

Second Looks: How Remembering Creates Stories

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Introduction

"One's memory never stands alone...one never remembers outside of some context, some situation that shapes the thing we know as remembering."
Susan Engel, *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory* (1999)

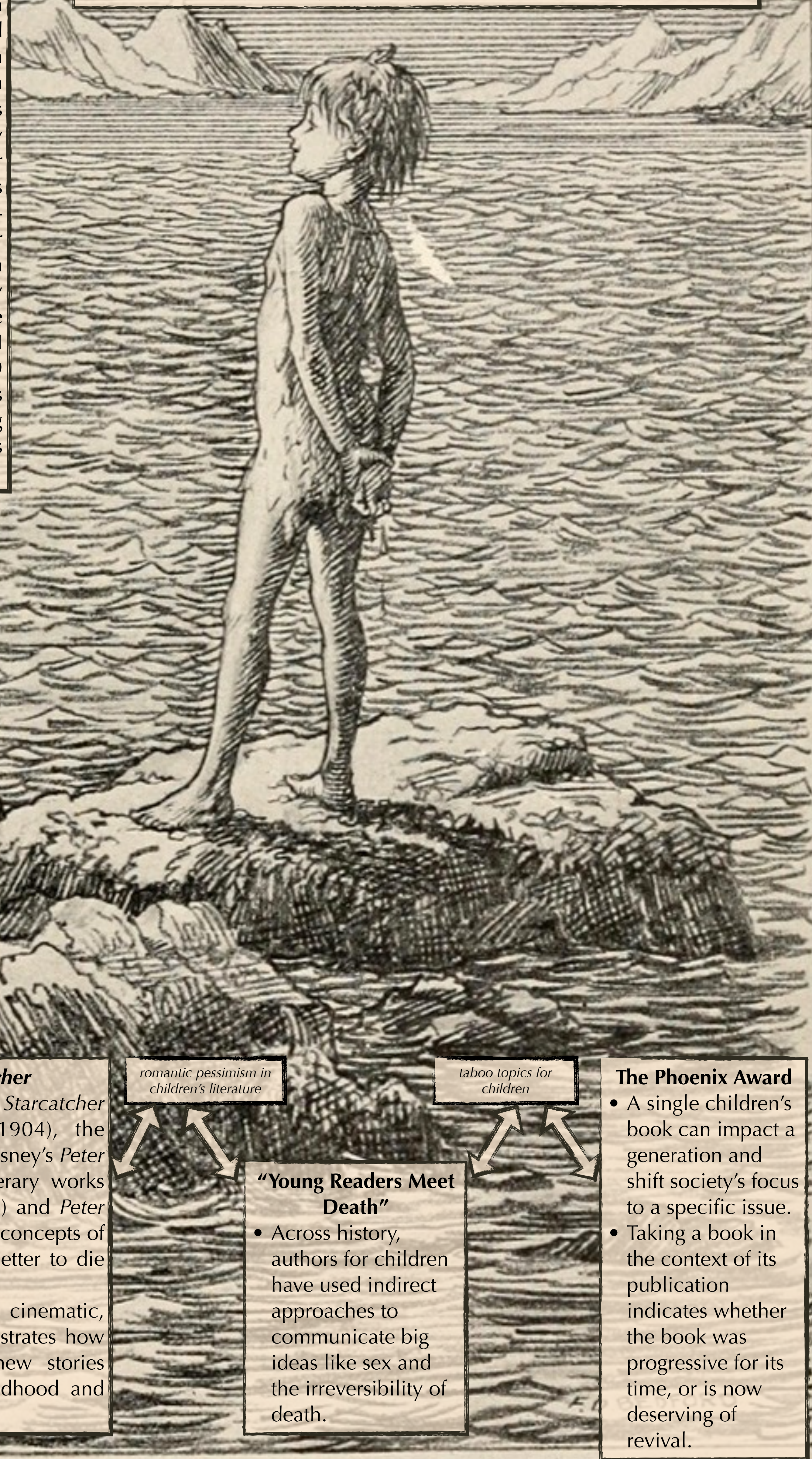
This project explores how literature, theater, and film convey ideologies of childhood. How does temporal context shape the conception and reception of art forms for the young? How does memory shape our understanding of the past? The Children's Literature Association's award of the Phoenix studies these questions in designating annual nominees. Granted to a book published twenty years earlier, this prize enables the text to rise from ashes of obscurity and to touch another generation of young readers. I collected, researched, and read an array of 1999 children's and YA novels. Publication dates reveal when a book was progressive for its time; or, an older text could be more relevant nowadays and be worthy of recognition for its contemporary importance. Furthermore, memory of one's own childhood reading informs speculation about a nominated book's potential. To consider how language and arts integration influence memory, I presented a filmed adaptation of my fourth grade's performance of *Paddle to the Sea*, Holling C. Holling's 1941 classic picture book and Caldecott winner. My presentation for Dr. Goodenough's class, "Growing Up Near the Great Lakes," demonstrated how active learning enhances memory in classroom settings. I also created a slide-presentation, "Young Readers Meet Death," to accompany her December lecture on how mortality has been portrayed in children's literature since 1671. My survey included Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *The Virgin Suicides*, set in 1970's Grosse Pointe, and Sofia Coppola's 2000 film of the same name. I followed a production of *Peter and the Starcatcher*, a 2009 Broadway prequel to James Barrie's 1904 play, *Peter Pan*. This analysis of books, plays, and movies reveals art's changing impact on people over time; its evolution in various forms dramatizes contexts of memory, both individual and collective.

Methods

- Literature survey (children's books, reviews, plays; articles on childhood, play, and pedagogy)
- Film screening and analysis
- Attendance at rehearsals and opening night of *Peter and the Starcatcher*
- Analysis and evaluation of Phoenix Award contenders
- Analysis and presentation of my elementary school arts integration
- Slide presentation for lecture, "Young Readers Meet Death"

Works Cited

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Engel, Susan. *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory*. New York: W.H. Freeman, 1999. Print.
Holling, Holling C. *Paddle-To-The-Sea*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941. Print.
Hook. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams, and Julia Roberts. TriStar Pictures, 1991.
Peter Pan. Prod. Walt Disney. Perf. Bobby Driscoll and Kathryn Beaumont. RKO Radio Pictures, 1953.



perceptions of the past

Paddle to the Sea

- Pedagogies such as theatrical reenactment solidify memories of learning.

Peter and the Starcatcher

- The plays *Peter and the Starcatcher* (2009) and *Peter Pan* (1904), the movies *Hook* (1991) and Disney's *Peter Pan* (1953), as well as literary works *The Little White Bird* (1902) and *Peter and Wendy* (1911), explore concepts of youth through Peter: is it better to die young?
- Barrie's legacy of theatrical, cinematic, and literary revivals demonstrates how memories of Pan beget new stories about the meaning of childhood and adulthood.

romantic pessimism in children's literature

"Young Readers Meet Death"

- Across history, authors for children have used indirect approaches to communicate big ideas like sex and the irreversibility of death.

taboo topics for children

The Phoenix Award

- A single children's book can impact a generation and shift society's focus to a specific issue.
- Taking a book in the context of its publication indicates whether the book was progressive for its time, or is now deserving of revival.

"TO DIE WILL BE AN AWFULLY BIG ADVENTURE?"

