

## **In Terms of Principles of Children's Literature, the Novel Entitled "Children of the Green Island"**

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**Abstract:** Children have spiritual-physical needs at every period. The aforementioned needs are provided by families, teachers, books. Children need literary works to learn life. Children's literature works, contribute to the children's world of sentiment and emotion. The works (books) which children shall read will differ at every developmental period because of this while preparing a text for them, a set of specialities, just like perception level, field of interest, spiritual world of the target audience must be considered. Havva Tekin has done an important contribution to the Cyprus Turkish children's literature with her novel named "The children of Green Island". The author tells the realities lived through 1974-1975 from the point of two children in the novel which was written by taking basic principles of children's literature into consideration. A child will find indications from his/her own life in this documentarily novel that will cause him/her to read it with interest.

**Key words:** Cyprus, education, child, Havva Tekin, Greek, Turkish, literary works

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an inseparable part of our life. It is a known fact that as a growing and developing being a child needs care, knowledge and guidance. Especially, the children who had an adequate and successful education process in the 1st years of their life in the future shall take their places in the society as adults who are useful for their nations. Therefore, the authors should show great care and attention while preparing books for children, who have an extremely important place for the future of their nations. In each development process of the children, different interests and needs are in question. The authors have to take into consideration the interests and needs of children while producing their works. We should keep in mind that children's literature plays an important role in the development of these interests and needs.

The researchers evaluate those works written in line with the interests and needs of children within the scope of "children's literature": "the literature which addresses to the world of emotions and thoughts of children in development process, by taking into consideration the level of understanding and comprehension is called the literature for children or shortly, children's literature" (Arici, 2012).

According to Alemdar Yalcin and Giyasettin Aytas, "the works considered in the scope of children's literature are those which appeal to the growing and developments

dreams, emotions, thoughts, capabilities and pleasures of the children. These works should both educate and amuse the children".

As a new field, the children's literature is also included in the developing literature in Cyprus. One of the well-known authors in this field, AysenDagli has given importance to the emotions, sensitivity and psychology of children in her tales and contributed to their development through the issues she addressed. We can sort some of the other authors who have also produced works in this field in Cyprus like that: EmineSelcuk, "child with a light", HusamettinTecmen, "Three Turkish Children in Cyprus", Ayse Gurmen, "Selen is in Cyprus", HavvaTekin "Children of the Green Island", etc.

In our study, we aimed to make a scientific contribution to the novel reviewing which we think is deficit in Turkish Cypriot Children's Literature. We have thus found it appropriate to review HavvaTekin's novel entitled "Children of the Green Island" which sheds light on social and historical life of the island in terms of the basic characteristics of children's literature in order to contribute even a little to the institutionalisation and improvement of Turkish Cypriot literature and to gaining its deserved place within the Great Turkish geography.

In this study, describe survey method has been used through a work-oriented review and analysis. HavvaTekin's novel entitled "Children of the Green Island" has been both reviewed in terms of the basic characteristics of children's literature and evaluated in terms of the constituents of children's literature.

The emergence of children's literature as a scientific field does not go long way back. From the literary works produced for adults in the past, the parts that are educational, instructive and at the same time exciting the attention of children have been taken; used in this field and tried to provide education for the children in this manner. However, "children are beings who perceive the world and the environment with their own subjective evaluations and who establish relationships with the world through these glasses. For them, the world firstly is a mass, a messy chaos which does not have any relation with each other. As they grow up, they learn to develop the functional relations between the objects and thus comprehend the thoughts and objective criteria of the world of adults" (Cilgin, 2007). As it can be understood from the above statements, according to us the mentioned practices which have been made in the past for the education of children were wrong. Because there are significant differences between the literary works that will be read by adults and by children.

Children's literature plays an important role in the education of the children. The products evaluated within this scope have an important function in mental and psychological development of the children. As Cahit Kavcar stated "the literary works promote by inculcating on orienting the good, the beautiful and the truth as well as on gaining new values both in individual and social life; educate people in that line" (Kavcar, 1999). If we want to raise healthy individuals capable of critical thinking and to create a solid society confident about the future, it should be paid attention to certain principles in these literary works written for children. The mentioned principles might be listed as follows.

The children's books have to be in a quality that support the school education and while producing their works all the authors have to take into consideration the age group they are addressing (Yalcin and Aytas, 2005).

Authoritarian and controlling attitudes should not be affirmed, the importance of a democratic life in society should be stressed and the author should succeed to communicate with the child with his/her tellings. (Diliduzgun *et al.*, 2004).

As the works of children's literature have an influence on the linguistic development of children in the mentioned works an appropriate narration should be chosen in order to contribute to the conceptual development of children and the children should be enabled to sense the expression opportunities and rules of our Turkish language (Sever, 2007).

Children identify themselves with the protagonists in the books as they take the fictive world as real. Therefore,

the thoughts inseminated in the book or story have an important role. The literary works written for children should be ideology-free (Cilgin, 2007).

Children always enjoy that they are considered important and that their growing up is seen. Therefore, children's books should contain a certain number of features that will make children feel important. The pictures in the publications for children should be clear, simple and related to the topic. The pictures placed in the most appropriate place of the text or the page should be entertaining for the children and should constitute a whole with the topic.

While creating the features of the protagonists partaking in the children's books, it should be taken care of not to exaggerate. For the child in order to identify himself/herself with these characters and to get involved in the narration, the characters described by the author have to be trustable as real as in daily life and more or less be at the same age level with the child (Arici, 2012).

One of the essential functions of the literature is to present new lives to the reader. The authors of children's literature should present new lives to the readers by using all the means of language and pictures; allow children to take lessons from these lives (Sever, 2007).

It should be possible for the children to give meaning to the stories told in the books; the texts in general should be related the experienced realities. The imaginary fantastic stories told in the books should be ended with the consequences relevant with the reality of the environment in which the child is living. The children will read the book caressively when they find impressions from their own lives (Yalcin and Aytas, 2005).

In the books undertaken for children, their loyalty to their families and nations should be reinforced. The authors should help children to build healthy relationships and gain them positive behaviours like helpfulness, honesty, etc. (Tezcan, 1985).

One of the most important problems of our society is the rarity of the number of youths, who regularly read books. We should keep in mind that fondness to read is a habit that should be gained in the early ages. The families and the schools play the most important role in making the child gain this love. The parents and the teachers, by having the children read the books they have chosen among the productions of "children's literature" which are according to the their age group can instil them fondness to read beginning from the early ages. By means of choosing the correct book the children will apprehend the importance of reading, thereby linguistic awareness will develop and improve; their vocabulary will thrive. The artists should pay utmost attention in the preparation of children books which are effective in the education of children and therefore in the development of the society.

In the present study, with regard to the general characteristics of the children's literature which we mentioned above, we will try to review the novel of a Cyprus Turkish author and poet HavvaTekin, entitled "Children of the Green Island", who have won the award of "Children's Book Great Prize" organized for the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

The first edition of the novel entitled children of the Green Island which was designed as 163 pages has been published by Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture in 1998. The work has been published again in 2013 by Elma Publishing House and the cover picture has been designed by Elif Balta.

As we have mentioned before, the authors who produce works for children, should take care of choosing the topics that are within children's field of interest and while creating their works should take into consideration the different interests and needs of the children. When the child finds something from his/her life in the book will be fond of reading the book: "the topic in the children's literature is a variable that attracts the child to the meaning world of the text and that brings into connection with the book. The topics addressed gain importance to the extend they are related to the interests and needs of the child. While the author is composing the text, the answers he/she will give to the questions 'what will I tell about on which issues I will emphasise?'" should be the starting point during the creation of the text; should direct the fictionalization of the life condition specific to the child.

It can be said that the basic variable that determines the subject area of the children's literature is the reality of the children; however, whatever its type is the chosen subject does not determine the quality of the text. The subject is only an instrument for the things that the artist wants to share with the reader. The important thing is that the fictionalization, recreation and reflection of that subject in the subjective world of the artist. The author processes that subject by an event or by a series of events (Sever, 2007).

A book having an extensive narration, the "mystery" factor is a value that canalizes the conspiracy and connects us to the book; comprises curiosity and motivates. Bookists, by the conflicts he/she has fictionalized within the work, should try to see the curiosity factor as a constantly rising value and carry the tension to its peak point towards the end of the book. The mentioned point is the resolution point of the tension. As from the resolution point the artist undergoes difficulties to draw the attention of the reader to the book. A good bookist should be capable of keeping the "mystery" factor until the end and carry the tension/curiosity factor

to the resolution point. If the factors of curiosity and tension are weak, this will effect the relation of the child with book negatively: the conflicts within the life situations presented to children should be balanced with curiosity elements; until the story is concluded, the child should be made partner to the format: 129-130).

HavvaTekin, in her novel entitled "Children of the Green Island" told her readers the events experienced in Cyprus in 1974 from the perspective of a Turkish and Greek child. The author tells the impacts of the war on people, especially on children within the conditions of that period and the hunger of people/children for peace in an emotional atmosphere.

Cengiz and Yorgo are two good friends living in a village where the Turkish and Greek people live together before 1974. Although, the schools and the neighbourhoods of these two kids who have met as a result of a fight and become good friends were in different places, they had too much in common. They shared the same feelings while they were wandering in caves to search for treasure, having fun with their dog Korsan, telling each other about their family relationships or playing games together.

In line with the wish of Greeks to command the island, the attacks they launched on Cyprus Turks and the events developed as a result of these attacks, compelled the two kids told to draw a line between each other. In the last chapter of her work, the author affectingly tells the forced migration of Turks to the north after the Peace Operation in Cyprus and the scene of the separation of those two good friends (Cengiz and Yorgo) that develops as a result of this migration.

The subject matter of the book ensures that the message to be given effectively reaches to the reader. The topic is well fictionalized and within the frame of the message desired to be given, the components of the book have been skilfully combined by the author. Curiosity factors have been scattered inside the book and these factors have been kept at the highest level until the end of the work. The reseatcher skilfully tied the main knot from the very beginning of the book and succeeded to attract the reader to the book. The father of Cengiz, Ahmet Cavus shares the rumours with his wife saying that the village will get into a caos and the Greeks will attack the Turks in the village and told her his concerns about the future of their children. Apart from the main knot we mentioned from place to place intermediary knots have also been scatted so that the reader is kept in a state of constant excitement all through the book. Cengiz's losing Yorgo in the caves, the disappearance of Yorgo's father who was a friend of Turks, until the end of the story, the interrogation of Ahmet Cavus and his relatives by two

Greek police during their trip to a Turkish village Koccat in order to ward off from the attacks, etc. are the places where the tension climaxes.

The best example that can be given for individual-society conflict, among other types of conflict factors is the hostility of Yorgo's mother against the Turks. However, as her husband is a friend of Turks the attacks also hit her within the processand, she had to take the shelter of Ahmet Cavus. As an another conflict factor, the fights that Cengiz had with the children in the Greek school can be given. Cengiz had a fight at the beginning of the story with a Greek child, who took away his ball and did not return it and in the future became good friends with Yorgo, who broke up the fight. Furthermore, the conflicts that Cengiz undergoes in his inner world are also included in the story. The short-term distress that Cengiz suffered, who wanted to bring home a dog in telling this to his father, the concern he had when he lost Yorgo in the caves can be given as examples for these inner conflicts. The book, on the other hand, does not include any preternaturalness or imaginary components that might have weakened the fiction of the work.

### CHARACTERS

The persons in the book are presented to us as models and characters. A model is a person who represents a specific human tendency and takes part in the book with only one specific feature. A character on the other hand is a person who has features specific to his/herself having multiple tendencies. The *raison d'être* of a book is the persons. A book tells the life story, emotional development and maturation of its main protagonist.

The main character of the novel is Cengiz. The reader follows the events that took place in between 1974-1975 in Cyprus from the eyes of Cengiz. The little Cengiz, who is a decent, honest boy loving his family a lot, thinks about why the Greeks do not like the Turks and can not give a meaning to the events experienced.

Yorgo is also a decent boy like Cengiz. He likes Cengiz a lot and also can not make sense of this war. Although he likes his family a lot, he finds odd the hostile attitude of his mother towards the Turks.

As the other important persons of the book, we can count the father of Cengiz, Ahmet Cavus, mother of Cengiz, Mrs. Sermin, his grandmother Mrs. Gulsun, his brother Cemal, Yorgo's father Andre and his mother Anna.

The main features of the characters are well presented by the author to the reader: "the boys were peaceful kids. The elder boy, Cengiz was at the last year of primary school. He was an intelligent, hard-working and curious

kid. The younger boy was at the 1st year of primary school. He was more a shy, nervous and a bit coy. Especially Ahmet Cavus, through his kindly but firmly warnings was trying to render him a more daring kid while Mrs. Sebnem was calling him 'my dearest coy boy'. But Cemal, without changing his coy attitudes made his brother Cengiz undertake some of his duties" (Tekin, 2013).

The authors while describing the features of the characters in her book, did not make any exaggeration. The child characters like Cengiz and Yorgo described in the book by HavvaTekin are trustable from the daily life, real, kids and are about at the same age level with children reading, who are the readers of the novel.

### LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The works to be assessed in the scope of children's literature should be suitable for children. The language and the style used in the children's books are one the most important features that enables the work to be pursuant to the child. In the texts considering the child, the sentences are simple and short. In this type of texts where the narration is fluent, the richness and the linguistic possibilities of Turkish language is used. These type of literary works play an important role in gaining children the awareness of mother tongue in early ages: in training of mother tongue in order to turn writing and punctuation rules into permanent behaviours, qualified texts in which these rules are used properly as well as conformable with the level are needed. As the interaction of the students increase by the texts having the mentioned qualifications, it is observed thatthey both start to apprehend the expressional features of the language and start to emulate to the usage in the correct and attentive examples. Therefore, in the education of mother tongue, rather than the processes based on providing information, it should be preferred for the students to experience texts in various types prepared with sensitiveness of an artist and reflecting the powerful narration and beauty of their mother tongue (Sever *et al.*, 2008).

The novel entitled "Children of the Green Island" has been written with a simple language and a fluent style. In the work, using the Turkey Turkish language in a successful way, the accent of the Greek character Yorgo disorders when he gets angry. Again in the work, although not that often, we encounter the accent of the Greeks.

The work has been written with a simple language and a style that makes it for children between 10-13 years old to read. The children will learn some new words from the book and therefore, the work will contribute to the

improvement of the vocabulary of the children. We can give some of those words as the following: "cortege, dread, ceasefire, violation of ceasefire, invasion, announcer, guarantorship, golifa (a Cyprus meal), etc." The author explains the meanings of some of these words in the footnotes.

We also see that the technique of inner dialogue is also successfully used in the novel entitled *Children of Green Island*: "there were voices echoing in the mind of Cengiz, telling him that something bad happened to Yorgo... My God, save Yorgo. Yorgo is a good boy. I am also a good boy. We never wanted to do something bad. I beg you, please do not let Yorgo to be caught by the smugglers or to be bitten by a snake" (Tekin, 2013).

The author sometimes made detailed descriptions in her book. These descriptions are the indicators of her claim to be realistic: "it was the last days of May. The weather was pretty hot. 'The elderly were saying that they would have the harvest earlier this year'. Olive trees were spreaded among the wheat fields which were starting right at the outskirts of the village and extended on a large and smooth area. The branches of the olive trees were as loaded as the wheat fields. The branches became quite heavy by the riped olives" (Tekin, 2013). We believe that the novel we are reviewing here will be useful for the linguistic development of children.

### **EDUCATIONAL FACTORS**

The priority of the works produced in the field of children's literature is to provide the desired contribution to the children. In this process while promoting fondness to read to the child, the publications that might harm should be avoided. The subjects, events, characters, emotions discussed in the literary works for children as well as the intended message of the novel and its probable influences on children are the factors that have direct impact on the development of the child. For this reason, we should pay attention for the books we recommend to children to be entertaining and instructive (Arici, 2012).

The novel we review here is pretty rich in terms of educational features. In this work, the author wants to instill into the children "fighting is wrong to be helpful at all times, the importance of loving animals, lying is bad, the promises should be kept, apologizing is necessary if a mistake is made that the importance of friendship and fellowship, the respect and love required to have for parents and elderly, hospitality, the happiness of making money by working, etc." The author wanted to impose these thoughts to the readers not directly as an

object lesson but as it should be, by adumbration: the deskmate of Cengiz, Ercan was a pint sized, brown boy with curly hair.

He was very intelligent. Especially, he was the one who finished the math problems first in math class. He was benevolent as well. He helped to Cengiz many times for the problems that he could not solve" (Tekin, 2013).

In another part, the author wanted to impose the love for animals and sense of responsibility in relation to each other: "...You are right mom, said Ahmet Cavs. He poured the milk in the bowl into a baby bottle and gave it to Cengiz. Cengiz stared at the bottle for a while bewilderedly. The father was insisting, 'Come on Cengiz, take it'. Cengiz looked at his father in surprise and a bit fearfully. 'Will I make it drink?' Yes. If it is your dog, you are responsible for feeding it. Otherwise how can it be committed to you? Don't forget, if you want it to love you and be loyal to you, you have to take very good care of it, love it and protect it. When it grows, this time it will start protecting you. Dogs are very loyal animals..." (Tekin, 2013).

The literary works for children should be in a supporting line with the education given in the school and each author while producing a work, should be attentive to which age group he/she is addressing to.

The reviewed novel is in the quality of supporting the education given in schools. We believe that the novel can be recommended for the education of children of 10-13 age group in many aspects.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Successful description of the environment plays an important role in the literary works. It is a known fact that there is direct relation between the environment and the event told in the work. Therefore, a successful description of the environment helps the child for a better understanding of the event: "the question about what kind of an environment is needed for the appearance of the chain of events told in the work in the scope of the conditions stated in the text and the time period designated, helps us to understand the specific features of the fictive world and takes us up to the edge of the manner of doing and creating practiced in the work" (Aktas, 2000).

The village where Ahmet Cavus and his family lived, the house of Ahmet Cavus, the school of Cengiz, the area where the caves are located, the Turkish village Koccat where they had to move afterwards, stand out as the important places where the events take place in the work. We also come across to other places in the book. For example, the house of Yorgo, the house of Cengiz's friend,

Ercan, the cafe of Uncle Hasim, etc. While the author was making the description of the main places which play an important role in the forming of the events in detail, she did not need a detailed description of those places playing a secondary role in the story; so that she prevented the children to get bored: "the river flowing through at some distance from the village was drawing a natural border with the other village and by following a long way, it was reaching to the sea at the shores of the island. The village houses had big gardens and big rooms and were luminous. Fruits and vegetables were growing in almost each garden. In some gardens, the large-grained grapes surrounding the pergolas next to colorful there were dazzling" (Tekin, 2013).

### THE MESSAGE

The message that an author wants to communicate in relation to a topic is called "governing idea". In other words, the message is the main idea that the author wants to share with the readers. The aim of a good literary work for children is to "develop the capacities of intuition, sensing and thinking in a child and to bring in them sensitivities specific to human beings" (Sever, 2007). The message in the production of children's literature as we mentioned above are usually given to the reader through the method of adumbration and the author by taking the child into the fictive world and waits for the child to make effort to see these messages: "the child is in the position of a receptor who ingenders meanings together with the author and the drawer and thus constantly needs the capacity for dreaming, thinking and imagination" (Sever, 2007).

In the novel reviewed, the main message is that the love is a very important value and that it cannot be annihilated despite the wars. This message is made intuitive to the children through different events told in the novel. This dialogue between two children deserves attention in that regard: "I have a dog now. A-ha where did you find it? Ercan's dog had babies. He gave one of them to me. I also want a dog but my mom does not like them. Don't be sad Yorgo, if we educate it together, it will get used to both of us. It is also your dog" (Tekin, 2013).

In another part of the novel, Ahmet Cavus provided the life safety of Yorgo and her mother whose husband got lost; together with his family took them to the Turkish village that they moved to.

At the end of the novel, the Peace Operation was carried out and then it came to the moment of separation of Cengiz and Yorgo. The author stresses with a very impressive style the importance of love in our lives: "at the end, it was time to separate. They had to say goodbye

to each other... after crying for hours, Yorgo and Cengiz looked in the eye to each other. Yorgo gave a packet to his friend and said this is yours.

That was the microscope of Yorgo. But... No said, Cengiz. Yes, said Yorgo. My father buys a new one. I want this to remain with you. You are my best friend, said Yorgo. He sniffed, he was silently crying. And you are also my... You are also my best friend, said Cengiz and then gave Korsan to Yorgo. Take good care of Korsan,

you are now the owner of him". Yorgo looked at him eyes wide open. Can't you take him? No they say that I can't. They hugged each other. They remained in their arms for a while. Anna looked at those children, who revealed the human heart to her. Then, she broke down in tears by closing her face with her hands. Andre removed the hands of his wife from her face and said 'don't hide; our friends are leaving, it is normal to cry'. This was love, unavoidable and not limited to nations. This was friendship. It resists, ever grows and stands upright (Tekin, 2013).

The researcher, telling about love as a universal value, succeeds to communicate with the children through an influential language and style as well as her stories.

### CONCLUSION

In order to speak in a good manner and have proper writing skill; children need the qualified works of children's literature, for the literary works to fulfil the specified functions, they have to be in direct correlation the authors, readers and the educators. If societies do not attach the required value to the works which include national elements, then there will be no relation between generations and the society will no longer form a nation. At this point, it is useful to remind the words of the great leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: who said: "the relation between the national feelings and the language is very strong".

"Children of Green Island" is a valuable novel which is written by taking into consideration the main principles of children's literature and admired by many specialists of children development as well as by instructors as it is already mentioned on the cover of the book. In the novel which examines the universal values such as friendship and love, the reader learns what experienced in Cyprus in the years 1974-1975 through the eyes of two children. In this regard, the work has a documentary characteristics and even partially, it contributes to development of children's consciousness of history. Also, the name of the work which has a documentary characteristics and which has been awarded in North Cyprus Turkish

Republic is remarkable. Cyprus is named as “Green Island” by different districts. The words, “Green Island” which gave its name to the island and the drawing of olive-branches on some pages should also be considered as a factor which strengthen peace and love.

When the novel is reviewed in terms of using and developing the mother tongue of a child we can say that the language is fluent and there is a correlation between sentences and paragraphs. Besides that, we see that the vocabulary used in the novel is appropriate for the children between the ages of 10-13.

The stories, told in the novel can be easily understood and interpreted by children. Stories told in the novel are directly related to the real events. There are no surrealistic situations which might mislead children. Thus, the will enjoy reading the novel as he/she will find some similarities to her/his life.

Although, the map of Cyprus used in the cover of the novel is a right choice specifically in stressing Cyprus and in attracting the attention of the children; however, it is possible to consider the use of only pictures of olive branches from time to time but not any other pictures in the pages of the novel as a deficiency. As known, the use of clear and simple and relevant pictures used in the publications for children helps children to understand the topic better in addition to amusing them. But it should be admitted that if there is no opportunity to work with a professional illustrator, the amateurish pictures could reduce the effect of the novel.

The educators, who emphasise the importance of using Turkish language in an accurate way can easily use this novel which makes a significant contribution to the linguistic development of children as well as endorsing the universal emotions and thoughts and help to improve historical awareness in children.

Additionally, we believe that the education faculties of the universities in the island should include these kind qualified works written for children within the scope of Turkish Cypriot literature courses in order to contribute to the development of children’s literature in Cyprus.

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