represent the evil and aggressive in the jungle, who is disrespectful of the Jungle Laws regarding killing and an innate troublemaker. His characterization is used by Kipling to teach young readers that Evil does not last, and the end of the harmful ones will be bad, no matter how long it takes. This contributes to the child’s social skills development and

helps them to become good members of society by demonstrating acceptable behaviour in society. Children are encouraged to love others, to help them, and do not harm those who are weaker than them, in order to avoid a bad end like the end of Shere Khan when Mowgli killed him. Mowgli had to learn by heart and he grew very tired of saying the same thing over a hundred times. But, as Baloo said to Bagheera, one day when Mowgli had been slapped and run off in a temper: "A man's cub is a man's cub, and he must learn all the Law of the Jungle". (*The Jungle Book* 44)

This paper analyses the use of animal characters to in still social consciousness and interaction in children, in order to develop their social skills and so become responsible members of society. The researcher will study the role and meaning of anthropomorphism in *The Jungle Book*. Then we will analyse the themes portrayed by Kipling through the use of anthropomorphism. And lastly, our focus will be on how anthropomorphized animal characters in *The Jungle Book* shape children's behaviour. When the author described Mother Wolf Raksha was defying the tiger Shere Khan, who wanted to eat the man-cub Mowgli. She decided to adopt him and protect him just like her cubs until her death. The language choice draws in the readers' minds the picture of the angry mother who cares and fears for her children from any danger that may happen to them. The way, she speaks to Shere Khan and screams at him, reveals her anger. The author used this diction to reflect Raksha as a real strong mother, the one who is always aware of what is happening to her family and her children.

Mowgli doesn't like to wear clothes, which makes sense since he was raised in the jungle by naked animals. When Mowgli has to live with the Men, they force him to wear a cloth, "which annoyed him horribly", it just isn't his style, and he's used to running naked through his days. Yet after killing and skinning Shere Khan, Mowgli wears the tiger's skin with pride. The hide of Shere Khan represents freedom from the tyrant. In killing Shere Khan, Mowgli steps into his power, fulfilling Mother Wolf's prophecy from when he was younger and proving his capability once and for all, and the tiger's hide is proof of this. In *The Jungle Book* he provides the animal characters with the ability to act like humans through talking, feeling, learning, etc.

In *The Jungle Book* characters are based on characteristics they possess in reality, with Kipling's perception and representation of these characteristics through his writing, presenting the nonhuman becoming human. Baloo, who is an anthropomorphic bear, is described as intelligent and caring. It is his ability to teach the young wolves and Mowgli as well, the jungle laws and the different languages of all the animals in that jungle is an anthropomorphic trait. In the story, Baloo displays the characteristics of a literate teacher who can obviously teach, inform and advise the cubs, Baloo has spoken, and he is our teacher for the young cubs, something which a normal bear cannot do. Even Baloo's intentions to save Mowgli are anthropomorphized, because a bear normally considered a harmful creature, would not be capable to have those characteristics and abilities.

Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human behaviour or character and feelings to animals and nonhumans such as nature, objects, etc., is the major literary device that runs through the text. In this story most of the characters are animals and Kipling use anthropomorphism throughout. The use of anthropomorphic animal characters indicates that the story is a fantasy although some things about the animals remain real. The animals are made to live in a jungle and appear in their real forms. They eat their real food and display their normal way of life such as living in the jungle and hunting. But their ability to talk, learn, and have memories and feelings reveals the unreal aspect of the story, it is important that the animals retain at least some of their natural behaviour, thereby creating a story that is unique to that particular animal. This results in both real and unreal situations coexisting in the text in order to make it more appealing to young readers, whilst encouraging them to identify with the animal characters. This positions the text as a fairy tale in fantasy fiction. The animals look and act just like normal farm animals, but the characters are relatable because of their anthropomorphic abilities.

Bagheera also is an anthropomorphic character. He is a proud panther. He buys Mowgli's life by giving the Wolf Pack a bull he killed. He has the dignity, intelligence, and courage that a normal panther doesn't have. The willingness to buy someone's life, the sense of shame, respect for the laws of the jungle, and the capacity to estimate distances are all human attributes embodied in the character of Bagheera. Respecting the rules is not applicable to animals, because they are not considered to have the ability to think and know their rights and duties, but the author uses animal emotions to express the idea that humans should know and respects the laws of the societies they live in. Authors of children's literature such as Rudyard Kipling use anthropomorphism for different reasons; to allow children to understand the story and apply it to their

personal experience in life which then aids the development of their social skills. One of the reasons is to introduce complex issues in society to children in a less harmful manner. Anthropomorphism reveals animal-human relationships in a way that allows the reader to see the animal characters not just as representations of humans but also as representing real animal issues. The story is narrated by representing the events from a human perspective of the animal, in which the use of the anthropomorphized characters helps children to understand the portrayed societal issues,

“Anthropomorphism is used in building a relational attitude between the young readers and the fictional characters in the text for the subtle facilitation of knowledge.” (Isaacs 06)

Findings from this study suggest that the anthropomorphic portrayal of animals in *The Jungle Book* plays a significant role in helping children understand and navigate social relationships. By identifying with characters like Mowgli, Baloo, and Bagheera, children are able to engage with and reflect on the social dynamics presented in the story, fostering their own social development. Additionally, the moral and ethical lessons embedded in the narrative further enhance children's ability to discern right from wrong, thereby contributing to their overall social and emotional growth. In conclusion, this study highlights the enduring impact of *The Jungle Book* as a tool for social learning, demonstrating how anthropomorphism in literature can effectively support the development of social skills in children. The insights gained from this analysis underscore the importance of incorporating anthropomorphic narratives in educational contexts to enrich children's social understanding and empathy.

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