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Style in Children's Literature: A Comparison of Passages from Books for Adults and for Children

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STYLE IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE:
A COMPARISON OF PASSAGES
FROM BOOKS FOR ADULTS
AND FOR CHILDREN

BY

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Abstract

Style in Children's Literature

In this study I tested the standard assumptions about differences in language usage in adult and children's literature by analyzing parallel passages from the works of four authors, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George MacDonald, Oscar Wilde, and John Gardner, who each wrote prose fantasy for both audiences.

A computer program and syntactic code based on those used by York University in Toronto provided a statistical analysis of the 20,000 words of selected text. I found that the passages from the children's books had much shorter paragraphs, and slightly shorter sentences, T-units, clauses, and words. T-units were the most consistently and notably reduced elements. The children's books also had more lexical repetition and fewer abstract and Latinate words and tended towards a verbal style. These characteristics support some of the common assumptions about children's literature, but the differences were slighter than anticipated. In the area of syntax, the assumption that coordination would increase and subordination decrease markedly in the children's stories did not prove true. Coordination was only marginally more frequent in the children's passages, and subordination nearly equal in both sets. The reduction of prepositions in the juvenile samples seems of more significance syntactically. In the children's passages there are large increases in the amount of dialogue and in the use of Germanic based words.

My general conclusion is that the differences in the children's passages reflect a stronger tendency towards everyday speech, that children's authors borrow more conventions from conversation and from oral traditions when writing for a child audience.

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Very special thanks go to my son Ian Anderson who patiently worked out the long and involved computer program which is central to this study and to Sharon Hussey, Programmer Consultant at the University's Academic Computer Center, who spent many hours creating the links that would allow the program to run. I also wish to thank Fred Robinson at Yale University who encouraged and criticised my pilot study on style in children's literature, conducted during his NEH seminar. Finally, thanks are due to the University of Rhode Island Foundation, which supported my research with a fellowship during the 1981-1982 academic year.

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Chapter 1

Assumptions About Writing for Children

> When a writer addresses other adults he is at eye level with his readers, and can usually use contemporary language. But in writing for children, he has to wander through his childhood. He must be willing to recreate who he was . . .and then find a syntax that will invite his readers in.
>
> (Barbara Bottner, "William Steig: The Two Legacies," Lion and Unicorn (Spring 1978):4)

In the field of children's literature scholars, critics, reading specialists, librarians, teachers, editors, and the authors themselves all bring different perspectives to the examination of style and language in books for the young, and all have voiced various theories on the subject. Basically, however, the debate over the criteria for judging the effectiveness of any given style for juveniles has adherents in two camps: those who promote a deliberate simplicity--consciously limited vocabulary and syntax--and those who deny the necessity for such self-conscious limitation. According to the first group (and it seems to be in the majority), writers who are

successful with a young audience use words that are short and familiar to children and employ simple syntax in brief sentences. The second group holds that language should flow naturally from the subject and that, while audience must always be considered by writers, style in children's books need not differ significantly from that in adult literature. Readability formulas and vocabulary lists are anathemas to this second group, usually acceptable to the first. The division of attitude is of course not clear-cut even among scholars and editors, and the actual practioners, the children's authors, apply or ignore such prescriptions, creating a continuum of styles, from some with simple sentences and "words of one syllable" (dubbed "limited vocabulary" in the twentieth century) to some that revel in word play, challenging diction, and long syntactic strings.

This present study is an investigation in some detail of what does happen in practice. I have analyzed and compared passages from a group of authors who have written prose fantasy for both adults and children to learn what, if any, are the important differences between the styles of adult and children's literature. The study is an attempt to discover if there is indeed a literary dialect of childhood, if a tendency toward certain linguistic choices

prevails in juvenile books. The questions that concern me are whether books for children are written in a pared down version of mature literary style, in a radically different style, or in a similar style.

There is some consensus among the critics and scholars but also a variety of attitudes on what is appropriate literary language for the young. In her widely used book, A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature , Rebecca Lukens gives a balanced assessment of the problem. While she states in her preface that "writing for children should be judged by the same standards as writing for adults," she holds that "writing for children presents some special concerns and problems;" these are that because children's experiences and understanding are more limited, the "complexity of ideas" must not be too great and the "expression of ideas must be simpler--both in language and in form" (Lukens 6). Lukens is not, however, arguing for blandness of language as she makes clear in her chapter on style. Here she considers the use of figurative language, word play, parody, and precise vocabulary, and concludes that the successful children's author does "know what he or she is doing with words" (Lukens 124). In sum, Lukens holds that a certain amount of simplification is necessary when writing for children but argues that this is not so

much a matter of limitation as of precision and a careful selection of stylistic options.

Nicholas Tucker in The Child and the Book is more emphatic about the need for simplicity, saying that a children's author must be "selective when it comes to communicating with his or her audience. The endless paragraphs of a Proust, the convoluted sentences of a Henry James, or the sophisticated, literary English of a Meredith will not get through to children" (12). He holds that "children usually seem to prefer a style that does not present too many difficulties, using a high percentage of direct speech and a less complex vocabulary" (Tucker 13). He reiterates these criteria later when explaining the overwhelming popularity that British author Enid Blyton's Noddy books have for children from age seven to eleven. He attributes her success to the fact that Blyton "leads the young reader without faltering from one stock situation to another, described in an equally stock vocabulary" (Tucker 106). Many popular children's authors, for example, the American writer Horatio Alger or the Stratemeyer Syndicate authors who produce the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys series, have used this method. Tucker does not argue that Enid Blyton's level of language is best for children's books, but he does advocate a recognition of the child's need for

linguistic security when reading. He also holds that an author must consider the child's cognitive stages (similar to those elucidated by Piaget). Piaget said on language comprehension and the school-age child that "When it is a question of adult speech, transmitting or seeking to transmit knowledge already structured by the [adult] language," that "this predigested intellectual nourishment" may not be "assimilated" (39-40)

Many theorists in the field of children's literature follow Piaget's principles. For example, Cullinan, Karrer, and Pillar in their comprehensive survey Literature and the Child rate the books they discuss into the fairly typical, Piaget-influenced categories of nursery (birth to 4), primary (5 to 9), intermediate (10 to 12) and advanced (13 to 15). They, like many, view the simplicity-complexity spectrum as one to be chronologically transversed. However, they stress (and again this is typical) that each child progresses at a different pace through these levels and the ratings are flexible, not absolute. They also hold that books should inspire the child's growth of language awareness. "Stories told or read to children," they say, "give them opportunities to hear words in use and, in the process, to support, expand, and stimulate their own experiments with language. . . .As children learn, books

can help at every stage to fulfill their need to make sense of language and of the world" (Cullinan 13 and 16). They view positively the fact that "Through books we learn to comprehend many more words than we actually use" (Cullinan 16). To put it briefly, they, like Lukens, do not view the necessity for varying degrees of simplication as an inevitable limitation so much as a natural progression. They would agree with Tolkien's often quoted statement that children's "books like their clothes should allow for growth."

Cullinan, Karrer and Pillar also touch on another issue which is relevant to style in children's books, namely, reader-response theory. For the purpose of this current study, I define literary style as the use of language to create patterns and deviations from pattern that control or enhance meaning. And precisely how this control of language allows the child as a relatively inexperienced reader to interact with the text is an important consideration. As Cullinan and her collaborators phrase it, "When we consider books for children, the child as meaning maker is ever present as the other half of the equation" (8). A similar concern led Peggy Whalen-Levitt to edit a special section on "Literature and Child Readers" in the Children's Literature Association Quarterly (Winter

1980). Whalen-Levitt expressed concern that there had not yet been much research in children's literature that used the recently developed reader-response theories, and yet, "To embrace a theoretical framework that enables us to consider author, text, and reader is to resolve a longstanding impasse in our field" (10). She goes on to say, "Implicit, but rarely explicit, in discussions of 'what makes a good children's book good' is some notion of a range of literary experience considered appropriate as an initiation into the world of literature" (Whalen-Levitt 10). Raising the issues of genre and aesthetics, that books for children are indeed an art form and part of a larger tradition of literature, widens the perspective on what the range of language should be and what typologies of style may be expected even for a juvenile audience. This perspective must be kept in mind. Although not measured statistically, it remains an undercurrent of thought throughout this study.

One other aspect of style in children's books that is outside the parameters of this study is that of sound patterns, the rhythm and the phonetic complexity of a literary piece. I do not include an analysis of sound patterns, but they are important in juvenile literature. Children's books are often read aloud, and knowledge of

this practice undoubtedly influences authors who write for the young. Also children are very sound sensitive. According to some theorists, childhood is the "age of resonance," the time when exact imitation of the sound of words in a given language is most natural. And children delight in tongue-twisters, nonsense words, and the heavy patterning of nursery rhymes. Tucker notes that "the way children respond imaginatively to the sound of words, as opposed to their content, is probably the single most unpredictable topic to try to understand in the whole field of children's literature" (13). It is a topic that has already produced interesting scholarship (for example, Jacqueline Gueron's study, "Children's Verse and the Halle-Keyser Theory of Prosody") and deserves more work, but is not of direct concern in this research.

Stylistic range in children's books is of interest to editors and publishers as well as to critics and scholars. "The styles of our children's books are as varied and eclectic as the books themselves," said juvenile book editors Judee Cohen and Lori Macle of Knopf/Pantheon in response to an August 1982 questionnaire I sent to them and 65 other editors in children's book departments. Of those surveyed, in both major and minor publishing houses, 38 (or 58%) responded, and their answers revealed a broad spectrum

of attitudes toward editing the language of books written for the young. The range reflects, among other things, the type of publishing houses that responded. As Joseph Turow demonstrates in his article, "The Role of 'The Audience' in Publishing Children's Books," the library oriented and mass market oriented publishers tend to split on the use of word lists and formulaic language.

FIGURE 1.1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON STYLE AND LANGUAGE IN JUVENILE BOOKS WITH COLLATED ANSWERS

---

1. Please indicate whether the person answering this questionnaire works primarily with

   children's books 6 / 15.5% adolescent books 0

   both combined 31 / 82% no answer 1 / 2.5% .

2. Do you have special stylesheets for the authors or for the copy editors of

   picture books 1 children's books 4

   adolescent books 3 special series 1

   one for all 1 none 33 / 87%?

   If so, please enclose copies. (7 sent)

3. Do you work with any reading specialists concerning language in juvenile books?

   routinely 6 / 15.5% occasionally 15 / 39%

   never 16 / 42% no answer 1 / 2.5%

4. Do you ask authors to simplify language in manuscripts being considered for publication as juvenile books?

   routinely 5 / 13.5% occasionally 24 / 63%

   never 4 / 10.5% rarely (added) 2 / 5%

   no answer 3 / 8%

If so, would you give some examples of the type of changes requested? (21 given)

5. Do you apply any linguistic criteria in assigning a book an age range for marketing purposes?

Yes 15 / 39% No 20 / 53% No answer 3 / 8%

If so, would you list some examples and/or cite any standard sources used. (Readability formulas used by 7 in various combinations: Spache, 6; Dale-Chall, 5; Fry, 1.)

6. Any additional comments would be welcome. (11 given)

As the collated answers in Figure 1.1 show, about 20% of those editors surveyed routinely use a somewhat technical approach (reading specialists and readability formulas). About 40% occasionally turn to these aids, and the remaining 40% avoid such means and rely solely on the judgment of their editors. However, even among those who use a formulaic approach, most made clear in comments that they do not do so mindlessly or rigidly. Note also in the questionnaire that while the majority (78.5%) of these editors do make requests for language simplification, only 13.5% do so routinely. Of the rest, 63% occasionally ask for this type of change (two respondents or 5% added in the category "rarely"), and 10% of the editors never ask for a simplification of language. The comments indicated that the most frequent requests are usually for an easier word or shorter sentences. One style sheet admonished:

"Sentence structure should be simple and direct. Avoid dependent clauses if at all possible."

The editors also enumerated reasons for requiring simplications, usually special cases such as easy readers, high-interest-low-vocabulary books, books for specific grades, books to be read by very young children. Many felt that non-fiction science books needed exceptionally lucid and simple language. The commenting editors generally acknowledged that fiction writers have a freer hand in matters of style.

The results of the survey (which I have commented on more fully in an article in the Children's Literature Association Quarterly, scheduled for Fall 1985) suggest that the question of what constitutes effective language in juvenile books is not resolved in any one way at this editorial level. There is some consensus, but the editors, like the critics and scholars, divide on this issue. Because of their power to determine what gets into print for children, this editorial diversity seems fortunate. Authors would scarcely want to face a publishing world of monolithic rules about appropriate style for young readers.

When children's authors themselves comment on this matter of style and the use of language, many tend to be

rather general and impressionistic in their descriptions of what happens when they write for young people. They have much more to say about choice of subject than choice of words. And the stylistic decisions may indeed not always be consciously made. In his famous essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," C. S. Lewis is mainly concerned with the motivation which is behind a decision to write a child's story. He rejects the give-them-what-they-want syndrome, admits the validity of the personal approach (the author addressing a specific audience of one or a few children), and promotes his own method of letting the subject choose the proper genre: "Where the children's story is simply the right form for what the author has to say" (Lewis 459). He is definitely in the camp that thinks there is little difference between children's and adults' books. He rejects "the neat sorting-out of books into age-groups, so dear to publishers" (Lewis 462) and holds that authors for children "must meet children as equals in that area of our nature where we are their equals. Our superiority consists partly in commanding other areas, and partly (which is more relevant) in the fact that we are better at telling stories than they are" (Lewis 467). Unfortunately he does not go on to discuss in detail the rhetorical and linguistic strategies that give mature

authors this storytelling advantage when they meet the child in the world of fiction.

Some other children's authors have commented at least briefly on stylistic problems. Jane Gardam, in her 1978 Horn Book, article "On Writing for Children," brings together some of these authorial comments. Alan Gaines, for example, says that he writes for children because "It imposes a literary discipline. . . .a compulsion to find language that will bring all the complexity of reality children share with adults within the verbal and conceptual compass of the young" (Gardam 493). Other authors share Gaines' attitude and regard the limitations in the same spirit that a poet would those imposed by the sonnet or roundelay--as a challenge. For example, Ezra Jack Keats (one of 104 authors interviewed by Scholastic Magazine editor Lee Bennett Hopkins) says that he is "constantly dropping a word here and there from my manuscript until I get a minimum amount of words to say exactly what I want to say. Each time I drop a word or two, it becomes a sense of victory to me!" (Hopkins 118). And Margot Bernay-Isbert, writing in Horn Book, asks emphatically for brevity and simplicity: children's authors, "must learn again to make words potent and few, as they were in the youth of humanity" (Bernay-Isbert 203). Jane Gardam, speaking of

her own writing, reports that when she wrote her first book about childhood, she "tried to describe childhood in very bare words and clear colors, and whether I thought I was writing poetry or painting, I don't know" (Gardam 492). The poet John Ciardi (whose love for words is certainly well established) selected I Met a Man (Houghton 1961) as his "favorite, because I wrote it on a first-grade vocabulary level" to teach his daughter to read (Hopkins 35). From these examples it seems clear that some authors with very high literary standards are not upset by the confinements that may be imposed by a child audience. Furthermore, some very succesful limited-vocabulary books have been produced. Dr. Seuss's Beginner Books (Norton) come to mind, and few critics have found fault with Else Holmelund Minarik's Little Bear series which are among Harper's "I Can Read Books."

Certainly, however, the stylistic simplicity achieved by self-imposed limitations does not necessarily make writing for children simple. There is the occasional quick inspiration that can occur in most genres. Ruth Krauss wrote The Carrot Seed (Harper, 1945) in forty-five minutes, Tomi Ungerer wrote Zeralda's Ogre (Harper, 1967) in half an hour, and Munroe Leaf beat them both by writing his classic The Story of Ferdinand in twenty-five minutes (Hopkins

122, 269, 129). But this is not the usual pace for children's authors. Theodore Seuss Geisel has described his throes of composition: "I remember thinking that I might be able to dash The Cat in the Hat off in two or three weeks. Was I mistaken! It ended up taking well over a year! to produce a 60-page book. I may easily write 1,000 pages before I'm satisfied" (Hopkins 257). Two other juvenile authors who have recounted their extreme care in revising are collaborators John and Patricia Beatty. In a lively and interesting article about their search for linguistic historicity in their book Campion Towers (set in 1651), they describe how they expunged words the OED did not date back to that time, read works from the period to catch the flavor and rhythm, and rewrote in order to clarify military terms that have changed meaning. Their article conveyed both their love of language and their respect for the young audience who should not be subjected to fake archaic language, the "fake "grammar" that Ursula Le Guin inveighs against in her essays The Language of the Night. By "fake grammar" Le Guin means using "thee and thou" or archaic verb forms (often incorrectly) and substituting words like "mayhap" for "maybe" (Le Guin 79-80). Eleanor Cameron, writing on "Of Style and the Stylist" in Horn Book, describes her own meticulous

revisions in which sentences "are taken apart and reworked time and again with always the hovering ideal of sound, of balance and structure floating tantalizingly just beyond reach of the cool and critical inner ear" (Cameron 31).

These samples make clear that children's authors have the same concern for stylistic effectiveness common to all careful writing. And if the various comments add up to any techniques shared by juvenile authors, the techniques seem to be those of a painstaking selection of words and a tendency to keep these "potent and few" chosen words uncluttered. The ideals promoted for children's books, clarity, honesty and simplicity, are usually reached through conscientious revision, a difficult process for any writer.

In fact the notion that writing for children is somehow easier than writing for adults riles many authors. Cameron says, "There are two kinds of people convinced that it is easy to write for children: mothers of five-to-seven-year-old children and established authors of so-called adult fiction who need money fast and think it's a pushover. Both are mistaken" (490). Ursula Le Guin calls this "adult chauvinist piggery" and answers the typical comment, "'It must be relaxing to write <u>simple</u> things for a change'", with

> Sure, it's simple, writing for kids. Just as simple as bringing them up.
>
> All you do is take all the sex out, and use little short words, and little dumb ideas, and don't be too scary, and be sure there's a happy ending. Right? Nothing to it. Write down.

This method, she says, may produce an adult best seller,

> But you won't have every kid in America reading your book. They will look at it, and they will see straight through it with their cold, beady little eyes, and they will put it down and they will go away. . . .[because] they are not like adults; they have not yet learned to eat plastic.
>
> (Le Guin 44-45)

Underneath this flippant sarcasm, Le Guin is making a serious point. Something besides writing down is happening in children's books. Children can be a more demanding audience than adults. E. B. White says emphatically, "Anybody who writes down to children is simply wasting his time. You have to write up, not down" (304). What he and many of the authors quoted are saying is that respect for the intelligence in the child is necessary and that this respect dictates that they bring a very strict discipline to their use of language.

The authors whose works of children and adults comprise the material for this present study are Nathaniel Hawthorne, George MacDonald, Oscar Wilde, and John Gardner. Hawthorne, besides his many adult works, produced A Wonder

Book and Tanglewood Tales, which contain retold Greek myths and legends. George MacDonald was famous in the nineteenth century for his Scottish novels but is today known mainly for his children's books like The Princess and the Goblin and At the Back of the North Wind. Oscar Wilde, in addition to his plays and adult fiction, told fairytales to his sons which were published in two volumes, The Happy Prince and A House of Pomegranates. John Gardner, a versatile modern author, wrote five books for children, including Dragon, Dragon, The King of the Hummingbirds, and A Child's Bestiary. These four authors all wrote fantasy for children, but there are some differences in their approaches and in their attitudes to their juvenile audience.

Hawthorne, for instance, is profoundly ambigious in his attitude about writing for children. In "The Gorgon's Head," the lead story in Wonder Book, the narrator addresses his child audience as "my wise little auditors" (VII: 21), and, in his 1851 preface for this first book of retold myths, Hawthorne states that

> The Author has not always thought it necessary to write downward, in order to meet the comprehension of children. He has generally suffered the theme to soar, whenever such was its tendency, and when he himself was buoyant enough to follow without an effort. Children possess an unestimated sensibility to

> whatever is deep or high in imagination or feeling, so long as it is simple, likewise. It is only the aritificial and the complex that bewilders them.
>
> (VII: 4)

Initially this statement denies any condescension to children, but the passage pulls in two directions. Hawthorne begins by saying he did not consistently write "downward" to the young audience, but the last two sentences suggest that he avoided complexity and wrote the Wonder Tales simply. In the stories themselves or the "Introductories," Hawthorne injects judgments that are not altogether positive as estimates of children's sensibility on "deep or high" matters. After Eustace Bright, the fictional narrator, defends his Gothic approach to the myths, Hawthorne comments, "During the above discussion the children (who understood not a word of it) had grown sleepy" (VII: 113). Perhaps this is simply a put-down of literary arguments, but later, in "The Golden Fleece," a similar comment occurs: "Little children, not quite understanding what is said to them, often get such absurd notions into their heads, you know!" (VII: 331). On the one hand, Hawthorne respects the intellectual vigor of the young; he describes the children's enthusiastic reception of Eustace Bright's "spontaneous play of the intellect"

(VII: 39). On the other hand, he does not expect the young to understand abstract concepts. The sentence following this last quotation is, "This remark, however, is not meant for the children to hear" (VII: 39).

With how much conscious care Hawthorne modified the language of his children's stories from his usual style is impossible to determine. There is some evidence that he took the two volumes of mythic tales more casually than his other works. Fredson Bowers, the textual editor of the Centenary Edition, notes that with the "children's books, Hawthorne's proof revision was not at all extensive" (VII: 389), and that for the Wonder Book and Tanglewood Tales "Hawthorne seems to have been bent less on literary improvements in his proofreading than on removing positive errors" (VII: 380). Neither do the manuscript alterations for these books (which are recorded in an appendix to the Centenary Edition, 417-57) contain any major revisions.

Certainly Hawthorne bowdlerized the tales. In the introduction to the second volume, he questions how "These old legends. . .some of them so hideous--others so melancholy and miserable. . .[could be] the stuff that children's playthings could be made of!" (VII: 178-190). The narrator responds by claiming that these troublesome elements "fall away, and are thought of no more, the

instant he puts his imagination in sympathy with the innocent little circle, whose wide-open eyes are fixed so eagerly upon him (VII: 179), and he adds that the myths were born in "a pure childhood of the world" and "Children are now the only representatives of the men and women of that happy era; and therefore it is that we must raise the intellect and fancy to the level of childhood, in order to re-create the original myths" (VII: 179). To make the tales suitable for children, Hawthorne downplayed violence and sexual relations. For instance, King Pluto does not intend to rape Proserpina, but to secure a granddaughter to brighten his caverns; Medea's love for Jason is not mentioned nor her hacking to death of her brother. This last matter, the censoring of the tales, concerns content more than style, but the attitude it implies suggests that Hawthorne may have simplified in more ways than he realized.

George MacDonald, like Hawthorne, is a moralist. W. H. Auden claims that MacDonald had the "ability, in all his stories, to create an atmosphere of goodness about which there is nothing phony or moralistic" (Golden Key, "Afterword" 86). But others find a certain preachiness. C. S. Lewis, for instance, finds "bad pulpit traditions" in MacDonald and sometimes too much "florid statement" and

"oversweetness" (Preface to Phantastes ix) but defends his style by saying, "There are indeed passages where the wisdom and (I would dare to call it) the holiness that are in him triumph over and even burn away the baser elements in his style: the expression becomes precise, weighty, economic; acquires a cutting edge" (Preface viii). Richard Reis would agree. In his book on MacDonald, he refers to the occasional "pulpit style," saying that "the effect of MacDonald's 'elevated' style is of pomposity and unnaturalness" but that "often his language is easy and fluent, and sometimes it is powerful" (55). Reis then remarks, "It is worth observing that artificiality of language is not out of place in nonrealistic fiction, where the exotic is native" (55). I find MacDonald's language more pompous in the realistic novels and more fluent and natural in the fantasies, especially those for children. Reis claims that MacDonald's stories "directed toward children. . . .differ in tone and subtlety but not essentially in manner and style" (75). How he distinguishes "tone and subtlety" from "manner and style" is not made clear.

MacDonald would not have minded the description "pulpit style." He considered his writing a substitute for the ministry he lost. On the religious impulse that

underlay his stories for children, his son Greville said, "My father's knowledge as to what food children best thrive upon came from his own childlike faith in their celestial inheritance: being of the spirit, their food must match their hunger" (Greville MacDonald 362). Stephen Prickett in his book Victorian Fantasy brings together both the philosophical and theological elements that inform MacDonald's attitude towards language. Placing him in the transcendental tradition that considers the universe transparent to the light of imagination, Prickett states that for MacDonald, literature allows that light to shine and "The mere use of language in writing a story is thus simultaneously a theological activity" (176).

But if MacDonald's style were merely homiletic and his stories bare sermons, he would not continue to be read in this century. His attitude toward writing and the use of language has more to it than simple moralizing. In his essay "The Imagination: Its Functions and Its Culture," MacDonald expounds on the way metaphoric use freshens a word (Imagination 7-8). Roderick McGillis, in his article "Language and Secret Knowledge in At the Back of the North Wind," contends that MacDonald is using language to convey the ever-changing possibilities of existence and not merely "language that deals with a stable reality," and that the

meaning of that book "is simply the importance of poetry as a way of knowing" (125). Along these lines, MacDonald himself makes a specific connection between poetry as a way of knowing and the "patois" of childhood:

> The man who loves the antique speech, or even the mere patois, of his childhood, and knows how to use it, possesses therein a certain kind of power over the hearts of men, which the most refined and perfect of languages cannot give, inasmuch as it has travelled farther from the original sources of laughter and tears. . . . To a poet especially is it an inestimable advantage to be able to employ such a language for his purposes. Not only was it the speech of his childhood, when he saw everything with fresh, true eyes, but it is itself a child-speech; and the child way of saying must always be nearer the child way of seeing, which is the poetic way.
>
> (Sir Gibbie 138)

Although MacDonald did not systematically bring together his ideas on writing for children, comments on the subject are scattered throughout his works. For instance, he told his stories for the young to his own children, and a record of such storytelling is given in "Papa's Story," where we see a family gathered for a tale that the smallest child present has requested. This child does not want Scottish dialect (which MacDonald did not use in his children's stories). In the course of the story she questions the word "garments" and is given "frocks" as a synonym, has "mountains" defined as "higher hills yet," and

is given an explanation of wind and storm used metaphorically for human passions (MacDonald, Gifts 311). We see here MacDonald's awareness of the limited vocabulary of his young readers. This awareness and his appreciation of the child way of seeing and saying suggest that he took his prose style for children very seriously. To most modern ears it is superior to his adult style, which is perhaps one reason why his children's stories have remained more popular than his adult works.

Oscar Wilde is more cryptic on the subject of writing for children. We have his son Vyvyan Holland's account of Wilde telling stories to him and his brother Cyril: "Cyril once asked him why he had tears in his eyes when he told us the story of The Selfish Giant, and he replied that really beautiful things always made him cry" (Son of Oscar Wilde 42). As Holland recalls it, Wilde modified the tales when he related them to his sons: "He told us all his own written fairy stories suitably adapted for our young minds, and a great many others as well" (Son 42). One wishes he had been more specific. What changes were made? Surely neither "The Selfish Giant" or "The Happy Prince" needed much adaptation, and was Wilde simplifying or merely varying the tales as storytellers are sometimes do. Holland goes on to say, "And he invented poems in prose for

us, which, though we may not always have understood their inner meaning, always held us spellbound" (Son 42). In another book, Oscar Wilde and his World, Holland gives his adult view of the fairytales. It is an interesting assessment; he says,

> They are almost more in the nature of poems in prose than stories. . . .After 1886 Oscar wrote very little poetry. . . .This was probably because he thought that he could give rein to his urge for writing poetry more successfuly and more readily through the medium of prose. So that in The Happy Prince and. . .A House of Pomegranates, he adopted a style which was half way between romantic prose and blank verse; this is particularly apparent when the stories are read aloud as it is impossible to read them intelligently without a certain lilt and cadence.
>
> (Wilde and his World 63-64)

In his plays and in much of The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde writes in a terse and epigrammatic style, but in the novel he occasionally produces baroque passages, catalogs of exotic items or sensory details. As Richard Aldington notes, in his introduction to the selected works, "Wilde had two distinct styles of writing. . . .One of these was the aesthetic or symbolist, gorgeous and poetic, full of allusion and reminiscence and jewelled words. . .and the other light, worldly, cynical, paradoxical, full of laughter" (Wilde, Selected Works 21). The pull between cynicism and a senuous emotionalism is present in all of

Wilde's work. In the fairytales the emotional side is ascendant, and the baroque predominates over the epigrammatic. The sentences loosen rather than contract, as the statistics of this study will show. Perhaps Wilde considered the cynical humor that pervades most of his adults works beyond the range of a child audience. There is humor in most of the fairytales, but it is quiet and downplayed. As an unsigned notice of The Happy Prince in Athenaeum (September 1, 1888) put it, "There is a piquant touch of contemporary satire which differentiates Mr. Wilde from the teller of pure fairy tales; but it is so delicately introduced that the illusion is not destroyed and a child would delight in the tales without being worried by this application" (Beckson 60).

Wilde, however, has not given us any clear statement of his purpose in writing for children or indicated any modifications he made in his prose style for this audience. Among the four authors covered in this study, Wilde shows the smallest change between adult and children's passages. If he did not articulate a theory on writing for children, perhaps it is because he did not feel it was a distinct literary problem.

John Gardner, on the other hand, has given interviews and written copiously on his theories on style, for any

audience, but also specifically on those concerning a juvenile audience. A pervasive theory in his book The Art of Fiction is that genre is a major influence on the style of a given literary piece. "Most fictional styles are traditional," he says (163). He gives a more detailed description of his notion of style in On Moral Fiction:

> The idea that the writer's only material is words is true only in a trivial sense. Words conjure emotionally charged images in the reader's mind, and when the words are put together in the proper way, with the proper rhythms--long and short sounds, smooth or ragged, tranquil or rambunctious--we have the queer experience of falling through the print on the page into something like a dream.
>
> (Moral Fiction 112)

The idea of style as mesmeric, as incantatory, is strong for Gardner, as it is with so many authors drawn to write in one of the juvenile genres.

Gardner spoke specifically of his writing for children in an interview with Roni Natov and Geraldine DeLuca for The Lion and the Unicorn. He identified his audience rather specificaly, saying that, except for the story "Dragon, Dragon" (in which a very youngest brother wins by causing the dragon to laugh at his pretensions), his stories are "really meant for kids who have been through fairy tales and are ready for slight variety" (Natov 119). In the same interview, Gardner commented that the "main

thing" he had learned from children's responses to his books was "that if you read these stories to children too early, they get bored. If you read "Dragon, Dragon" to a five year old, the kid will go around remembering that verse Dragon, dragon how do you do? I've come from the [illegible] to murder you, but the story has too many dead spots for him" (Natov 130).

Gardner insisted, however, in a tape taken by Stephen Banker, that (as Banker paraphrases it) he "applies the same esthetic principles to children's fiction as he does to adults' fiction. He simply tries to make sure the fiction is available, or accessible to younger minds" (Howell 94). Gardner's concern that his writing is accessible is not restricted to his juvenile audience. Asked whether he would simplify his work to make it more salable, Gardner replied that he would not, but added, "I would never be consciously difficult" (Howell 100). And in [illegible] Art of Fiction he advises novice writers that "A huge vocabulary is not always an advantage. Simple language, for some kinds of fiction at least, can be more effective than complex language" (144). Evidently, one of these kinds of fiction is the fairytale for juveniles.

As were Hawthorne, MacDonald, and Wilde, John Gardner is a moralistic writer. He defines morality in art as "one

of civilization's chief defenses, the hammer that tries to keep the trolls in their places" (Moral Fiction 147). But he is not, he insists, a didactic writer. True art, he says, "is not didactic because, instead of teaching by authority and force, it explores open-mindedly" (Moral Fiction 19), but apparently with a metaphoric hammer in hand. With the possible exception of Wilde, there is a consensus among the four on the need for relative simplicity in literature for the young. But as with many authors, these four acknowledge rather than describe special techniques and choices in writing for children.

The critics, editors and authors have presented a general outline of some of the principles that may influence language choices in children's books, but more detail is needed if we are to understand precisely what these choices are. The comments have included words like "simple," "complex," "long," and "short," which are all relative terms. We still do not know what happens in juvenile texts to distinguish them stylistically from adult ones. The most specific research relative to this problem has to date been in reading theory, much of which has included or focused on child readers and asked questions similar to those important to the present study. Such research and related investigations into the way children

speak and write have given insights into that dialect of childhood that authors for the young try to capture.

Reading theory can vary from approaches like the passionate and personal one espoused in Sylvia Ashton Warner's Teacher (1963) in which she argues for the use of emotionally charged words to involve the beginning reader, to those that use mathematically formulated tests and vocabulary lists. George R. Klare thoroughly reviewed the formulaic approach to reading theory in his excellent book The Measurement of Readability. Reporting that the earliest attempts by tenth-century Talmudic scholars to judge the relative accessibility of texts involved frequency lists of usual and unusual meanings, Klare notes that most early attempts to study readability were also vocabulary centered. The McGuffey Readers focused on this, and by the end of the nineteenth century word frequency lists began to appear. In the United States, E. L. Thorndike's influential The Teacher's Word Book (1921) led to the first readability formulas. Since then, many experimenters, notably Edgar Dale, Jean Chall, William Flesch, and George Spache, have worked to create or refine formulas that could predict readability and have expanded the criteria for judging it well beyond simple vocabulary counts.

A collation of Klare's table of readability formulas (see Table 1.1) reveals that, of 31 formulas dating from 1923 to 1959, 16 used both sentence and vocabulary factors. The remainder used word-related factors only. Table 1.1 shows in more detail the various factors relevant to readability and their frequency in these 31 formulas.

TABLE 1.1

FREQUENCY OF FACTORS IN 31 READABILITY FORMULAS

Factors	Frequency
Word difficulty (determined by lists)	17
Average sentence length	14
Syllable count	9
Percent of different words	7
Ratio of concrete to abstract words	5
Number of prepositions	4
Number of personal references	3
Percent of simple sentences	3
Number of sensory words	2
Number of technical words	1
Number of affixes	1
Ratio of Anglo-Saxon to Graeco-Roman	1
Number of human interest words	1
Noun typology	1
Percent of finite verbs	1
Number of modifiers	1
Sound complexity of modifiers	1
Word length	1
Number of dependent clauses	1
Number of indeterminate clauses	1
Initial w, h, b (= easy), i, e (= hard)	1

In the 25 years since Klare's study the most popular and apparently reliable formulas (Spache's and refined versions of the Dale-Chall) have used freguency lists

combined with sentence-length counts. One exception, popular because of its ease of application, is Edward Fry's readability graph, which figures reading level from the average number of syllables per 100 words and the average number of sentences per 100 words. During these last two decades, much of the serious investigation of the relation between school-age children and language has turned to studies of the young's own progression in writing and speaking. The distinct differences in the use of language found among children of various ages will be covered in detail as those particular aspects of syntax and diction are discussed in this study. With the exception of six factors (syllable count, personal references, affixes, sound complexity of modifiers, indeterminate clauses and the original and rather strange count of the letters w, h, b versus the letters i, e), all the matters investigated in the readability studies are considered in the present one. However, my purpose is simply descriptive, and I make no attempt to develop a formula to judge effective style in children's books.

Even with the narrower issue of readability, the formulas have many unresolved problems. For one thing, as Klare notes, no clear correlation between readability and better comprehension has been established (15-16). He also

regrets that the "formulas do not touch on organization, word order, format or imagery in writing" (24) and concludes that "Formulas measure only one aspect of style--difficulty," and even this "imperfectly" and therefore are "not measures of good style" (25). For a specific example of why something as complex as literary style is best not reduced to formula, consider R. H. Bloomer's approach to readability. Using reading textbooks, first-grade to sixth-grade level, he found, as Klare states it, that "modifiers increased in number and difficulty" and "make reading more specific and thus more difficult" (Klare 72). Here we have a case of readability apparently running counter to the colorful, sensory writing which is generally thought to be characteristic of good style in children's books. In other words, a writer aiming for this type of simplicity may sacrifice substance for ease in reading and fall into the illusion-of-meaning syndrome. Enabling the reader to move down the page without hitch or challenge is not the usual goal of seriously composed literature, for whatever audience, and any formulaic approach to the simplification of language for children carries with it the danger of producing this sort of slippery emptiness.

Bruno Bettelheim, in his and Karen Zelan's book <u>On</u>

[redacted] to Read; The Child's Fascination with Meaning, argues against such severe limitation of language, and comments, "If we wish to induce children to become literate persons, our teaching methods should be in accordance with the richness of the child's spoken vocabulary, his intelligence, his natural curiosity, his eagerness to learn new things, his wish to develop his mind and his comprehension of the world and his avid desire for the stimulation of his imagination" (30). As some of the editors surveyed for this study commented, the readability formulas have the greatest impact on producing textbooks and readers; general literature is not as affected. Nevertheless, Bettelheim's criticism sums up the case against the formulaic approach to language for children. For balance, however, it should be noted that the research conducted to create the formulas has added new insights to our perception of language and occasionally touched on points not covered in more literary stylistic studies. Furthermore, those who have worked on the development of reading theory are virtually alone in looking closely at written language intended for children.

My own assumptions about literary style and language for children were first formulated during a 1976 NEH seminar at Yale, where I conducted a pilot study on the

linguistic changes that occur when an author switches from an adult to a child audience. My initial working hypotheses were that words and sentences were consistently shorter, consistently simpler, and that certain classes of words would prevail. For instance, I thought that coordination would prove to be children's authors' overwhelming choice for connecting thoughts. I also investigated whether prose for children was filled with diminutives, intensifiers and other "gushy" words. In this ealier study, I sought the linguistic norms and parameters of this audience-defined genre, children's literature. The results were interesting but ambiguous and led to the fuller investigation embodied here.

I have expanded my inquiry and developed hypotheses on the variety and complexity of syntactic patterns and on smaller syntactic units like clauses. I also consider matters like sentence inversion, expanded verb tenses, and non-finite verb forms. In the area of vocabulary, I investigate the proportion of Latinate words, negative words, abstract words, and words relevant to childhood. I consider the incidence and types of repetition and the relative amount of dialogue and of direct address to the reader. Figure 1.2 lists these hypotheses and affords an overview of the direction this study takes.

FIGURE 1.2

HYPOTHESES ON THE CHARACTERISTICS

OF LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Length
- --Paragraphs short
- --Sentences short
- --T-units short
- --Clauses short
- --Words short

Vocabulary
- --Much repetition of words
- --Few Latinate words
- --Few abstract words
- --Few negative words
- --Few allusive words
- --Words relative to childhood
- --Many descriptive words
- --Many intensifiers and diminutives
- --Many exclamations

Syntax
- --Much repetition of syntactic patterns
- --Little sentence inversion
- --Large amount of dialogue
- --Much coordination
- --Little subordination
- --Few non-finite verbs
- --Few expanded verb tenses
- --Few Passives

Besides these specific hypotheses to be tested statistically, I had some more nebulous theories about what I would find. Many of the authorial comments suggest an intense involvement with language when writing for children. Perhaps the lesser length of words and sentences was the result of careful distillation rather than a mere

simplification of language. I hoped to be able to verify that first-rate writers for juveniles hear and catch children's actual speech patterns (what I have dubbed the dialect of childhood) and do not simply prune their usual style.

The librarians, scholars, editors, and the children's authors themselves discuss this process but usually not specifically enough. Because theories about style in any genre must remain open-ended, the stylistic strategies that bring about the effective simplicity of language found in successful children's books cannot be absolutely explained or even completely described, but supplementing that description is the purpose of this present statistical analysis.

Chapter 2

Methodology

> Stylistic studies must be comparative in order to mean much.
>
> (Cluett, Prose Style and Critical Reading 259)

Given all the assumptions about brevity, syntactic simplicity, and limited vocabulary in literature aimed at a juvenile audience, the challenging problem is how to test the validity of these assumptions. Literary judgments on the ways in which writing for the young differs from writing for a mature audience have been based on impressions rather than on empirical evidence. Reading specialists have given the closest attention to the simple statistics of vocabulary and sentence type and length, but their intention has been prescriptive, concerned with creating effective textbooks rather than with analyzing children's books in general. What is needed for an adequate assessment of the language and stylistic tendencies in children's literature is to apply clearly defined criteria to representative works that are acknowledged as serious examples of the genre.

As in all stylistic studies, the question of what constitutes "normal" style arises. It is obviously impossible to process every word and passage written for adults and then compare the findings about this body of literature with those on the entire body of children's literature. Furthermore, there is no definition or adequate description of normal prose style for adults (either historically or in a given century) against which to test prose style for children. Because of this, we cannot deal solely with children's books but must devise some practical method for comparing samples from both adult and juvenile books.

Ideally the main differentiating factor between the samples compared should be the audience--adult or child--for which the piece was composed. The more similarities there are between the passages, the better for the purposes of this study. So rather than select randomly, I searched in the works of authors who have written for both children and adults for parallel passages from the two genres. Comparing an author against himself eliminated the problem of differing idiolects, and

comparing passages of similar content, theme, and genre further reduced extraneous differences.

In my search for appropriate authors, I discovered that while a great many authors famous for adult works had indeed written one or more items for children (and vice versa, children's authors turning to adult audiences), that in most cases they crossed genres when doing so. For instance, a humorous essayist such as A.A. Milne turned to poetry and fiction when writing for his son. The overwhelming pattern that I discovered is that an author who writes in a realistic genre for adults will turn to fantasy when addressing children. Thackeray with The Rose and the Ring and Faulkner with The Wishing Tree are two diverse examples of this tendency. Authors who crossed genres or who had written only one juvenile or, conversely, one adult work to balance against a body of literature for the opposite audience were eliminated from consideration. The criteria for selecting the authors whose styles are analyzed in this study are, therefore, that the author must have written more than one work for each audience, must have written them in similar genres, and, since I wished to discover the stylistic tendencies in good literature for children, that the author must have achieved some critical acclaim. I determined upon George MacDonald, Nathaniel

Hawthorne, Oscar Wilde, and John Gardner because authors who had written in the genre of fantasy for both young and old seemed a sensible choice. Sub-genres of fantasy like the fairytale and the talking-animal story are very popular mediums with adults who write for children. Fantasy, therefore, seems the most elemental choice for investigating style in children's literature.

I selected passages with a similar subject or theme in both the adult and juvenile work. John Gardner, for instance, presents scenes with a witch in both his adult and children's stories. In Lilith and Phantastes (MacDonald's adult fantasies) and in his fairy tales for children, George MacDonald frequently has his protagonist happen upon a cottage in the woods which contains a wise old lady. Thematic choices (friendship, aesthetics, wit) formed the basis of selection in Oscar Wilde, while for Nathaniel Hawthorne, passages depicting a descent into the underworld, metamorphosis into animals, and two typical dark ladies were chosen. For each author two random passages from another adult work and juvenile work were added as a check against the possibility that the material for the study might be severely atypical of the author. Figure 2.1 gives the actual passages used.

FIGURE 2.1

PASSAGES ANALYZED BY THE PROGRAM

Adult	Children's
Nathaniel Hawthorne	
Volume IX "The Celestial Railroad" 240-41, "The respectable . . . . .and nostrils." "The Maypole at Merrymount" 24-25, "But what was. . . .Comus of the crew." "Feathertop" 256-57, "And then the witch. . . . .thee speak." The Blithedale Romance 37-40, "While this passed . . . . .feminine system."	Volume VII "The Pomegranate Seeds" 302-04, "King Pluto had . . . . .dismal one', said Proserpina." "Circe's Palace" 275-78, "So they hastened . . . . .brim to brim." "The Golden Touch" 48-51, "Meanwhile Marygold. . . . .be eaten." "The Golden Fleece" 363-64, "Jason left . .depended upon."
George Macdonald	
Phantastes 48-49, "I walked on. . . .the whole story." 128-29, "The cottage . . . . .poor child!" 34-35, "Soon after mid-day. . . . .another mind." 118-19, "With the first . . . . .lead downwards." 73-74, "The whole of. . . .deeply refreshed." Lilith 116-17, "I soon began. . . .to protect them."	The Golden Key 14-19, "It led her. . . . making a girl cry." 28-30, "But to her surprise. . . .side of it." 54-59, "He led her. . . . into words again." 51-53, "I will go and see . . . . .riotous fish." The Princess and the Goblin 104-05, "Go and look. . . .of a pigeon's eggs."

Oscar Wilde

[redacted]ture of Dorian Gray
[redacted]-27, "Laughter is not
. . . .necessary to me."
134-38, "It was rumoured
. . . .from the soul."
55-57, "I can sympathize
. . . .darkening eyes."

[redacted]e Canterville Ghost
[redacted]-34, "He had not. .
. .in his ear."

The Happy Prince
"The Devoted Friend,"
35-37, "Ah! I know. .
. . true friendship."
"The Young King"
81-83, "Many curious. .
. .beautiful things."
"The Remarkable Rocket"
56-58, "IF you want. .
. .called it humbug."
"The Selfish Giant"
28-30, "Then the spring
. . . .he had done."

John Gardner

Freddy's Book
196-99, "I was an ex-
cellent. . . .blanch
at all."
209-11, "He spurred.
. . .knife of bone."
95-96, "So it was. .
. .melt like snow."
The King's Indian
"King Gregor and the Fool"
158-63, "The afternoon's
. . . .coming, gleaming."

King of the Hummingbirds
"The Witch's Wish"
37-41, "The witch told
. . . .people happy."
"The Gnome and the Dragon"
69-75, "As if wearily
. . . .them completely."
"King of the Hummingbirds"
6-10, "Olaf worked all
. . . .afraid of bears."
Dragon, Dragon
48-50, "But the mule
. . . .for evidence."

The size of the individual passages varied from 450 to 1,000 words, with approximately 5,000 words per author (Hawthorne, 6,200; MacDonald, 5,300; Wilde, 5,100; and Gardner, 5,100). The total sample contains 10,763 words in the adult literature passages and 10,976 words in the children's literature passages. In the York Inventory in Toronto, as Robert Cluett explains in his book Prose Style

Critical Reading, samples of 3,400 to 3,500 words per author in cuts of 350 to 700 words were used, but in the present study the need for parallel passages caused an increase and minor variations in sample size. The passages from Hawthorne, MacDonald, Wilde and Gardner, once encoded, were run through the computer program, both individually to allow for comparison of similar passages against each other and then in a block (total adult passages per author and total juvenile passages per author).

As the encoding system is similar to the one used for the material in the York Inventory, many of the results of my study can be matched against the findings at York. The York syntactic code is a revision of the Fries-Milic code (see Cluett 17) and uses two- and three-digit numbers to identify word classes and typological and syntactic divisions within these classes. For instance, verbs are assigned code numbers that designate them as finite or non-finite. Auxiliaries are distinguished from main verbs. The York code also notes syntactic functions like whether a noun is a subject or an adjective is a post-modifier.

My own major expansion of the York system was the inclusion of the text as well as the code in the material to be computer-processed. This allowed me to drop some classifications, although the special nature of my study

caused me to add others. Using a recategorized three-digit code (see Figure 2.2), I kept many of the distinctions and, in general, followed the York principles in assigning words to a certain class or function. For example, I adhered to their philosophy of subordination and classified as subordinators only those words involving finite predication. However, I treated adverbs differently. The York encoders limited the definition of an intensifier more strictly than Fries and Milic had. Especially interested in this group of words, I expanded the list. I added some distinctions of my own, creating codes for transitive and intransitive verbs, address to the reader, nonsense words, and further punctuation codes (most importantly, for quotation marks to allow a dialogue count). I also added a code number for contractions. I used the number symbol (#) to mark paragraphs. The asterisk (*) and the slash (/) marked clauses and T-unit endings respectively. (A T-unit, sometimes called a "grammatical sentence," is any independent clause and its modification, including dependent clauses, in other words, a sentence defined by its grammar rather than its punctuation.) In general, my changes and additions tailored the code to fit the study I was conducting.

FIGURE 2.2
ANDERSON'S VARIATION ON THE YORK SYNTACTIC CODE

[redacted]t

001 Omitted Subordinator
003 Contractions

011 Noun
012 Attributive Noun
013 Possessive Noun
014 Appositive Noun
015 Nominative Address
017 Noun (Number)

021 Pronoun

031 Gerund
032 Gerund Passive
033 Infinitive
034 Infinitive Passive

[redacted] Verb Transitive
042 Verb Passive
043 Verb Intransitive
044 Copulative Verb

[redacted] Auxiliary (have)
[redacted] Auxiliary (will)
053 Auxiliary (be)
054 Auxiliary (do)
055 Modal Auxiliary

211 Interrogative

[redacted] Preposition
313 Postposition Prep.

[redacted] Infinitive Signal
412 Pattern Marker (it)
413 Pattern Marker (there)

[redacted] Exclamation
611 Address to Reader

[redacted] Foreign Word
712 Nonsense Word

061 Adjective
062 Participal
063 Participal Passive
064 Subordinating Participal
065 Sub. Participal Passive

071 Definite Determiner
072 Determiner (Number)
073 Indefinite Determiner
074 Possessive Pronoun
075 Misc. Determiner
076 Negative Determiner

081 Descriptive Adverb
082 Function Adverb
083 Intensifier
084 Negative Adverb

091 no (Absolute)
092 yes (Absolute)

111 Sentence Coordinator
112 Correlative
113 Negative Correlative
114 Subordinator
115 Relative Pronoun
116 Connective (however)
117 Non-sentence coordinator

971 Parenthesis
972 Comma
973 Dash
974 Colon (List)

981 Semicolon
982 Intrasentence (?)
983 Intrasentence (!)
984 Intrasentence Colon

991 Period
992 Question Mark
993 Exclamation Mark
995 Fragment Period

811 Quoted Material
812 Verse

/ T-unit
* Clause
# Paragraph

Notation Marks

The computer program which processed the coded texts is based on The York program. Working with a professional programmer, I developed a program in PL-1 that supplies the following information:

1. a printout of the coded text
2. the total number of words
3. an alphabetized word-frequency list
4. a frequency list of word lengths
5. the average number of letters per word*
6. the number and percentage of words in quotes.
7. the number of T-units
8. the average number of words per T-unit*
9. a frequency list of T-unit lengths
10. the average number of T-units per sentence*
11. the number of clauses
12. the average number of words per clause*
13. a frequency list of clause lengths
14. the average number of clauses per sentence*
15. the number of sentences
16. the average number of words per sentence*
17. a frequency list of sentence lengths
18. the number of different three-class sequences (Class equals noun, verb, etc.)
19. a frequency list of three-class sequences
20. a frequency list of sentence openers
21. a frequency list of sentence closers

22. a frequency list of code numbers
23. frequency and percent of word classes
24. frequency and percent of punctuation marks
25. the total number of verbs
26. the distribution of types of verbs
27. the total number of connectives
28. the distribution of types of connectives
29 the number of sentences with no subordination
30 the mean point in sentences of subordinators*
31. a frequency list of the point of subordination

*Standard deviation also given.

The program allows for a statistical testing of the hypotheses about language in literature for children and also allows for the discovery of any finer distinctions between the two audience-defined genres. The word-frequency lists show any intra-author variation in word length, in Latinate versus Anglo-Saxon, abstract versus concrete vocabulary, or gender bias in pronouns. The figures resulting from the program's analysis of the code numbers reveal such things as the relative incidence of intensifiers or nonsense words and the nominal or verbal propensities of one genre over another. On the syntactical level, the program can give, via the code, such information as the adult-juvenile ratio of coordination to subordination, the proportional use of subordinating participles, the proportion of noun to pronoun, or the

sophistication of verb tenses. The clause and T-unit counts can supplement the statistics about relative sentence lengths.

Of course, the organizing of statistics does not end with the computer printout. Clear patterns emerge only after the thousands of figures are distilled on systematized worksheets. In fact, many of the more interesting and unanticipated discoveries of this study came from the patient back-and-forth scrutiny of the printouts for the juvenile and adult fiction of a given author. Both the encoding process and the careful comparison of the computer-generated statistics were extremely time-consuming, but both steps allowed me to penetrate the texts and discover many fine points about the nature of language itself and the nature of literary style in books for the young.

Chapter 3

A Brief Disscussion of Length

> One of the characteristics of juvenile books as compared to adult books is that they are shorter.
>
> (Kenneth Donelson and Alleen Nilsen, Literature for Today's Young Adults 14)

If there is one area where commentators seem to agree on a standard for children's literature, it is on the matter of length: length of complete works, paragraphs, sentences, words. And the consensus is that shorter is better.

Although total length of a work may not seem important at first glance, nevertheless certain expectations about style can be influenced by length, and genre is sometimes determined by the number of words (short story, novella, novel; in poetry, the fourteen-line sonnet) or even by the number of syllables (the haiku perhaps the most extreme case of this). Length is considered of special importance in writing for children as they presumably have a shorter attention span than most adults. Therefore, a brief consideration of the total length of pieces of literature for children is an appropriate starting point.

With notable exceptions, like Richard Adams' Watership Down, books for children are usually shorter than those written for adults. However, in respect to three of the four authors with whom this study is mainly concerned, comparative total lengths of their children's and adult works do not reveal much because of a mixing of genres, the short story and the novel. That Wilde and Hawthorne turned exclusively to the short story when writing for a young audience (as did Gardner, except for his book In The Suicide Mountains) seems of more importance than the variations of length among the stories. As years of working with children's literature both in research and teaching has led me to expect brevity, I was somewhat surprised when two of the four authors did not reduce length for juveniles. In fact, Hawthorne's children's stories are, on the average, longer than his adult stories.

There is, however, some reduction in MacDonald's and Gardner's children's works. Gardner's children's stories are consistently and markedly shorter than his adult ones. In Dragon, Dragon and The King of the Hummingbirds, for instance, the stories vary only from 11 to 15 large-print pages (which average 200 words per page). This means that Gardner's average children's story is 13 pages or 2,600 words long. On the other hand, in an adult book like The Art of Living the words per page average around 350 and the stories

vary from 9 pages (3,000 words) to the 103-page "Vlemck the Box-Painter (a novella that has been printed separately). Excluding "Vlemck," they average 20 pages or 7,000 words.

The stories in Hawthorne's Wonder Book and Tanglewood Tales vary from 17 to 38 pages (average 350 words per page) and average 27 pages or about 9,500 words per story, while his adult short stories, also from the Centenary Edition and with the same average words per page, vary from 6 to 37 pages (average 12 pages or 4,200 words, less than half the juvenile average), Wilde's stories in The Happy Prince average 16 pages (300 words per page or 4,800 words) and range from the brief 6-page story "The Selfish Giant" to the long 39-page "The Fisherman and his Soul," which is almost identical in length with his novella Lord Arthur Savile's Crime. Wilde's most famous works for adults, the plays and The Picture of Dorian Gray, are of course much longer. Dorian (which is included in this study) runs some 80,000 words. Similiarly, Gardner and Hawthorne wrote novels for adults but not for children. This choice of the, by definition, shorter genre of the tale seems to be the most important factor concerning length with these three authors.

Among the four, George MacDonald, who wrote a number of novel-length fantasies for children and two for adults, affords the most realistic basis for comparison. The adult

fantasies Phantastes and Lilith are 185 and 255 pages long (390 words per page) in the Eerdmans' editions and average 85,000 words. Two of the children's fantasies The Princess and the Goblin and At the Back of the North Wind are, at 207 and 288 pages (220 words per page) shorter in average length (54,000 words) and the story for children closest, in my judgment, in theme to Phantastes and Lilith is The Golden Key which is only about one tenth as long as the adult fantasies. MacDonald, like the three other authors, also wrote many brief fairytales for children, while his major output was some 20 realistic adult novels which are on the average longer than any of the fantasies. These four authors do not consistently validate the standard assumption that literary works for children are shorter than those for adults. Although Gardner and MacDonald tend to shorten within the same genre when writing for the young, Wilde and Hawthorne do not. Of course in this matter of total length, four authors do not constitute enough of a sampling.

In not shortening their works for children, Hawthorne and Wilde are atypical. Most books for children are indeed shorter that most for adults. Donelson and Nilsen note that briefer books are the rule in juvenile literature. "Teachers, librarians, and editors," they say, "have come to accept this matter of length as a given" (Donelson 14). How

seriously educators and publishers take the principle of brevity for juveniles can be seen in the history of first grade readers. In her study of five different editions of the Scott, Foresman series, Jeanne Chall found "a continuous decline in the number of words used in these readers. Whereas in 1920 the number of running words per average story was 333, by 1962 it had shrunk to 230" (Bettelheim 23-24). Primers are the extreme example, but they are symptomatic of the tendency to write briefly for children.

In the next unit considered, the paragraph, some important differences do emerge. Paragraphs are a purely literary form. Their parallel form in an oral culture is the poetic stanza, which is clearly marked by sound patterns and may, but need not, be a division by content or thought. The paragraph, on the other hand, is an intellectual, visually perceived unit, a kind of spatial punctuation that allows for a high degree of stylistic manipulation. Paragraphing in books for very young readers is often emphatic and precise. In picture books each such unit is frequently marked off by an illustration, or several subject-connected paragraphs are grouped with the relevant picture. Paragraphing, in the hands of a skillful author, especially an author-illustrator, can become an art form in itself. Graham Greene noted that Beatrix Potter's paragraphs "are fashioned with a delicate

irony, not to complete a movement, but mutely to criticize the action by arresting it. The imperceptive pause allows the mind to take in the picture" (Egoff 293).

Other factors also make paragraphing important in children's literature. For instance, the conventional journalistic wisdom is that short pargraphs aid readability. And the high incidence of dialogue in juvenile fiction, with its concomitant convention of paragraph per speaker, further increases the relative number and relative brevity of paragraphs in many juvenile works. In the use of the paragraph, then, whether by authors or the editors of books, differences between the longer, supposedly more complex units for adults and the shorter, supposedly simpler, more digestible blocks of prose for children should be highly visible.

The evidence for the four authors does indicate that brief paragraphs prevail in children's literature. As Table 3.1 clearly shows, there is, for three of the four, a marked difference between the length of paragraphs for adults and the length of those for children. Only Wilde has a minimal difference, an average 69 words per paragraph for adults and 61 for juveniles. Table 3.1 gives average paragraph lengths with deviations, the ratios between the two sets and some further statistics such as the proportions of short or long

paragraphs. Those under 20 words are designated as short because, according to Cluett's study, the average sentence length in literature over the last two centuries has hovered around 20 words. Any paragraph shorter than an average sentence seems quite brief. The figure of 100 words or more for long paragraphs was arbitrarily chosen.

TABLE 3.1

PARAGRAPH LENGTH

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Ave. Length	134	70	231	37	69	61	133	42
Deviation	69	94	198	74	15	84	96	69
Ratio	2 : 1		6 : 1		1 : 1		3 : 1	
Fewest Words	9	9	19	5	4	4	9	4
Most Words	349	239	547	285	386	227	521	256
Under 20 Wds.	10%	14%	8%	55%	31%	19%	15%	19%
Over 100 Wds.	52%	24%	58%	7%	25%	24%	50%	7%

Hawthorne, MacDonald, and Gardner reduce paragraph size drastically when writing for children. The adult-child ratio is almost 2 to 1 in Hawthorne's prose samples, 3 to 1 in Gardner's, and 6 to 1 in MacDonald's. It should be noted

that Phantastes, from which three-quarters of the material for the samples comes, is very low on dialogue and that the sample passage from Lilith (containing no dialogue) averages only 105 words per paragraph. Comparing this figure to the 37-word average in the juvenile samples suggests that a ratio closer to Gardner's 3 to 1 figure might exist in MacDonald's total corpus. Even this is a dramatic difference, however, and the reduction in paragraph size in MacDonald's children's stories seems a deliberate choice. That MacDonald was very aware of the paragraph as a rhetorical device is evidenced by the following idiosyncratic usage:

> "Are you the Old Man of the Earth?" Tangle had said.
>
> And the youth answered, and Tangle heard him, though not with her ears:--
>
> "I am. What can I do for you?"
>
> (Golden Key 56)

The dialogue is deliberately separated from its tag, the space adding further pause (and emphasis) after the already double punctuation of colon and dash. MacDonald also uses this paragraphing technique in one of the other passages analyzed to put emphasis on the importance of the golden key:

> The first words the lady said were,--
>
> "What is that in your hand, Mossy?"
>
> (Golden Key 33)

The passages of the other three authors have no similar emphatic use of the paragraph, but, with the exception of Wilde, their shorter average lengths in the child samples suggests that either they or their editors reduce paragraph length for this audience.

The deviation figures and the proportions of short and long paragraphs in Table 3.1 show that Wilde is again the exception. His sometimes epigrammatic style lends itself to the short paragraph and the short sentence whoever his audience. He is the only one of the four to decrease the incidence of very short paragraphs (31% adult, 19%, children's) when writing for the young. With Hawthorne and Gardner, there is only a 4% increase of very short paragraphs in the juvenile samples. MacDonald again represents the extreme with a 47% increase in the number of paragraphs under 20 words. On the opposite end of the scale, his children's passages have 51% fewer paragraphs of more than 100 words. The decrease of 100-word-plus paragraphs in the children's books is also large for Hawthorne (52% to 24%) and Gardner (50% to 7%). Wilde has an insignificant drop from 25% to 24%. To sum up these results, Hawthorne, MacDonald and

Gardner consistently and markedly shortented their paragraphs when addressing a child audience. Wilde seems to have only the slightest tendency in this direction. But all have chosen to reduce their paragraphs at least somewhat when writing for children.

Turning to syntactic units such as clauses and sentences (whether grammatically defined as T-units or classified by punctuation) we see again (in Table 3.2) a tendency to reduction. Again Wilde proves the exception and MacDonald the extreme. A glance at Table 3.2 shows that, in Wilde's samples, sentence length remains virtually the same. The .7 increase in the average number of words per sentence is scarcely enough to build a case for longer juvenile sentences in Wilde. However, another study of mine (an NEH Seminar project in 1976) which tested some 6,000 words from Dorian Gray and the entire stories "The Happy Prince" and "The Young King" (almost 9,000 words total) yielded an average sentence length of 12 for the adult novel and 19 for the fairy tales. A quantification of Wilde's entire opus might reveal a consistent tendency towards longer sentences in his children's works.

TABLE 3.2

AVERAGE LENGTHS OF SYNTACTIC UNITS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Punctuated Sentences								
Length	26.2	22.5	23.6	14.9	20.0	20.8	17.2	15.6
Deviation	15.6	14.7	14.6	11.9	19.2	15.8	13.9	13.2
Grammatical Sentences (T-units)								
Length	24.2	20.1	15.8	12.4	17.4	13.4	13.8	11.7
Deviation	14.3	11.8	11.3	9.9	16.8	10.6	10.6	6.9
Ave. per Sentence	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.3
Deviation	.4	.4	.7	.5	.5	.7	.6	.7
Clauses								
Length	12.5	10.6	9.7	8.4	10.1	9.5	9.0	7.9
Deviation	7.3	5.9	5.1	4.7	6.3	5.8	5.2	4.1
Ave. per Sentence	2.1	2.1	2.4	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.0
Deviation	.9	.8	.9	.7	1.0	.9	.8	.9

As the next table shows, MacDonald's samples have the largest difference in average sentence lengths (23.6 words for adult; 14.9 words for children's). As with paragraphs, there seems to be a deliberate effort to shorten.

TABLE 3.3

SENTENCE LENGTH

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Shortest	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Most Wds.	78	66	91	88	126	97	104	109
[redacted].	15.6%	19.1%	7.4%	39.3%	33.9%	16.1%	25.3%	35.0%
> 31 wds.	44.4%	27.6%	28.7%	8.9%	21.7%	20.0%	14.9%	18.8%

Sentences with fewer than 9 words were designated as short because Paula Menyuk found in one of her studies of children's sentences that "With sentences up to nine words in length, the length of the sentence was not the factor which determined successful repetition even for children as young as 3 years" (Menyuk 114).

Table 3.3 shows that MacDonald's entire juvenile sample contains 75 sentences (39.3%) with 8 or fewer words. His adult sample, on the other hand, contains only 8 sentences (7.4%) of 8 or fewer words. Sentences of more than 30 words make up 28.7% of MacDonald's adult samples and only 8.9% of the children's. But that close to a tenth of his sentences for children are long demonstrates that MacDonald does not hesitate to expand a thought when length suits his purpose.

For example, he describes the mysterious valley filled with shadows in a 39-word sentence:

> The mass was chiefly made up of the shadows of leaves innumerable, of all lovely and imaginative forms, waving to and fro, floating and quivering in the breath of a breeze whose motion was unfelt, whose sound was unheard. (Golden Key 38)

The eerie, "floating" quality would be lost in shorter sentences. Or consider the longest sentence (88 words) in his children's samples:

> She was standing at the foot of a tree in the twilight, listening to a quarrel between a mole and a squirrel, in which the mole told the squirrel that the tail was the best of him and the squirrel called the mole Spade-fists, when, the darkness having deepened around her, she became aware of something shining in her face, and looking around, saw that the door of the cottage was open, and the red light of the fire flowing from it like a river through the darkness.
>
> (Golden Key 29-30)

A modern editor for a juvenile department would probably itch to dissect that sentence into several, and yet it is both easy to follow, due to its temporal sequencing, and a successful blending of content and form.

In Hawthorne's samples, average sentence length does not vary between the two sets as markedly as MacDonald's does. Hawthorne shows a difference of only 4.2 words. And, although his adult average sentence length is, at 26.7 words, the highest of the four and his average for children's

stories (22.5 words) close to MacDonald's adult average, nevertheless, Hawthorne has the shortest, longest sentences (if it may be so phrased). He writes a 78-word sentence for adults and a 66-word one for children. His reputation for long sentences, however, is verified by the fact that 44.4% of his adult-sample sentences are 30 words or longer, a much higher percentage than any of the others have.

The samples indicate that shorter sentences are, as the popular assumption has it, likely in literature written for children; three of the four authors did shorten them. But only in MacDonald's case (average 23.6 words to 14.9 words) is the difference large. MacDonald, who also has an extreme increase of very short sentences (from 7.4% to 39.9%) and a drastic decrease of long sentences (from 28.7% to 8.9%) in his children's samples, comes closest to the accepted notion of sentence-length differences between juvenile and adult literature.

John Gardner, the only contemporary author, has the shortest average sentence lengths. In fact, reading across the sentence-length averages of Table 3.2 indicates that with these four writers we may have an example of the historical tendency toward shorter sentences that Cluett notes. The current average is about 20 words per sentence (Cluett 29). But that speculation to the side, Gardner follows the pattern

that Table 3.3 shows for Hawthorne and MacDonald--shorter sentences when writing for children--though with less difference than those two have. Gardner varies from the pattern in his increased use of sentences over 30 words in the juvenile passages (18.8% as compared to the adult's 14.9%) and as the only author to have his longest sentence occur in the children's sample. This 109-word sentence is, however, grammatically five sentences separated by semicolons:

> The ants on whom he had refrained from stepping came and paraded by while he worked; the mice he'd fed cheese came and polished the copper pots by rubbing their backs against them; the owls he'd allowed to roost on the rafters flew down to him and fanned Olaf's fire with their wings; the wolves he'd allowed to hide under his bench when there were hunters about came and helped him line up the pots when he'd finished with the mending; and the huge burly thieves he'd allowed into the cellar when they escaped from the sheriff (who'd gotten trapped in conversation with the mayor) sang him barber-shop quartets.
>
> (The King of the Hummingbirds 6 and 9)

The clauses divided by semicolons are each a T-unit, 16, 17, 20, 28, and 28 words long (average 21.8), longer than Gardner's average T-unit (13.5 for all his samples) and longer even than his average sentence length (16.4); but notice how the parallel structure signals the reader what to expect in the next clause and how the clauses build in length

as the sentence proceeds. It is, because it is composed of fairly reasonable sized T-units similar in structure, not a difficult sentence.

The adult sentence that tops 100 words is syntactically complex:

> He'd been wanting, as he walked slowly through the palace, thoughtfully stroking his beard with his right hand and swimming with his left, bowing to his brave and gallant knights as they swam by arm in arm with their elegant ladies, or throwing a word of encouragement to some elderly minister who was puffing hard and looking very doubtful that he'd make it as far as the safety of the stairs--he'd been conscious of wanting to embrace them all, both the beautiful and the ugly, and cling to them as a sweet uninhibited child clings for dear life to his parents.
>
> ("King Gregor and the Fool," The King's Indian 160)

The sentence breaks at the dash and repeats the subject with a variation on the main verb, so one could argue that there are 2 T-units (72 and 31 words long), but as the predicate is not completed until the end, the sentence can also be regarded as one very long T-unit.

As Kellog Hunt's study (1965) demonstrated, T-unit length increases steadily in grade school children and is a more reliable indication of syntactical maturity than sentence length. I would be surprised, however, to find a sentence like Gardner's example from "King Gregor" in a children's book. Indeed, a look back at Table 3.2 will show

that the count on T-units (grammatical sentences, however punctuated) yielded a more consistent pattern of reduction among the four authors. All shorten such units by an average of 2 to 4 words. This indicates to me that under the surface of more consciously manipulated punctuation strategies, the authors are following very similar instincts when addressing a young audience and are reducing the amount of material that must be comprehended as an inseparable syntactic unit. Furthermore, they are reducing it by similar proportions (Hawthorne by an average 4.1 words, MacDonald by 3.3, Wilde by 4, and Gardner by 2.1).

The average clause lengths reveal a similar consistent trend; all are shorter in the children's passages and the reductions of like proportions (1.9, 1.3, .5, 1.1). The decrease of clause and T-unit length in the children's samples indicates that basic syntactical units as well as content units like the paragraph do tend to be slightly shorter in children's books.

I did not count syllables. Klare notes that syllable counts are popular because they are easier to quantify than some other elements of a text, but "the syllable is not a very respectable unit in linguistic analysis" (Klare 161). So the last and smallest item that I consider is the word. Short words have long been thought the hallmark of children's

literature. And indeed, as Table 3.4 shows, all of the authors do have a slightly lesser word-length average in their juvenile samples.

TABLE 3.4

AVERAGE WORD LENGTHS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Length	4.5	4.3	4.1	3.9	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.1
Deviation	2.4	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.0

Actually, the smallness of the difference between the two sets is an expected result. For one, thing, the high incidence of brief function words influences the averages. These authors may have chosen a few more short words for children than for adults, but certainly not to the exclusion of long words. Hawthorne, for instance, in his children's passages, uses circumference, contemptuously, disconsolately, and weatherbeaten. MacDonald uses forgetfulness, marvellous, understanding, and whiteblossoming; Wilde, burgomaster, consciousness, distinguished, and unselfishness; Gardner uses anticipated, inadvertently, responsibilities, superficially, and the long nonsense word, wallawalled. And the words

appearance, especially, everything, and something show up in at least two of the four authors' children's samples. Furthermore, many "difficult" words like eon, rue, gyre, id, and apt are brief. More to the point when considering word-length in literature for children, many common words are long: grandmother, yesterday, understand, schoolhouse, and several of those already listed. Simply counting the number of letters per word is not a satisfactory method of judging an author's word choice for children. There are many other criteria that determine which words may be more suitable for the genre and these criteria are presented in the next chapter, "Vocabulary."

In general, I have tried to show that any difference between the lengths of units in literature for children and literature for adults is not a cut-and-dried matter. The four authors considered here reduce their paragraphs, T-units, clauses, and words, but do not consistently reduce the size of punctuated sentences or the total size of story or book. And many of the reductions are quite small. A study that concentrated on picture books and other pre-school literature would undoubtedly find more marked differences between those and adult books, but literature for the school-age child, while measurably shorter in some aspects, is not consistently so.

Chapter 4

A Close Look at Vocabulary

> Words, the best possible words for this particular story, are not only the style of the story, they are the story.
>
> (Rebecca Lukens, A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature 131)

Beyond the simple and absolutely quantifiable matter of length are the more complex and qualitative matters of semantic and syntactic classifications. Of special interest in this chapter are etymology, levels of abstraction, and such meaning bearing word-classes as noun, verb, and modifier. An investigation of the types of words found in the samples should help determine whether or not there is a special vocabulary used for young people.

Some authors and editors and most reading theorists hold that certain kinds of words are more suitable for young readers than others. Typical prose for children should, they suggest, be composed mainly of easy words--words that are basic and everyday, specific, personal, concrete, positive, and relevant to childhood. Abstract words, technical, Latinate or foreign words, harsh words, words intended ironically or that allude to cultural

or historical information not internally explained should be used sparingly. Furthermore, it is considered acceptable practice when writing for children to repeat words more often than one would for adults. The obvious intention behind all these prescriptions is to create prose that is accessible to child readers.

George Klare, for instance, includes many of these factors when considering the selection of words for an easily readable text. First mentioning that "high frequency of occurrence [in the reader's society] and consequent familiarity" is an important element (Klare 18), he then lists seven criteria that mark words as easy:

1. Words learned early in life
2. Short words (in terms of either syllable or letter length)
3. Words of Anglo-Saxon rather than of Norman, Greek or Latin derivation
4. Nontechnical words (where possible)
5. Words familiar "in writing" . . .
6. Words used in a common meaning
7. Concrete or definite, rather than abstract words.

(Klare 19)

As Table 1.1 indicated, these are the vocabulary factors that were, up to the time of Klare's study, commonly tested in readability formulas. More recently,

John Barmuth and E.B. Coleman devised a measurement system which George Spache sums up as containing "such factors as: word length, the frequency of affixes and stems and of Latin roots, the abstractness of nouns, word frequency, grammatical complexity, word depth, transformational complexity or idea density, and contextual cross references" (Spache 32).

Linguists, when analyzing a literary text, apply some of these and still other criteria and ask, for example, whether a style is nominal, verbal, adjectival, or balanced among such word classes. These distinctions, used in stylistics mainly to distinguish authors and to define historical periods of literature, can be relevant in assessing literary style for juveniles because supposedly they aid in judging the directness or the descriptive level of a piece of prose.

To give a specific case of the type of issue involved, consider that some critics of children's literature think good juvenile style contains "richly descriptive prose," with close-up views conveyed by "sensory detail," as Lois Kuznets phrases it in defining the "rhetoric of childhood" (Isaacs and Zimbardo 150 and 155). On the other hand, reading specialists judge less specific prose more accessible. For instance, R.H. Bloomer found in his study

on the influence of modifiers on levels of abstraction, that modifiers make the text more difficult precisely by making it more specific (Klare 72). We should look at all these elements--familiarity, etymology, levels of abstraction, relevance to childhood, and word classes--when trying to determine what patterns of vocabulary may be typical for children's books.

Many readability formulas use word frequency, both internal (amount of word repetition in a text) and external (frequency in the general population as determined by set word lists) to evaluate the reading level of books. This quantifiable matter seems a good place to begin the investigation of any differences between adult and juvenile vocabularies in literature.

Using the alphabetized word frequency lists in my printout, I calculated the percentages of different words, ignoring duplication for plurals, possessives, and tense changes. I also calculated the percentages of unique words (those appearing only once). As Table 4.1 indicates, the adult samples consistently had more lexical diversity, the children's more repetition.

TABLE 4.1

VOCABULARY DIVERSITY

PERCENTAGES OF DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE WORDS

(A = Adult Samples, C = CHildren's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Different	63.3	36.0	31.6	22.7	36.2	29.1	33.3	29.2
Unique	26.8	17.3	18.5	11.4	23.9	17.9	20.5	15.6

Note especially the great change in the Hawthorne samples. In his introduction to a Wonder Book, he asserted that he did not write down to children, but the figures in Table 4.2 show that he reduced his vocabulary range considerably (by 27.3%) in these passages from The Tanglewood Tales and A Wonder Book.

TABLE 4.2

PERCENTILE DIFFERENCES OF THE REDUCTION OF VOCABULARY DIVERSITY IN THE CHILDREN'S SAMPLES

	Hawthorne	MacDonald	Wilde	Gardner
Different	27.3	8.9	7.1	4.1
Unique	9.5	7.1	6.0	4.9

However, even with the reduction, Hawthorne's vocabulary for children is as diverse as the next highest adult sample, Wilde's, in which 36.2% of the total words are different from one another.

Table 4.2 also reveals what may be a diachronic pattern (though more samples would be needed to confirm it). The modern tendency toward a simpler vocabulary seems to be closing the gap between writing for children and writing for adults. It is tempting to speculate that prose for children can be a predictor of styles to come (and indeed insofar as most writers have literate childhoods and have been exposed to the genre since it evolved a few centuries back, it does have some influence). But the narrowing gap shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 may be merely a historical freak. If the ideal in style were to tend toward the baroque in the future, the gap might widen again. More important for this study is the simple fact that there is a consistent reduction in vocabulary size in all the juvenile samples.

Testing these authors against the standard word-frequency lists presents a problem because two of them (Hawthorne and MacDonald) predate the existence of such lists, and Wilde was writing in England at the time of the first American lists. And they are valid measures of

contemporaneous readers' recognition level of given words only when list and author exist in the same historical and cultural context, a principle acknowledged by the periodic updating of the frequency lists. We could assign current reading levels to these authors, but this would not tell us how accessible they were to Victorian children.

Gardner's writing, however, is contemporary with Spache's 1978 revised list of 1041 words familiar to juveniles (Spache 191-94). And Gardner's vocabulary, when tested against Spache's list, shows a slight increase in familiar vocabulary in the juvenile samples. I found that 75.5% of Gardner's "adult" words were on the standard list and 81.8% of the children's, an increase, however, of only 6.3%. And indeed, when the Revised Spache Readability Formula is applied to Gardner's samples, it results in a grade-four reading level for the children's passages and a grade-five level for the adult. The level of sophistication of Freddy's Book strikes me as further from that of the fairytales than this would suggest. The phenomenon is not unique to Gardner. Klare mentions Wilson Taylor who holds that "formulas will tend to seriously overestimate the readability of such writings as those of James Joyce or Gertrude Stein; the words may be familiar and the sentences short but [syntactic] redundancy may

still be very low" (Klare 173). Syntactic redundancy refers to predictable word-class patterns within a sentence, the type of common English syntax that a writer like E.E. Cummings frequently subverts. Gardner is more accessible than much of Stein, Joyce and Cummings, but in the adult passages he is somewhat elliptical, a stylistic mannerism that the Spache formula, relying on sentence length and word familiarity, does not isolate.

In order to compare the etymology of words in the adult and juvenile samples, I first marked those that (for each author) appeared only in the juvenile or only in the adult samples. For instance, in Hawthorne the words abortive and abundance were on the adult list, the words account and accustomed on the juvenile. Such words as about and above which appeared on both lists were not considered for determining differences in the origins of words used for the two audiences. Frequency of an individual word and variations on a word (such as abundance, abundant) were not counted here. The percentages in Table 4.3 reflect the proportions of a type of word, one occurrence divided by the subtotal gleaned from each list. I classified the words' origins as either Nordic (Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Swedish, Celtic, etc.) or Romance (Greek, Latinate, French, etc.) Any words falling

outside these groups were labelled "other." Compound words were classified by the main element, i.e., overexpenditure as Romance, corpsesnatcher as Nordic. Unassimilated foreign words were so labelled. I used Webster's Unabridged (Second Edition) and The Oxford English Dictionary as reference sources for those words whose origins were not immediately obvious. And I classified as Anglo-Saxon (under Nordic) any word that was present in the language in that period, even if it also has a Latin cognate. For instance, according to the OED, dish is found in English as early as 700 A.D. but is either from or shares a common root with the Graeco-Latin discus.

TABLE 4.3

WORD ORIGINS: PERCENTAGES

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Nordic	44.8	54.0	50.0	71.0	36.5	54.9	52.0	57.3
Romance	52.9	41.7	50.0	28.6	56.5	41.4	48.4	40.7
Other	3.4	4.3	0	.4	7.0	3.7	0	2.0

Table 4.3 shows that while the change is most radical in MacDonald, who increases his use of Nordic words by 21%

and decreases the Romance words by a similar 21.4% in his juvenile samples, Wilde also has a large shift (18.4% more Nordic, 15.1% fewer Romance). Hawthorne (9.2% and 11.2%) and Gardner (5.3% and 7.3%) show the same tendency though with smaller shifts. Each seems to rely more on the Nordic, Germanic-rooted words that are basic to English and to cut back on Latinate words when writing for children.

Of course, Latinate words are not necessarily difficult or obscure. Such simple words as bar, fig, cell, city, story, color, fix, gum, cards, and face have Latin or Greek origins and occur in the adult samples, while, in the juvenile samples, such Anglo-Saxon based but not everyday words as shimmering, blighted, boddice, cunningly, hinder, furthermore, and nevertheless appear. Abstract and technical words, however, are often Latinate, and the words that describe everyday objects and happenings are more likely to Germanic. These differences probably account for the preponderance of Nordic over Romance words in the children's samples.

Foreign words proved to be an insignificant (indeed almost non-existent) factor in any of the samples. Unless one wishes to count wampum (Hawthorne/adult) and wigwam (MacDonald/children's), the only occurrence is the Latin phrase panis caelestes in Wilde's Dorian Gray. And even in

this adult work he tranlates the phrase for the reader. Wide reading in both adult and children's literature suggests to me that foreign phrases and words occur considerably less often in children's works, but the samples in this study scarcely offer conclusive evidence on this matter. The most important evidence is the authors' proclivity for Anglo-Saxon based words in their fiction for juveniles.

Words alluding to extraneous sources, what Barmuth and Coleman called "contextual cross references" (Spache 32), do not occur frequently in any of the samples and almost not at all in the children's. None of Gardner's samples contains any, and Hawthorne and MacDonald do not use any allusive words in their children's passages. In his adult passages Hawthorne has "Adam," "Bunyan," "Comus," "Eve," "Gothic," and "Tophet." MacDonald refers to the dawn as "Aurora." Oscar Wilde, whose children's samples so often prove the exception in this study, has 8 allusions of this sort in his adult samples ("Antinomianism," "Bacchante," "Christ," "Darwinismus," "Gretna Green," "Omar," "Saroni," and "Silenus") and 5 in the children's ("Adonais," "Bithynian," "Endymion," "Hadrian," and "Narcissus"). Of course, Hawthorne's children's tales are filled with Greek names, usually unfamilar to children, but they are

characters in the stories and explained in the text.

The next consideration, the relative levels of abstraction in the two genres, presents a difficulty. As P.J. Gillie noted in his 1957 study on the subject, there is no absolutely objective standard for measuring abstraction. "Unless," he said, "the directions for identifying abstract or concrete terms are so explicit as to be burdensome, the dependence upon individual judgment reduces reliability" (Gillie 214). In 1950, Flesch had developed a rather complex formula for measuring abstraction, based mainly on a count of "definite words." Gillie created a simplified version of this formula which, determined levels of abstraction by finding the proportions of finite verbs, of definite articles, and of nouns of abstraction (those ending in _-ness_, _-ment_, _-ship_, _-dom_, _-nce_, _ion_, and _-y_ (except diminutives). With very slight modication to allow me to use my entire wordlist, I applied Gillie's method to my samples.

The scale he devised runs: "0-18, very abstract; 19-30, abstract; 31-42, fairly abstract; 43-54, standard; 55-66, fairly concrete; 67-78, concrete; 79-90, very concrete" (Gillie 215). Keeping in mind his warning that "as with any of the readability formulas, numerical scores may imply an unwarranted degree of precision" (215), we can

see in Table 4.4 that the four authors are, in all samples, on the concrete end of the scale, (1 sample is "standard," 4 are "fairly concrete," and 3 are "concrete"). This is to be expected in works of fiction.

TABLE 4.4

LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Score	57	63	62	72	54	68	60	76
Number of Abstract Nouns	79	28	41	12	79	26	46	26

The formula-derived differences between the adult and juvenile passages are not very great for any one author. Hawthorne's child and adult passages both are "fairly concrete," MacDonald and Gardner vary only one category each, and Wilde misses the same "fairly concrete," "concrete" ratings by only one point. Notice, however, that there is an increase in the "concrete" character of each of the samples from children's books, and that in one factor, abstract nouns noted by suffixes, there is a very marked decrease in the juvenile samples, the ratios being 3:1 for Hawthorne, MacDonald, and Wilde and 2:1 for

Gardner. These findings indicate a slightly lower level of abstraction in the juvenile selections and suggest that one more assumption about the style for young audiences may be true.

A still somewhat subjective but more easily measured quality in literature is the presence of absence or words with negative meanings. It is usually assumed that children's books should present an encouraging view of life, more optimistic than that of mature literature with its tendency toward irony and its frequent acknowledgement of the tragic. So one would expect to find a lack of negative language in children's literature. When the standard negatives in the language (no, not, never, neither, nor) were considered, this did not prove true. Table 4.5 reveals very little difference between the genres, and what difference there is points to a possible increase of negation in children's books.

TABLE 4.5

NEGATIVES

(A = Adult Samples, C. = Children's samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
neither	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
never	1	5	2	2	5	11	3	1
no	9	9	16	16	7	8	17	7
nor	0	3	1	1	0	1	2	0
not	15	18	19	30	12	10	11	9
nt	0	3	0	7	10	4	3	12
Totals	25	39	38	57	34	34	37	31
Percent of Total Words	.8%	1.2%	1.5%	2%	1.4%	1.3%	1.4%	.3%

This table leaves the question of what gives children's literature its reputation for positiveness unanswered. A count of other negative words on the authors' frequency lists revealed more consistent but still small differences between the adult and juvenile samples. I recorded and tabulated words that denoted a negative state, character or situation. Table 4.6 shows the collated results and Table 4.7 gives the percentile differences.

TABLE 4.6

NEGATIVE WORDS

Adult Samples		Juvenile Samples	
afraid	4	afraid	3
against	5	against	4
anger/ry	4	anger/ry	2
-----		ashamed	2
awful	4	-----	
bad	5	bad	2
bewildered	2	-----	
bitter	2	bitterly	1
-----		blighted	2
-----		broken	1
-----		contemptuously	1
-----		cross (adj.)	1
curse	1	-----	
damned	4	-----	
-----		dangerous	2
-----		darker	2
dead	11	dead/ly	3
defeat	1	-----	
deficient	2	-----	
deformed	1	-----	
degenerated	1	-----	
-----		derision	1
despair	2	-----	
devil	17	devil	1
diabolic	1	-----	
difficult/y	7	difficult	1
-----		dirty	1
disastrously	1	-----	
-----		disconsolately	1
-----		disgust	1
dismal	2	dismal	3
doleful	1	-----	
doubtful	1	doubtful	1
dreaded	1	dreadful	1
enemy	6	enemy	1
enmity	1	-----	
error	5	-----	
evil	6	-----	
fault	4	-----	1
fear	3	fear	3

fool	6	-----	
foolish	1	foolishly	1
frighten	5	-----	
frowning	1	frowned	2
fuming	1	-----	
furious	1	-----	
gloom	1	gloomy	1
grief	1	grief	1
grim	2	-----	
groaned	2	groaning	1
-----		growl	11
guilty	2	-----	
harm	1	harm	2
hate	1	hate	1
heartlessly	1	-----	
helpless	2	-----	
-----		hinder	1
horrible	2	-----	
-----		horror	1
hurt	2	-----	
idiotically	1	idiot	1
-----		ill-looking	1
-----		ill-natured	1
immorality	1	-----	
imperfectly	1	-----	
impossible	1	-----	
incapable	1	-----	
inferior	1	inferior	1
infernal	1	-----	
injuring	1	-----	
insincere	1	-----	
irresponsible	1	-----	
killed	2	-----	
malevolence	1	-----	
meaninglessly	1	-----	
melancholy	2	-----	
mindless	1	-----	
mischief	1	-----	
miserable	3	-----	
-----		misfortune	2
misshapen	1	-----	
mistaken	3	-----	
-----		moaning	1
morbid	2	-----	
-----		murdering	1
-----		naughty	2

nothing	12	nothing	10
nowise	1	-----	
-----		objected	1
-----		ominous	1
-----		poisonous	1
-----		poorest	1
pusillanimous	1	-----	
quarrel	1	quarrel	1
rage	2	rage	1
refuse	4	-----	
regrets	1	-----	
rejection	1	-----	
rude	1	-----	
ruined	1	-----	
ruthless	1	-----	
sad	1	sad	2
scorn	2	-----	
scowling	1	-----	
shameful	1	-----	
-----		sob/bing	3
sorrow	1	sorrow	1
-----		spoilt	1
squabbling	1	-----	
stifled	1	-----	
stupidity	3	stupid	3
stupified	1	-----	
suffering	1	-----	
-----		suspicion	1
tears	4	tears	3
-----		terrible	5
threatened	1	-----	
-----		tormented	1
tragedy	1	-----	
travesty	1	-----	
trouble	2	-----	
ugly	3	ugly	7
-----		uneasy	1
unhappy	1	-----	
unjust	3	-----	
unlovely	1	-----	
unpleasant	1	-----	
unspeakable	1	-----	
untrue	1	-----	
unworthiness	1	-----	
victim	1	-----	
vile	1	-----	
wailed	1	-----	
weaker	1	-----	

wicked	1	wicked	1
withered	1	-----	
-----		worse	2
wrathfully	1	wrath	1
-----		wrecked	1
wretch	1	-----	
wrong	1	wrong	1
Totals	231		117
[redacted] of Total Words	2.2%		1%

A quick visual scan shows more blanks in the children's column and usually a lower frequency. One can understand the absence of such words as malevolence and pusillanimous which would be beyond the range of most children's vocabularies, but more interesting is the fact that the juvenile list does not contain nearly so many words that suggest impotence and guilt. The adult column with a preponderance of words like defeat, despair, guilty, helpless, morbid, victim, and vile conveys a feeling of existential angst.

TABLE 4.7

NEGATIVE WORDS: PERCENTILE DIFFERENCES FOR EACH AUTHOR

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

[redacted]thorne	MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
C	A	C	A	C	A	C
1.5	.7	.6	2.0	.7	4.0	1.5

The average ratio of two to one varies among the authors and represents only a few percentage points at most. The figures and the list seem to indicate that the amount of negative vocabulary often diminishes in children's books, but more authors would have to be sampled to confirm this. What impressed me most while analyzing this aspect of diction was how a slight increase of negation affects the mood of a text rather strongly; negative terms seem to be powerful ingredients.

There is another class of words which, unlike negatives, we expect to find in children's books--easy words. One of Klare's criteria for easy words was "words learned early in life" (Klare 19). Such words, by their very nature, would have to do with the family, home, school, pets, food, and other child-related concerns. It should be possible then to isolate a vocabulary of childhood. Using the complete word lists, as I did with

the search for negative words, I tabulated the number of child-relevant words found in the adult and children's samples. I looked for words that had to do with:

family
home
food
school
play
body
clothing
emotion
behavior
age
size
animals
fairytales

Children are intensely interested in their bodies, in questions of older and younger, large and small. They are told to be good, scolded for bad behavior. A category for words that express emotion was suggested by Sylvia Ashton Warner's experience with children who demanded such words as kiss, hug, love, and hate their first choices to spell and read. Family and school-related terms seem an obvious choice given that children's environment, and food, play, and pets are of great concern for them. Another reason for including pets or animals is that Spache lists "animalness" as one of the positive elements of style for young readers (Spache 15). I included the fairytale category because this genre has been popularly relegated to children's literature and the passages tested are from fantasy works where such terms should presumbably occur, perhaps in both adult and juvenile writings.

Table 4.8 show the results, which were not entirely what I expected.

TABLE 4.8

WORDS RELEVANT TO CHILDHOOD

	Adult Samples	Children's Samples
Family	0.3%	0.2%
Home	* 0.5%	* 1.4%
Food	0.3%	0.6%
School	0.1%	0.1%
Play	0.2%	0.4%
Body	1.0%	1.1%
Clothing	0.2%	0.2%
Emotion	0.6%	0.7%
Behavior	0.8%	1.0%
Age	0.5%	0.9%
Size	0.4%	0.7%
Animals	* 0.2%	* 1.6%
Fairytales	* 0.3%	* 1.2%
Totals	5.4%	10.1%

While there is a slight increase in the total percent of such vocabulary, the individual categories vary noticeably only in three cases: words related to home and household (all physical objects like a bed, room or table), names of and terms related to animals (like elephant, dog, growl, fur, and forepaws), and conventional fairytale terms (like witch princess, magic). Since this study is concerned solely with fantasy, the increase of standard fairytale words in the juvenile samples may indicate that

the child fantasies stay closer to the conventions of fairytales than do the adult fantasies. The other two starred categories may have a more general importance for children's literature; the home-related words encompass the daily environment most important to children, and, as Spache noted, "animalness" has a strong appeal for them. There is actually a miniscule decrease in school-related terms (distinguished more precisely than in Table 4.8, the school words are .07% in the adult samples and .05% in the children's). This probably reflects the nature of the works chosen. A large general sample of children's books might show an increase in school terms. The present samples suggest there may be a slight increase in some child-relevant words. I hope some future studies either validate or disprove these findings.

Selected words from one of the categories just considered (size) when added to intensifiers and diminutives should, according to numerous commentators, reveal that children's literature deals in extremes like "teen-weeny" or "great big" and overuses intensifiers. Exclamatory words are also reportedly used excessively. As heavy use of these groups would create a gushy style (which is considered inferior), these accusations should be tested. The samples yielded the following:

TABLE 4.9

TOTAL OCCURRENCES OF WORDS DENOTING SIZE

	Adult Samples	Children's Samples
big	1	5
great	26	24
huge	6	4
little	13	37
small	5	4
tiny	2	3

With the possible exception of little, none of these seems to be especially marked as a juvenile word. Indeed big occurs 5 times for children and only once for adults, but numbers are too small to predicate much on. Table 4.10 shows that there is sometimes an increase in the use of intensifiers for juveniles among the four authors and consistently one in exclamations.

TABLE 4.10

PERCENTAGES OF INTENSIFIERS AND EXCLAMATIONS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Intensifiers	.8	1.7	1.2	1.0	1.7	1.8	.6	.9
Exclamations	.06	.4	.04	.2	.1	.5	.04	1.0

The percentages, however, do not suggest a heavy use of intensifiers in any of the samples. Wilde in both the adult and the children's and Hawthorne, in the children's, approach 2%. These are indeed the most conversational sounding passages, and conversation relies more heavily on emphasis words than writing normally does. Also Wilde often parodies "gushy" speech.

Wilde and Hawthorne are relatively high on exclamatory words in their children's passages although Gardner with his nearly 1% has the largest proportion. As exclamations are usually a very small fraction of any piece of writing, perhaps in this case the increases shown in the four juvenile samples are significant even though small. But the figures do not show any radical difference between the juvenile and adult samples in a dependence on these types of emphatic words.

Table 4.11 which compares the proportions of the major, semantic bearing word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) reveals some consistent patterns of change between the child and adult passages:

TABLE 4.11

PERCENTAGES OF SEMANTIC WORD CLASSES

(A = Adult Samples, C. = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Nouns	22.1	20.0	18.5	17.0	21.7	20.0	24.4	20.6
Nominals	22.4	20.6	19.2	17.3	22.4	21.0	24.6	21.4
[illegible]	13.3	15.9	14.8	18.4	14.5	16.4	16.1	18.6
All Verbals	16.7	18.9	17.4	20.4	17.5	18.9	19.0	22.2
[illegible]ives	10.2	7.9	8.1	7.0	9.7	8.9	7.1	6.6
Adverbs	6.5	7.0	7.3	7.7	6.2	7.0	6.1	7.5
Adj. & Adv.	16.7	15.3	15.4	15.9	15.9	15.9	13.2	14.1

Nominals include nouns and gerunds; verbals include finite verbs, auxiliaries, infinitives and subordinating participles. The total of adjectives and adverbs is the "M" statistic referred to in the text.

In every case in Table 4.11 there is a decrease in nouns and an increase in verbs in the juvenile samples, and the modifiers connected with these two classes follow suit. But what does less nominal or more verbal mean in terms of style? Rulon Wells, in his article "Nominal and Verbal Style, concluded that "A nominal sentence is likely to be longer, in letters and in syllables, than its verbal counterpart" (Freeman 301). A good example of this can be

found in Joseph Williams' rhetoric, Style: Ten Lessons in [redacted]rity and Grace. Williams begins with the problems created by over nominalization and compares these two sentences:

> There will be a suspension of these programs by the Dean until his reevaluation of their progress has occurred.
>
> The dean will suspend these programs until he reevaluates their progress.
>
> (Williams 10)

The first sentence had 91 letters and 30 syllables, the second, 62 and 19 respectively. And it is not simply that the noun forms (suspension and reevaluation) are longer than their verbal counterparts, but also that heavy use of nouns can breed extra prepositional phrases, passives, and unnecessary there/it constructions. All of these lengthen a sentence. Therefore, it is logical for a writer aiming for brevity and simplicity to reduce nominals. Perhaps this tendency of a verbal style to be brief explains its ascendency in the juvenile samples. It seems the case with the four authors. The three nineteenth-century children's samples show about a 2% reduction and Gardner's a 5% one.

In every case in my samples, the verbs increased in the juvenile passages in a proportion similar to the decrease in nouns. In tandem with the notion that nominal styles tend to be wordy and obscure is the belief that

verbal styles aid clarity. For instance, Don P. Brown and his co-authors of a composition text claim that when "a piece of writing seems unclear, you will often discover that it has a low verb density" (Brown 51). The range they defined ran from 11% verbs for low density to 20% verbs for high density. (Their count included finite and auxiliary verbs.) Cluett's verb count included these and participles, gerunds, and infinitives, and he concluded that "as a style reaches 18.5% in its total verb items, it tends to become a verbal style" (Cluett 74). My division of verbals varied from these slightly (gerunds falling under the noun class), but by either Cluett's or Brown's criteria the children's samples can be classified as verbal.

But is a verbal style more accessible to children? Walter Loban, who cites Brown's theory, found in his study of grade school children's writing that "verb density does not appear to distinguish among the groups [high, low, and random]" (Loban 66-7). Cluett found that because "The verb system in English. . .is so complicated as to allow a very extensive set of alternative patterns," there is no one "verbal style" in English (29). Taking simply the categories used by Brown and Loban (finite verb and auxiliary), I considered the statistics on the 50 authors

covered in Cluett's study (given in the tables in his chapter "Historical Matters") and found a 14.8% average for verbs. Lewis Mumford (10.8%) and Henry James (11.4%) had the lowest density, and this might seem to sustain Brown's contention that the fewer the verbs, the less clear the style; but Joseph Addison, touted for his typical eighteenth-century wit and clarity, is next with 12% verbs. At the other end of the scale, the philosopher Berkeley had 18.9% verbs, and Gertrude Stein, with 20.2% had the highest verb density. I do not recall anyone ever accusing either of these last two of easy readability.

To return to the authors dealt with in this present study, in the adult samples their average is 14.3% verbs with very little deviation among them. Like most of the 50 authors from the York Inventory, they cluster around 15%, moderate density by Brown's scale. For total verbals the figure is 17.4%, which (even without the inclusion of gerunds) approaches Cluett's standard for a verbal style. The children's samples average 17.3% verbs and 19.9% total verbals, high density by both sets of standards. Whatever factors cause it, whether the avoidance of nominalizations or the attempt to quicken the narrative pace, the children's passages tend toward a more verbal style. But it is within a normal range, and, across the board, the

styles of the four authors are fairly balanced between nominal and verbal.

The other major semantic class, modifiers, should, according to stylists, reveal distinctions. Cluett comments, "of all words the modifying words can most easily be edited in or out" and that therefore "the 'M' statistic best separates writer from writer" (Cluett 92-3). The "modifier" statistic is derived by adding together adjectives (including participial adjectives) and all adverbs (descriptive, function, and intensifying). More complex modificaton like that of prepositional phrases and subordinating participles is considered in the next chapter, but the simple, single-word modifiers should, in theory, reveal stylistic differences.

In my samples, however, the "M" varies only slightly among the four authors, and there is no pattern in the changes between adult and juvenile samples. The extremes are 16.7% modifiers in Hawthorne and 13.2% in Gardner (both adult passages), and, as Table 4.11 shows, the "M" statistic drops in two of the children's passages (Hawthorne's and MacDonald's), remains the same in Wilde's, and inreases in Gardner's. These figures do nothing either to prove or disprove the two contradictory assumptions, one, that children's books are highly descriptive or, two,

that they have fewer modifiers to aid readability.

Furthermore, when the "M" statistic is split into word classes, changes in the percentages of adjectives and adverbs do not to prove much either. The decrease in adjectives and increase in adverbs in the children's samples seem to reflect little more than a correlation with the decrease in nominals and the increase in verbals. The ratios of noun to adjective and verb to adverb are almost identical in the juvenile and adult samples. The nominal-verbal proportions seem to be the determining factor here rather than any choice to be more or less descriptive.

With an average of 15.3% modifiers in the adult samples and 15% in the juvenile, the four authors are, however, more prone to use modifiers than many of the 50 authors in Cluett's study. The overall average there was 12.8% modifiers (with those 25 authors roughly contemporary with my four averaging 13.8%). In the York samples, Thomas Hobbes has the lowest "M" with 7.7% and Thomas Carlyle, with 17.7% the highest; most cluster around the average. Hawthorne seems the only author in my study to use what might be termed excessive modificaton. Gardner is closest to the average.

None seems to change a habit of modification in any

marked manner when writing for children, but the fact that all four authors had more than 6% of their total words in the adverb class may have some significance for this study. Only 9 (or 18%) of Cluett's authors had a 6% or higher incidence of adverbs, and only Carlyle topped 7%, which all of the children's passages do. Although Loban weights adjectives and adverbs equally for his transformational analysis, he found a preference for adverbial clauses in school children in the high and random groups (Loban 46-49). Cluett notes that narrative, as "likely to be concerned with time and place" (93), is often high on adverbs. This, in conjunction with the adverbial tendency Loban found, may explain why the children's samples consistently have more adverbs than even the narrative writers in Cluett's samples.

But, as Cluett contends, word-class typology is very complex and often of "limited use" (Cluett 96). For instance, patterns of pronoun usage should, one would think, help reveal whether passages are personal in tone (high in personal pronouns with human referents) or impersonal (low in such pronouns). Such a difference might show up if genres such as the expository essay and the short story were being compared, but, as Table 4.12 shows, there is very litle statistical difference between the two

sets, adult and children's.

TABLE 4.12

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne A	Hawthorne C	MacDonald A	MacDonald C	Wilde A	Wilde C	Gardner A	Gardner C
% of Total Words	8.5	10.2	11.5	14.7	11.5	9.6	13.0	11.6
[redacted]ronouns:								
Neut. Sing.	21.8	16.4	16.3	16.0	22.5	15.3	11.9	1.8
Neut. Pl.	11.5	15.1	11.7	6.5	9.3	14.1	14.5	1.5
Masc.	8.2	25.2	.3	10.0	37.5	37.9	42.0	39.1
Fem.	18.4	12.2	11.1	36.9	5.0	2.8	3.2	7.5
First Sing.	20.5	14.1	59.2	18.9	17.1	21.0	17.4	15.4
First Pl.	11.0	2.6	.3	0	1.4	.9	3.8	3.2
Second Per.	8.6	14.4	1.1	11.7	7.2	8.0	7.2	11.5
[redacted]h Human Referents	66.7	68.5	72.0	77.5	72.7	70.6	73.6	76.6

Note that, even excluding the neuter plural (because "they" can have either persons or objects as antecedent), we see a heavy use of human referent pronouns in all the samples. Most of the person and gender differences reflect the choice of narrators and characters, and, with one exception, establish no clear pattern.

The only pattern of pronoun usage that has any importance for this study is the consistent increase in the use of the second person pronoun in the children's samples. This high incidence of you seems correlated mainly with the increase in dialogue. The passages analyzed do not contain blatant examples of direct address to the reader such as Rudyard Kipling's, "You must not forget the suspenders, Best Beloved" (Just So Stories). Hawthorne, in "Circe's Palace," interjects, "you might possibly have heard a low growl," and "such as you may always hear," and in "The Golden Fleece," Hawthorne informs the reader that Medea had eyes into which "you can seem to see a very great way . . . yet can never be certain," and in "King Midas" we have, "a very pretty piece of work as you may suppose." But these account for only 4 of 38 you's in all the samples. The rest are in dialogue, one speaker addressing the other as "you." In his adult passages, Hawthorne uses "reader," "whoever," and "we" to draw the reader into the text. Such direct address is reputedly common in children's books, but this impression is probably due to the popularity of Victorian juvenile literature, which shared with its adult counterpart a proclivity for addressing the "dear reader." Hawthorne, as we have seen, and MacDonald employ it in both adult and juvenile writing. The use of you is one

rhetorical trick for involving the reader. It may carry some weight this way even when the you is a character spoken to in dialogue. In this sense the children's samples may be slightly more personal than the adult ones, but pronouns do not change in any major way between the two sets of samples.

To sum up the meaning of the many vocabulary related factors that have been considered, let us take them in ascending order of their importance. The least significant factors found in this study seem to be the incidence of foreign words (too few to allow for any conclusion) and the use of negative function words (which revealed no pattern of change from adult to juvenile). Neither did the "M" statistic show any consistent tendency towards more or less modification in children's books.

Some factors that suggested patterns, but with far from conclusive statistics, are total negative words (where the ratio was 2:1, adult to child. However, the average difference was only 1.2%. The word little occurred 37 times in the children's samples to 13 times in the adult and may well be, as it is often designated, a "children's word." But other size words were not so clearly distinguished by relative occurrence. Intensifiers and exclamations showed a small but consistent increase

(average .3% and .5% in the juvenile samples, and among the pronouns, you was used more often (average 5.4% increase) in all the children's samples. Also of interest, but problematic as to significance, were the figures on words relevant to childhood. The juvenile samples showed a 4.7% total increase in such words, but only terms relating to home, animals, and fairytales stood out as markedly greater.

Clearer patterns were established for such distinctions as relative amounts of abstract and concrete words. The children's samples consistently registered more concrete on Gillie's scale with an average 11.5 difference, and there were were an average 38 fewer abstract words in the juvenile passages. Also consistent were the increase in verbals and decrease in nominals for children. The adjectives and adverbs correlated with this, and the number of adverbs (7% or more of the total words) in the children's samples may be of importance concerning style for children as, historically speaking, this is a very high adverb count.

Although only the selections from John Gardner's works were matched against a standard word frequency list, he did show a 6.3% increase in the children's passages of words considered common and accessible. An assessment of

internal word frequency showed that the children's samples had an average of 11.9% fewer different words and 6.9% fewer unique words. Finally, the analysis of word origins showed that the children's passages contained an average of 13.8% fewer Latinate words and 13.5% more Nordic-based ones.

Therefore, the study shows that vocabulary in children's books is likely to favor concrete words in Anglo-Saxon based English, repeat words more often than adult prose usually does, and tend to a verbal style and a corresponding high usage of adverbs. Other factors, such as words relevant to childhood, intensifiers, diminutives and exclamations, may increase slightly, but the evidence for this is inconclusive in this study. A literary dialect of childhood is only partly defined by this look at the vocabulary of sample authors.

Chapter 5

Syntax for Juveniles

How Complex?

> The changes in the norms of syntax are as significant as the ones in vocabulary, if not more so.
> (Robert Cluett, Prose Style and Critical Reading, p. 258)

When words are considered not for their individual content but in their grammatical relations to each other, we are dealing with syntax, a word from the Greek, meaning "to arrange together." There are many ways to analyze an author's use of the grammatical arrangements a language offers, but in this study I give most attention to those syntactical choices that can be readily measured statistically, things like the incidence of function words (prepositions, determiners, connectives) and distinctions within these and other word classes. The computer program also counted the frequency rate of three-class patterns (like the sequence adjective-noun-verb). The statistics

gained from these approaches helped determine the validity of some of my hypotheses about syntax for child readers.

The hypotheses about syntax, listed in Chapter 1, are, in summary, that children's books contain much coordination and little subordination, simple tense forms and few verbals in proportion to finite verbs, much direct address and dialogue, little sentence inversion, and repetitive syntactic patterns. I added a few more hypotheses while working with the samples: that there are fewer pronouns per noun in the juvenile passages; that determiners, especially definites (the, this, etc.) increase; and that prepositions decrease.

My first new hypothesis was that children's books would contain fewer pronouns in proportion to nouns than do adult books because a young audience would need more referents. But the figures in Table 5.1 show an increase of pronouns per noun in two of the four authors and very little difference in the others.

TABLE 5.1

NOUN : PRONOUN

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
% Nouns	22.4	20.6	19.2	17.3	22.4	21.0	24.6	21.4
% Pron.	8.5	10.2	11.5	14.7	11.5	9.6	13.0	11.6
N : Pron.	[3:1	2:1]	[1.7:1	1.2:1]	[2:1	2.2:1]	[1.9:1	1.8:1]

The greater amount of dialogue in the children's passages may account for some of the increases in pronouns. The dialogue percentages are as follows: Hawthorne, adult, 23%, child, 38%; MacDonald, adult, 9%, child 28%; Wilde, adult, 35%, child, 40%; Gardner, adult 30%, child, 62%. Pronominal tags may influence the pronoun count in the children's passages, but Gardner has the greatest increase in dialogue and his pronouns decrease. Only in Hawthorne's passages is there much correlation between relative amounts of dialogue and relative pronoun usage. Perhaps the high incidence of you is also a factor. Whatever the explanation, we are left with an increase in pronouns in half of the children's passages and a decrease in the other half.

Investigation of the subject has convinced me that pronoun proportions have very complex causes. Cluett, for instance, finds Hemingway's style pronominal and feels that this contributes to its reputation as simple plainstyle (Cluett 152). Yet pronouns are not a fully developed part of young children's vocabulary. Paula Menyuk in her study of 96 young school children found that pronominalization was somewhat infrequent; only a third of the 48 kindergarteners used it and a little over half of the first-graders (Bar-Adon 294). Genre also seems to affect pronoun usage. Donald Ross, in his article on the influence of genre, for example, notes that "pronouns in stage dramas are usually three times more frequent than in essays" (265). But Wilde, the playwright among my authors has the lowest average pronoun count even though Dorian frequently reads like one of his plays. The wide variety of influences on pronoun usage may explain why there is no one pattern of change between the adult and juvenile samples.

Another added hypothesis that did prove true was that the use of determiners and especially of definite articles would increase in the children's samples. The reasons for this are less complex. For one thing, Cluett and several of the readability formulas connect a low use of determiners in proportion to nouns with a high use of plurals and abstractions (Cluett 68-69). As already shown, the children's samples are less abstract than the adult ones, especially in noun choice. Concerning another facet of determiners, Fries regards definite determiners as "sequence signals" (246), and here again there is some relevancy to children's literature as time-ordered narrative is especially common there. Table 5.2 gives some support for the hypothesis that determiners and especially definite determiners increase in children's books.

TABLE 5.2

PERCENTAGES OF DETERMINERS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Definite	7.5	6.8	6.9	7.7	7.0	8.1	5.8	9.9
Number	.3	.4	.3	.1	.4	.4	.6	.3
Indef.	2.9	3.2	3.2	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.6
Poss.	3.0	2.9	2.3	2.3	2.9	1.9	3.8	2.2
Negative	.2	.2	.6	.5	.2	.2	.6	.2
Misc.	.7	.7	1.0	.7	.6	.9	.9	1.0
Totals & % of Sample	14.6	14.2	14.3	14.0	14.0	14.3	13.9	15.2
N:Det	[1.5:1	1.4:1]	[1.3:1	1.2:1]	[1.6:1	1.4:1]	[1.7:1	1.4:1]

Except for Hawthorne, there is an increase in the use of the definite article, and although the percentage of determiners decreases about half a percentage point in Hawthorne and MacDonald, when the noun-determiner ratios are considered, all the authors conform to the pattern of more determiners per noun in the juvenile samples. All also fall within a normal range of determiner usage which, according to the York Inventory figures reported by Cluett,

clusters around 13% for total determiners (67).

Although Northrope Frye (Anatomy of Criticism 61), links an increased use of definite articles with the ironic mode, which is usually not found in children's books, and Menyuk reports that the definite is the last type of article that small children master (Menyuk 34), nevertheless, the weight of other commentary (especially among reading specialists) and the evidence of this study indicates that an increased use of definite determiners is one of the characteristics of children's books. A slight increase in the proportion of determiner to noun may also exist, but here the evidence is less conclusive.

Prepositions, those small but powerful function words have been ignored or down-played in many stylistic studies. Josephine Miles did not include them in her count of word classes in Poetry and Change or in her earlier studies. Charles Fries gives them less than a page in his book The Structure of English, and yet Cluett notes that the sequence preposition-determiner-noun is the most common in the language (Cluett 68). As a word class, the preposition ranks second, third, or fourth in usage in the samples of my study (behind nouns and/or pronouns or determiners), and Table 5.3 shows that these four authors are quite typical in the number of prepositions they use: 64% of the 50

authors that Cluett tabulated fall between 9% and 13% usage for prepositions (Cluett 260-265). Here, only Gardner's children's sample falls below this range.

TABLE 5.3

PREPOSITIONS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Percent of Total	12.0	9.7	12.1	10.4	11.7	9.6	10.9	8.3
[redacted] of Phrases:								
% Adj.	37.1	31.7	32.9	34,6	41.1	34.7	33.8	15.7
% Adv.	58.7	62.7	61.5	62.0	55.8	61.6	64.1	80.3
% With Rel. Pron.	4.2	5.6	5.6	3.4	3.1	3.7	2.1	4.0

The figures on the types of prepositional phrases show (with the exception of MacDonald) some correlation with the authors' adjectival/adverbial and nominal/verbal proportions (see Table 4.11). Of more interest for this study is the consistent pattern of decreased prepositons in the juvenile samples. The reasons for the reduction seem multiple. It is, after all, impossible to judge whether fewer nouns caused the reduction or vice versa. An

increase in modifiers could also explain the reduction because the information in most prepositional phrases can be expressed by an adjective or adverb, but Table 4.11 recorded a slight tendency to reduce modifiers as well as nouns. Therefore, some other influences must be behind the decrease in prepositions. For one thing, regarding the characteristics of a dialect of childhood, the findings of several studies show that immature speakers and writers do not use the prepositional option as often or as the mature do. We have tended to think of modification by subordinate and relative clauses as the area of syntax difficult for children, but research has called this into question. Walter Loban includes prepositional phrases among "those syntactical strategies for classifying thought relationships" (12). He and others suggest that the use of genitives, adjectives, verbals, and prepositional phrases may more accurately signal a mature style than the use of dependent clauses.

Menyuk, studying language in very early childhood, reports in her monograph Sentences Children Use that prepositions begin to appear at about age 2, usually lumped under the sound "uh" (grammatically though not phonetically distinguished from the indefinite article at this stage). Prepositions of place appear from ages 3 to 9, but

"prepositional Phrases of manner and time do not begin to appear until some time later" (Menyuk 35). Following the stages of syntactic development of grade-school children, O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris found that one of the most significant increases in usage was of noun plus prepositional phrase: in speech, from 3.9 kindergarten occurrences per 100 T-units to 7.3 for grade 7 and in writing from 4.3 in grade 3 to 9.9 in grade 7 (O'Donnell 59-60). The higher incidence of prepositions in the writing leads me to another possible reason for the reduction of prepositions in the juvenile samples in my study; namely that high usage of the preposition is somewhat literary. While classifying the prepositional phrases (which, after circling the 311 code numbers in red, I did by hand), I noticed a visual pattern: prepositions tended to cluster in the non-dialogue sections. They occurred less often when everyday speech was being imitated. So perhaps the higher amount of dialogue and the more conversational tone of children's books is also a factor in this preposition reduction. A study that compared Charles Fries' taped telephone conversations with the holdings of the York Inventory or some other computer-stored body of literature might determine how literary prepositions are, but that is beyond the

parameters of this study. Of the several possible theories that may explain the smaller number of prepositions in the children's books tested, I find most interesting the one that regards th use of prepositional phrases as a sophisticated syntactic strategy in English, one mastered slowly by children and therefore used somewhat sparingly by those children's authors who are sensitive to subtleties of juvenile speech patterns. But, whatever the reason, prepositions are reduced in the children's samples.

The syntactical issue which has received the most attention from those involved with the books produced for children is that of coordination versus subordination. For instance, several stylesheets for juvenile books from the publishers surveyed asked for a reduction of complex sentences. Furthermore, excessive coordination of clauses is usually linked with immature language. But the matter may not be this simple. O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris, besides noting the significant increase in prepositions by the end of grade school, comment that "One of the most enigmatic features in the whole array of data collected in this study is the showing that kindergarten children used relative clauses more frequently than did children at any other stage, in either speech or writing" (O'Donnell 60). In their conclusions, they note that, regarding syntactic

strategies,

> the greatest overall increases and most frequently significant increments from grade level to adjacent grade level were found in the use of adverbial infinitives, sentence adverbials, coordinations within T-units, and modifications of nouns by adjectives, participles, and prepositional phrases. In the theory of transformational grammar, all these constructions are explained as being produced by application of deletion rules.
>
> (O'Donnell 90)

They go on to say that, although the amount of subordination has long been used to calculate syntactic maturity, their findings call into question the sensitiveness of this measure. They found, besides the high early incidence of relative clauses, that "Nominal, adjectival, and adverbial clauses were all used quite often by kindergarten children, and none of the types was employed in speech in any grade at a rate significantly higher than in the grade below" (O'Donnell 98). Therefore, the fact that Hawthorne, MacDonald, Wilde, and Gardner did not make major changes in their choice of connectives when they wrote the children's passages may not be as surprising as it initially seemed to me.

By looking carefully at Table 5.4, "Types of Connectives and their Percent of the Total Words"; Table 5.5, "Frequency of Types of Connectives," and Table 5.6,

"Percentage of and Placement of Subordinating Elements," which are grouped together, we can gain an overview of this complicated matter.

TABLE 5.4

TYPES OF CONNECTIVES AND THEIR PERCENT OF TOTAL WORDS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Sentence Coordinator:	.8	1.2	1.7	2.0	1.3	2.8	1.4	3.0
Non-sentence Coordinator:	4.7	4.0	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.1	2.7	2.3
Correlative:	.6	1.0	.3	.3	.2	.2	.4	.1
Subordinator:	2.1	2.6	2.2	1.8	1.9	.6	1.9	2.0
Relative:	1.5	1.7	1.4	.9	1.2	1.1	1.2	.6
Transition "however"	.3	.1	.1	.03	.3	3.1	.04	.2

TABLE 5.5

FREQUENCY OF TYPES OF CONNECTIVES

Hawthorne

Adult Samples			Children's Samples		
	Freq.	% of Con.		Freq.	% of Con.
Non-S Coor.	145	42.0%	Non-S Coor.	126	33.4%
Subordinator	66	19.1%	Subordinator	82	21.7%
Relative	46	13.3%	Relative	53	14.1%
Sen. Coor.	24	6.9%	Sen. Coor.	39	10.3%
Sub. Part.	19	5.5%	Sub. Part.	36	9.5%
Correlative	18	5.2%	Correl.	27	7.2%
Sub.Part.Pas.	13	3.8%	Sub.Part.Pas.	4	1.1%
Transition	9	2.6%	Transition	4	1.1%
Deleted Sub.	5	1.4%	Del. Sub.	3	.8%
Neg. Cor.	0	0	Neg. Cor.	3	.8%

MacDonald

Adult Samples			Children's Samples		
	Freq.	% of Con.		Freq.	% of Con.
Non-S Coor.	87	32.0%	Non-S Coor.	94	30.7%
Subordinator	56	20.6%	Sen. Coor.	59	19.3%
Sen. Coor.	43	15.8%	Subordinator	52	17.0%
Relative	36	13.2%	Sub. Part.	41	13.4%
Sub. Part.	22	8.1%	Relative	25	8.2%
Deleted Sub.	16	5.9%	Deleted Sub.	24	7.8%
Correlative	7	2.6%	Correlative	7	2.3%
Transition	3	1.1%	Neg. Cor.	2	.7%
Sub.Part.Pas.	2	.7%	Sub.Part.Pas	1	.3%
Neg. Cor.	0	0	Transition	1	.3%

Wilde

Adult Samples			Children's Samples		
	Freq.	% of Con.		Freq.	% of Con.
Non-S Coor.	77	31.7%	Non-S Coor.	81	30.9%
Subordinator	48	19.8%	Sen. Coor.	71	27.1%
Sen. Coor.	33	13.6%	Subordinator	40	15.3%
Relative	30	12.3%	Relative	29	11.1%
Sub. Part.	28	11.5%	Sub. Part.	20	7.6%
Deleted Sub.	13	5.3%	Deleted Sub.	11	4.2%
Correlative	5	2.1%	Correlative	5	1.9%
Sub.Part.Pas.	5	2.1%	Sub.Part.Pas.	4	1.5%
Transition	4	1.6%	Neg. Cor.	1	.4%
Neg. Cor.	0	0	Transition	0	0

Gardner

Adult Samples			Children's Samples		
	Freq.	% of Con		Freq.	% of Con.
Non-S Coor.	72	27.8%	Sen Coor.	73	27.4%
Subordinator	50	19.3%	Non.S Coor.	56	21.1%
Sen. Coor.	38	14.7%	Subordinator	49	18.4%
Sub. Part.	34	13.1%	Sub. Part.	34	12.8%
Relative	32	12.4%	Deleted Sub.	31	11.7%
Deleted Sub.	12	4.6%	Relative	14	5.3%
Correlative	10	3.9%	Transition	6	2.3%
Sub.Part.Pas.	8	3.1%	Correlative	3	1.1%
Neg. Cor.	2	.8%	Sub.Part.Pas.	0	0
Transition	1	.4%	Net. Cor.	0	0

TABLE 5.6

PERCENT AND PLACEMENT OF SUBORDINATING ELEMENTS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
All Sub.* % of Total	4.8	5.6	5.1	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.1	5.2
% of Con.	43.0	47.2	48.0	46.7	51.6	39.7	52.0	48.0
[redacted] Sen. with Sub.	63.5	65.0	60.0	45.0	51.6	50.8	52.5	42.8
% with Initial Sub.	3.5	5.7	4.6	3.7	5.6	1.9	3.0	5.0
% Sub. 1st 3 Words	11.3	10.7	15.7	11.5	16.1	5.6	10.4	14.9
[redacted] point in Sen. of Sub.	18.3	18.5	17.4	14.2	20.3	15.6	14.7	15.8
Midpoint Ave. Sen. Length	26.7	22.5	23.6	14.8	20.0	20.8	17.2	15.7

*All subordinators = subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns, deleted subordinators and relatives, and subordinating participles.

First note the figures on coordination in Table 5.4. It is a prevalent assumption that children's language and, by way of imitation, children's books contain a high amount of sentence coordination. Children's language itself apparently does. O'Donnell,Griffin, and Norris found that

"Younger students. . .are excessively fond of coordinating main clauses. . . . One sentence combining transformation they learn early and tend to overuse is conjunctional coordination without deletion" (O'Donnell 21). They cite studies by Strickland (1962), Loban (1963), and Hunt (1965) which "found frequencies of main-clause coordination to vary inversely with advance in grade level" (O'Donnell 21).

In regard to the language in literature for children, the matter does not seem so straightforward. There is indeed a consistent increase in the juvenile samples; the greatest, however, is only 1.6% (in Gardner's juvenile passages). Coordination within T-units (non-sentence coordinators) decreases minutely in 3 of the juvenile samples. According to the O'Donnell study, such coordination involves deletion rules and is less typical of children. Turning to Table 5.5, note that such non-sentence coordinaton is the most used connective in every sample except Gardner's juvenile one. Only he follows the assumed pattern for children's books and favors sentence coordination. Furthermore, none of the authors is excessive in total use of coordinators (5.5%, adult and 5.2%, children's for Hawthorne; 5.1% and 5.3% for MacDonald; 4.4% and 5.9% for Wilde; and 4.1% and 5.3% for

Gardner). These percentiles are not out of line with the 4.3% average for twentieth-century writers from Cluett's samples (265), and, Cluett notes in his study that "prior to 1825 a writer with fewer that 5% coordinators. . .was the exception" (227). He speculates that the modern decline is connected with the shorter sentence and the decline in "formal parallelism and in the copia that is often associated with it" (Cluett 227). Children's literature often retains a tendency to lists, to elaboration by example (both copia), and to repetition in parallel form. Such strategies exist in Wilde's and Gardner's juvenile passages and may explain why they have larger increases in coordination than Hawthorne and MacDonald do.

Further examination of the frequency list of connectives (Table 5.5) reveals that only Hawthorne retains the same order in both adult and juvenile samples. The other three authors reverse (among other things) the order of subordinators and sentence coordinators, favoring subordination in the adult samples and coordination in the juvenile. But this seeming proof of the hypothesis that children's books contain fewer dependent clauses is dashed when relative pronouns and deleted subordinators are added in. Then the frequency order for the children's samples

reads--Hawthorne: total subordinators, 138, sentence coordinators,39; MacDonald: 101 and 59; Wilde: 80 and 71; Gardner: 94 and 73. All the authors used more subordinating devices than coordinators to connect clauses in the passages they wrote for children. And the count just given does not even include such devices as subordinating participles, although Table 5.6 does include them.

I have been mainly concerned with clausal subordination, but, as Loban points out, "this seems an unnecessarily narrow concept of what subordinating actually is in human communication" (13). His long-term study of school children showed a fairly consistent rise in the use of dependent clauses among all the groups until grade nine, when the high group leveled off and the two lower groups caught up. The explanation," Loban says, "is that dependent clauses are not the only or necessarily always the best syntactic strategy for subordinating elements of thought" (45).

Among the more sophisticated strategies that Loban goes on to discuss are gerunds, participles, and infinitives. Such verbals, which exist syntactically in a gray area between the subordination of and the predication of ideas, are the next group to be considered. I have not

encountered any standard theories on how these forms of syntax are reputedly employed in children's literature. The most interesting comments are again drawn from Loban, who notes a strong dichotomy between oral and written performance where the "data actually move in opposite directions with the High group showing substantially more nonfinite verbs in written than in oral language" (Loban 68-69). He concluded there was more conscious effort to use such forms in writing by the High group and that with the Low group performance did not reflect competence. As far as infinitives are concerned, both Loban (68) and Menyuk (Sentences 105-106) found the use of the infinitive developed early and seemed to pose no problems of easy acquirement.

As Table 5.7 shows, the samples of the four authors show no significant patterns in the use of nonfinite verbs, Neither in the total verbals used nor in the distinctions among them was there any consistent tendency to change usage in verbals when writing for children.

TABLE 5.7

VERBALS: PERCENT OF TOTAL WORDS

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Gerund	.2	.5	.7	.3	.7	.6	.6	.8
Gerund Pas.	.03	.09	.04	0	0	0	0	0
Infinitive	1.9	1.8	1.7	.8	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.1
Inf. Pas .	.03	.3	.04	0	0	.04	.04	.08
Participle	.3	.3	.4	.5	.4	.04	.5	.2
Part. Pas.	.9	.4	1.1	.4	.8	.9	.8	.7
Sub. Part.	.6	1.1	.9	1.4	1.1	.8	1.3	1.3
Sub.Part.Pas	.4	.1	.07	.04	.2	.2	.3	0
All Verbals Total	4.36	4.6	4.95	3.44	4.8	4.08	4.84	4.9

Infinitives ("The fire continued to burn") and subordinating participles ("The fire, burning out by morning, had to be restarted") are the most popular verbals

with all four authors. With the possible exception of MacDonald's, the very slight reductions in infinitives in the juvenile samples do not seem significant, nor does the slight increase in subordinating participles in all the juvenile samples except Wilde's. The generally low incidence of simple participial adjectives (the burning fire) surprised me; although when added with the passive form (the burned log), their presence becomes a factor and they show a small decrease (average .4%) in the 4 juvenile samples. When all types of participles are counted, the average .4% decrease in the juvenile samples holds, but this difference is too small to prove a hypothesis that participles are used less often in children's books. MacDonald has the greatest decrease in total verbals used in the children's samples (a 1.5% difference), which may be worth noting as in other areas he has proved closest to the standard practice expected for children's authors.

Ability to use the compound tense forms of English finite verbs should, in theory, reveal levels of stylistic sophistication, but findings have been quite contradictory on this matter. Menyuk found that "children have much greater difficulty in reproducing the complex expanded form of the auxiliary than the simple form" (11). Loban, however, who "had expected verb density to show a difference between High and Low groups" found that "the evidence proves otherwise" (67). His data showed no correlation between general linguistic competence and the use of expanded verb forms. Loban speculated that the design of the study (which did not elicit many elaborated tenses) may have been the problem here rather than the theory itself, and he continues to believe that mastery of tense forms is a sign of linguistic maturity. Whatever the answer to this puzzle, the present study's statistics on finite verbs with their auxiliaries given, in Table 5.8, did reveal some patterns of change between the adult and juvenile samples.

TABLE 5.8

FINITE VERBS: MAIN VERBS AND AUXILIARIES

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
% of Total	13.3	15.9	15.8	18.4	14.5	17.4	16.1	19.6
Finite Verbs:								
Transitive	33.3	30.9	28.1	35.1	37.5	32.4	33.8	37.7
Intrans.	16.4	16.3	26.1	22.9	13.3	16.7	18.5	19.5
Passive	15.4	5.4	3.2	1.5	3.9	4.9	4.6	1.5
Copulative	15.7	19.0	17.7	16.3	21.7	16.7	17.1	17.4
Aux. (have)	9.1	5.6	8.7	4.2	5.0	6.7	6.1	9.5
Aux. (will)	1.5	2.4	.8	1.9	.6	2.0	.9	1.9
Aux. (be)	6.6	9.3	3.7	3.9	4.7	8.5	5.6	3.4
Aux. (do)	1.4	2.0	1.5	4.8	3.1	1.8	2.8	2.1
Aux. Modal	9.1	6.5	8.0	7.5	8.3	5.8	6.8	6.8
Post Prep.	1.5	2.6	2.2	1.9	1.9	4.5	3.8	3.8
gressive Tense, % of Main Verbs:								
	.2	5.5	2.5	3.0	1.1	5.0	1.6	2.5
cal Auxiliaries' % of Finite Verbs:								
	27.7	25.8	23.0	22.3	21.7	24.8	22.2	20.1
Auxiliaries % of Total	3.7	4.1	3.6	4.1	3.1	4.3	3.6	3.9

After repeating the percentages of finite verbs in the total samples (already given in Table 4.11), Table 5.8 then gives the percent that each subdivision is of the finite verbs. Those classes that showed a fairly consistent pattern of change are the passive form, the auxiliary will, modal auxiliaries, and the progressive tense. Total auxiliaries decreased in 3 of the juvenile samples.

The first of these findings, that the passive form is reduced in 3 of the 4 juvenile samples, lends support to the hypothesis that passives occur less often in children's books. I also expected to find fewer compound tense forms in the children's passages, and the reduction of auxiliaries in 3 of the juvenile samples bears this out. Wilde is the exception as he is with passives. He increases his use of auxiliaries by 3.1% and his passives by 1%. Hawthorne decreases auxiliaries by 1.9% and passives by 10%; MacDonald by .7% and 1.7%, and Gardner by 2.1% and passives by 3.1%. The use of modal auxiliaries decreases in 3 of the juvenile samples (Hawthorne's by 2.6%, MacDonald by .5%, and Wilde by 2.5%). Gardner's remains unchanged.

Two unexpected results are the increases in all the juvenile samples of the progressive tense (calculated by subtracting the number of passives from auxiliary be) and

of the future tense. There is an average 2.6% increase in the progressive tense and an average 1.1% increase in the future tense. A possible reason for this difference is that books written for young people are likely to have a forward-looking, on-going thrust, and the future and the progressive are the verb tenses that express this. All of the noted changes, however, are slight and merely suggest rather than prove tendencies toward fewer passives, modals, and auxiliaries in general, and toward increased progressive and future tenses in literature for children.

Another element of syntax is the ordering of word classes in sentences. This is especially important in English. The two questions posed here are whether certain orderings are more typical of children's literature and whether syntactic patterns are less various. To help answer these questons, the computer was programmed to calculate the total number and the frequency of 3-class sequences. This gives something like the "D" statistic that L.T. Milic developed, a statistic that shows different syntactic patterns in a text. Commonly used as one of the measures to determine authorship, it also, as Cluett comments, gives an index of the degree to which an author "tends to exploit the possibilities of word arrangement that the language offers" (50). The York Inventory "D"

values are mainly between 820 and 960, with exceptions like the Bible (510 and 710 in two samples) and Sidney who tops 1000. My figures, like Milic's, are lower because of a smaller number of classes. But after figuring probability, weighting, and sample size factors, I calculated that multiplied by 1.75 my figures can be roughly compared with those in Cluett's study. Note also that when each author is compared with himself, adult against juvenile passages, the differences in sample size must be taken into account. These caveats stated, the results appear in Table 5.9

TABLE 5.9

"D" STATISTIC: THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT 3-CLASS SEQUENCES

(A = Adult Samples, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
"D"	464	515	437	419	434	403	440	461
Total Wds	3073	3154	2551	2837	2485	2573	2654	2412
"D"X1.75	812	901	765	733	760	705	770	807

We see that Gardner and Hawthorne have slightly more syntactic range in their juvenile samples, which would seem to suggest a complication rather than a simplification of style. MacDonald's and Wilde's juveniles "D" statistics do indicate the smaller syntactic range that is assumed for

children's literature, but the difference is slight. This and the two-way split leaves open the question whether syntactic range shrinks or expands in children's books. A larger sampling of authors is needed on this matter.

Increased lexical repetition in children's books seems fairly well established both by this study and many readability experiments, but that this is reinforced by syntactical repetition may not prove true. The first may give the illusion of the other. As Cluett commented on Hemingway, "The enormous amount of lexical repetition in his prose is likely to give the reader. . .an insistent impression of repeated pattern. . . . The lexical repetition seems to be reinforced by repetition of syntactic arrangement" (143). But Hemingway proved average in his syntactic variety, his "D" value almost identical with Nabokov's and higher than, say, Virginia Woolf's.

So the evidence on syntactic variety is inconclusive. Neither does a perusal of the three-class frequency lists given in Table 5.10 offer much information relevant to this study. The table gives only those sequences which appeared 30 times or more in more than one author in the juvenile set or the adult set.

TABLE 5.10

THREE-CLASS FREQUENCIES OCCURRING 30 OR MORE TIMES IN MORE THAN ONE AUTHOR'S JUVENILE OR ADULT SAMPLES

Adult Frequency		Children's Frequency
492	Prep-Det-N	458
356	Det-Adj-N	338
295	N-Prep-Det	253
291	Det-N-Prep	239
185	V-Det-N	214
181	Det-N-Con	206
163	Prep-Det-Adj	131
63	Con-Pron-V	121
110	Adj-N-Prep	112
* 0	Det-N-V	100
71	Con-Det-N	99
73	Adj-N-Con	83
102	V-Prep-Det	82
0	Pron-Aux-V	77
137	N-Prep-N	0*

*Occurs more than 30 times in one author.

The first 7 three-class sequences are in the same order in the children's and adult samples and are not significantly different in frequency. There may be some importance in the doubling of the Connective-Pronoun-Verb sequence, but more samples are needed to verify it. But in conjunction with the higher incidence of the sequences Determiner-Noun-Verb and Pronoun-Auxiliary-Verb, it is possible to argue that the authors favor very basic constructions when writing for children.

A frequency count of the opening and closing three-class sequences in each sentence reveals some interesting patterns. Judging that those sentence openers which occurred 4 or more times in more than one sample were possibly characteristic of either the author or the genre, I tabulated them. The results are shown in Table 5.11.

TABLE 5.11

THREE-CLASS SENTENCE OPENERS OCCURRING FOUR OR MORE TIMES IN MORE THAN ONE SET OF SAMPLES

Adult, Total Sen.: 501		Children's, Total Sen: 609
Frequency		Frequency
13	Pron-Aux-V	28*
4	Con-Pron-V	25
13	Det-N-V	24
26	Pron-V-D	23
*28	Det-Adj-N	21
9	Pron-V-Pron	18
9	Pron-Aux-Adv	15
5	Con-Det-N	15
11	Pron-V-Adv	11
0	Con-Pron-Aux	10
0	Adv-Pron-V	7
12	Pron-V-Adj	6
0	Aux-V-Det	5
0	There-V-Det	5
20	Prep-Det-N	4
10	N-N-V	0
5	Pron-V-Con	0
4	Det-N-Prep	4

*Most frequent.

Table 5.11 shows Determiner-Adjective-Noun as the most frequent opener in the adult samples. This is also the only opener used 4 or more times in all 8 samples. In the children's passages the Pronoun-Auxiliary-Verb sequence is first and Connective-Pronoun-Verb second. The seeming preponderance of pronouns in the openers for juveniles was not borne out by the entire sentence-opener frequency lists where the trend was reversed slightly (27.3% with pronouns in the adult and 25.1% with pronouns in the children's). Of most interest in Table 5.11 is the high incidence in the children's passages of sentences that open with connectives. Among these favored openings there are 5 times as many connective openers in the children's samples. The complete frequency lists show the tendency continuing (though with a smaller ratio of difference); in the adult samples 63 (12.8%) of the sentences opened with connectives while in the juvenile 112 (18.4%) did. Increased sentence coordination is an influence, but it is a slight one. As Table 5.4 on Connectives showed, coordination is not excessive in any of the juvenile samples.

Another sequence that should be noted is Determiner-Noun-Verb. It heads the frequency lists in MacDonald's and Gardner's children's samples with 12 occurrences each, but is absent in Hawthorne's and Wilde's

(though Wilde uses this sequence 4 times in his adult sample). Given the nature of the sentence in English, Determiner-Noun-Verb is among the most basic of possible openers. MacDonald's two second choices (Pronoun-Verb-Pronoun and Pronoun-Verb-Determiner, both with 9 occurrences) suggest the basic sentence pattern Subject-Main Verb-Predicate. I had expected to find a preference for such straightforward openers increased in all the juvenile samples, but this did not prove the case.

The last sentence-opener sequence that should be mentioned is Preposition-Determiner-Noun. As already noted, this is the most popular sequence in the language. Although it leads the frequency list for openers in the adult samples of Hawthorne (7 times) and MacDonald (8 times), it drops below the four-or-more usage in all the juvenile samples except Wilde's (4 times). Total frequencies of Preposition-Determiner-Noun openers are 21 (4.2%) for adult and 11 (1.8%) for juvenile. These figures may suggest some attempt to avoid delaying the subject of the sentence when writing for children, an intuition that sentences with frontal prepositional phrases are more complex. The decrease of Preposition-Determiner-Noun openers and the increase of connective openers in the juvenile passages seem the best candidates for possible

stylistic distinguishers between the two genres as far as syntactic sequence is concerned.

In a manner similar to the way in which I calculated different and unique word occurrence, I used the sentence-opener frequency lists to find the percent of different and unique openers. Table 5.12 shows that three of the four authors had more variety in their juvenile samples. Only MacDonald, who is generally the most syntactically repetitious of the group has a smaller percent of different sentence openers for juveniles.

TABLE 5.12

PERCENTAGES OF DIFFERENT AND OF UNIQUE THREE-CLASS SENTENCE OPENERS

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Different	62.5	66.4	44.4	38.7	51.6	58.9	48.0	53.9
Unique	48.7	50.7	23.1	22.5	37.9	41.9	26.6	38.9

A look at Table 5.13 (Sentences Closers) shows immediately where some of the prepositions missing from the juvenile sentence openers are:

TABLE 5.13

THREE-CLASS SENTENCE CLOSERS OCCURRING MORE THAN FOUR TIMES IN MORE THAN ONE SET OF SAMPLES

Adult, No. of Sen: 501		Children's, No. of Sen: 609
Frequency		Frequency
88	Prep-Det-N	89
40	Det-Adj-N	53
22	V-Det-N	51
4	N-Prep-Pron	11
5	V-Prep-N	8
0	Det-N-V	8
25	N-Prep-N	7
0	V-Prep-Pron	6
4	Prep-Adj-N	5
4	N-Con-N	5
0	Prep-N-N	5

Not only is Preposition-Determiner-Noun overwhelmingly in the majority in the total samples, but it also heads 6 of the frequency lists and comes in second in Wilde's and Gardner's juvenile samples. The complete lists show that 37.5% of the adult and 30.5% of the three-class sentence closers contain prepositions. Table 5.12 also suggests a preference for noun closure which is confirmed by the lists (62.5% of the adult and 57.1% of the juvenile sentences end with a noun). These percentiles correlate with the percentages of prepositions and nouns in the samples, and

whether sentence closure choices affect the incidence of nouns and prepositions or simply reflect it is difficult to determine. Other stylistic choices for ending a sentence do not vary much between the two sets of samples. The correlation of the authors with each other is also higher than for sentence openers. Nor is there a consistent variation between the adult and juvenile samples in regard to number of different and unique sentence closers, as Table 5.14 shows.

TABLE 5.14

PERCENT OF DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE

THREE-CLASS SENTENCE CLOSERS

(A = Adult Sampled, C = Children's Samples)

	Hawthorne		MacDonald		Wilde		Gardner	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
Different	43.5	44.3	47.2	40.8	50.0	45.2	48.0	50.0
Unique	30.4	30.7	28.0	22.0	32.2	33.0	30.5	35.7

A comparison with Table 5.11 will show that Hawthorne's closers are about 20% less various than his openers. Wilde's are sightly less various, Gardner's about the same. MacDonald has more syntactic variation in his closers than in his openers. But the concentration of a few popular choices visible in Table 5.13 suggests that sentence closure is not varied with the same care as sentence initiation and, therefore, is not a particularly good distinguisher.

There seem then to be only a few syntactic areas that are clearly affected by writing for a child audience. The reduction of prepositions and the increase of definite determiners and of pronouns (especially second person <u>you</u>) may be more important than other changes. Several differences proved slighter than anticipated, especially the popularly assumed strong preference for coordination and an avoidance of subordination in children's books. Coordination increased very slightly, and subordination (whether clausal or verbal methods were considered) changed little between the two sets of samples. Expanded verb tenses (especially passives and modals) lessened slightly although the future and progressive tenses increased in the children's samples. Average syntactic variety was even; the average "D" value for the adult passages is 444, for

the juvenile 450. The figures for sentence closers are also similar. Sentence openers were slightly more various in the children's samples but not enough so to conclude that this is characteristic.

This ambiguous evidence about changes in the amount of syntactic variety and the relatively small increases or decreases in certain key word classes that denote syntactical functions suggest that the difference between the syntax of adult and children's literature may not be as great as is assumed. As a growing number of studies of children's own language usage are indicating an earlier and fuller range of syntactic strategies than was formerly suspected, my findings, if confirmed by further research, may help establish what links exist between the style of children's literature and the syntax that children actually use.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

> There is surely no doubt that the child's achievements in systematizing linguistic data, at every stage, go well beyond what he acutally produces in normal speech.
>
> (Noam Chomsky, "Formal Discussion of Miller and Ervin's The Development of Grammar in Child Language," Bar-Adon 343)

This journey through the syntax and vocabulary of four authors who have written for both children and adults has revealed both expected and unexpected tendencies in children's literature. The findings suggest that certain assumptions about language usage in children's books are correct, and that others have a weak basis. The hypotheses listed in the first chapter are repeated here in Figure 6.1.

FIGURE 6.1

HYPOTHESES ON THE CHARACTERISTICS

OF LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Length
- --Paragraphs short
- --Sentences short
- --T-units short
- --Clauses short
- --Words short

Vocabulary
- --Much repetition of words
- --Few Latinate words
- --Few abstract words
- --Few negative words
- --Few allusive words
- --Words relative to childhood
- --Many descriptive words
- --Many intensifiers and diminutives
- --Many exclamations

Syntax
- --Much repetition of syntactic patterns
- --Little sentence inversion
- --Large amount of dialogue
- --Much coordination
- --Little subordination
- --Few non-finite verbs
- --Few expanded verb tenses
- --Few passives

Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4 give the average figures for the two sets of samples taken from the four authors. The items are marked with one of three symbols: "+" or "-" or "?". The plus mark designates findings for which the difference between the adult and juvenile samples is

greater than 10% of the figure in the adult column; the minus symbol designates cases in which the difference is less than 10% of the figure in the adult column; the question mark designates borderline differences where the significance is problematic, for example, too close to 10% to allow for a margin of error or concerning small classes where further statistics are needed to confirm the data. The correlation and Chi-square tests run on the York Inventory material showed that studies based on codes similar to the Fries-Milic can obtain positive results. Part-of-speech distribution, for instance, can individuate between samples with fewer than the 10,000+ in each complete set (adult and children's) of this study (Cluett 275). Cluett notes, however, that the Chi-square test "is thrown off by the presence of small and volatile classes that appear in some samples but not in others" (Cluett 276). Following the tables, the relevance to this study of the differences (or lack of difference) is discussed point by point. In some cases, like that of subordination, the absence of change is what it important.

TABLE 6.1

AVERAGE LENGTHS

	Adult		Children's	
Total Words	10,763		10,976	
	Ave. No. Wds.	Dev.	Ave. No. Wds.	Dev.
+ Paragraphs	141.7	52.2	52.5	15.9
+ Sentences	21.7	4.0	18.4	3.8
+ T-units	17.8	4.5	14.4	3.9
? Clauses	10.3	1.5	9.1	1.2
- Words	4.3	0.17	4.1	0.16

The hypotheses on length can be treated briefly. Table 6.1 shows that the most marked differences are in average paragraph lengths and average T-unit lengths. Two very opposite forces seem to produce these differences. Paragraph size is a highly conscious and easily edited aspect of composition. T-units, on the other hand, can be masked by punctuation. They represent syntactic rhythms that are less consciously but more consistently used by an author than those of sentence length. As T-units are the basic unit that must be comprehended as interrelated syntax, their reduction for a child audience seems natural, and T-unit length was reduced in all four children's

samples with virtually no deviation in the percent of reduction. Sentence lengths show a respectable average reduction, but Wilde's children's samples had a slight increase (which is verified by my study of a larger sampling of his writing).

Clauses and words are more problematic. The reductions are consistent but small. However, that these reductions are typical of children's literature is supported, in the case of clauses, by the figures on the other two syntactic units. It would be statistically peculiar if the authors, having reduced sentence and T-unit length, expanded the clausal subdivision of them. In the case of word length, the supporting evidence comes from the decrease of Latinate and abstract words and nominals which tend to be long. The minute difference (4.3 average letters, adult and 4.1 average letters, children's) makes clear why some stylistic studies and readability formulas dismiss word length as significant. In this study it did not prove nearly as important as syntactic lengths.

Table 6.2 on vocabulary also indicates that many of the hypotheses are strengthened by the results of this study.

TABLE 6.2

VOCABULARY: AVERAGE PERCENT OF WORD-CLASS DISTRIBUTION AND ABSTRACTION SCORE

	Adult	Children's
+ Different Words	41.4%	29.3%
+ Unique Words	22.4%	15.5%
Word Origins:		
+ Nordic	45.8%	59.3%
+ Romance	52.0%	38.1%
? Other	2.2%	2.6%
? All Negative Words	3.5%	2.5%
+ Child Relevant Words	5.4%	10.1%
+ Abstraction Score	58 = Fairly Concrete	70 = Concrete

There are substantial increases in the proportion of different and unique words in the adult samples and decreases in the children's literature passages. This means that there is, as hypothesized, more lexical repetition in the juvenile samples.

The findings on abstract, negative, and child-relevant words should be considered with reservation because of the difficulty in determining an exact, non-subjective count for these categories. However, as the decrease of abstraction and negation and the increase of child-relevant

words exceed 10% of the adult figure and support the hypotheses concerning them, the categories merit further study.

The hypothesis that there would be fewer Latinate and more Anglo-Saxon based words in the children's samples also proved true. Except for the proportion of dialogue (an arbitrary and not strictly syntactic matter), the 14% difference in the case of word origins represents the largest difference found in any of the categories considered in this study. As Kipling has it in the Just So Stories,

> Said Leopard to Baviaan . . . Where has all the game gone?"
>
> . . . .
>
> Said the Ethiopian to Baviaan, "Can you tell me the present habitat of the aboriginal Fauna." (That meant just the same thing, but the Ethiopian always used long words. He was a grown-up.)
>
> (Rudyard Kipling "How the Leopard Got His Spots")

The Leopard's words are all Anglo-Saxon in origin, the Ethiopian's not merely long but Latinate. The difference is one of the most basic in children's literature.

Word classes were discussed in some detail when they were covered in Chapters 4 and 5. Notice that the averages in Table 6.3 confirm only two of the hypotheses: the increase of definite determiners and the decrease of prespositions.

TABLE 6.3

VOCABULARY: AVERAGE PERCENTAGES OF SELECTED WORD CLASSES

	Adult	Children's
? Nouns	21.7%	19.4%
? All Nominals	22.2%	20.1%
- Pronouns	11.1%	11.5%
+ Verbs	14.7%	17.3%
- Non-finite Verbals	4.7%	4.3%
? Auxiliaries	3.5%	4.1%
- Aux. % of Finite Verbs*	23.7%	23.3%
? Passives % of Finite Verbs*	6.8%	3.3%
? Aux. "will" % of Finite Verbs*	.9%	2.0%
? Progressive % of Main Verbs*	1.3%	4.0%
? Adjectives	8.8%	7.6%
? Adverbs	6.5%	7.4%
- All Modifiers	15.3%	15.0%
? Intensifiers/Diminutives	1.2%	1.9%
- All Determiners	14.2%	14.4%
+ Definite Determiners	6.8%	8.1%
+ Prepositions	11.7%	9.5%
? Sentence Coordinators	1.3%	2.3%
- Non-sentence Coor.	3.5%	3.2%
? Subordinators/Relatives	3.4%	2.8%
- All Subordination	5.0%	4.9%

*A subtotal

Besides definite determiners and prepositions, other classes worth noting are passive verbs which decrease and the progressive and future tenses which increase. However, they represent so small a class that the significance of the change is questionable. Intensifiers and diminutives, the "gushy" words are also among the "volatile small classes," as Cluett puts it. There seems to be a tendency to increase them, but an extremely large number of samples would be needed to confirm this.

In several cases the lack of change is the important factor. For example, one hypothesis not confirmed is that coordination would increase substantially. There is less than a 1% difference in total coordination, sentence coordination increases by only 1%, and non-sentence coordination decreases slightly. Similarly, the hypothesis that there would be much less subordination in the children's passages was not confirmed. There is only a .6%

average decrease in true subordinators, and when deleted and verbal subordinators are added in, there is only a .1% decrease. But although this finding contradicts a long-standing assumption about the way to write for children, i.e., in simple sentences, the results of studies of researchers like Loban, O'Donnell, and Menyuk which demonstrate children's fairly comprehensive grasp of syntax, suggest that the prescription, not the practice of these children's authors should be questioned.

Pronouns and modifiers, which had been projected to increase, also remained virtually the same. Across the board, word-class distribution did not prove a good distinguisher between children's and adult literature, nor did the syntactic patterns which the program calculated. As Table 6.4 suggests, no major syntactic differences in word order or its amount of variation emerged as typical of the children's genre.

TABLE 6.4

SYNTACTIC PATTERNS: AVERAGES

	Adult	Children's
- "D" Value, Ave. No. of Words	444/2691	450/2744
+ Dialogue, % of Total Words	24.2%	42.0%
Sentence Openers, % of Total Sentences in Each Set:		
- Different Sentences Openers	51.6%	54.5%
? Connective Openers	12.8%	18.4%
? Prep-Det-Noun Openers	4.2%	1.8%
- Initial Subordination	4.2%	4.1%
? Subordination, 1st 3 Words	13.4%	10.7%
- Mean Point of Subordination	17.8	16.0
- Midpoint of Ave. Sentence	10.9	9.2
Sentence Closers, % of Total Sentences in Each Set:		
- Different Sentence Closers	47.2%	45.1%
? Prep-Det-Noun	17.6%	14.6%
- Det-Adj-Noun	8.0%	8.7%
? Verb-Det-Noun	4.4%	8.4%
? Noun-Prep-Noun	5.0%	1.0%

There is very little change in the amount of syntactic variety. The "D" statistic average shows none and the

authors split on the matter, Hawthorne and Gardner increasing theirs very slightly in the juvenile passages, MacDonald and Wilde decreasing theirs (see Table 5.8). The frequency statistics on sentence openers indicate tendencies to begin more sentences with connectives and to avoid the Preposition-Determiner-Noun sequence as an opener when writing for children, but these need further confirmation. Sentence closers (given in detail in Table 5.12) show very little variation between juvenile and adult samples. Preposition-Determiner-Noun and Determiner-Adjective-Noun are the most frequent choices in both sets. The increase in the Verb-Determiner-Noun ending in the children's samples may be a result of the higher incidence of very short sentences. The sequence is a basic conclusion to a brief English sentence.

The figures on placement of subordinators within sentences reveal the shade of a tendency to decrease left-branching sentences when writing for children, but it is not a clear pattern. In fact none of the statistics on syntactic ordering proves the hypothesis that there is substantially less sentence inversion in children's books.

It can be seen, therefore, that the arrangement of word classes into specific syntactical patterns is no more susceptible to major changes between the two genres than

the statistical distribution of those classes is. There are some differences, but they are not nearly so large or consistent as those found in vocabulary and length.

The work of the last decade or so on children's use and comprehension of language suggests that syntactical simplification in children's books may not be necessary in any great degree, even for quite young children. Menyuk found, for instance, that "All the basic structures used by adults to generate their sentences were found in the grammar of the nursery school group" (Syntactic Structures 298). These developing theories about juvenile language assimilation should be taken into account by authors and editors for the young. Routine oversimplication of children's books could actually inhibit language acquisition. In his seminal work, Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin, Otto Jespersen, speaking of the way small children acquire language, describes it as "The 'little language' which the child makes for itself by imperfect imitation of the sounds of its elders" (106). He is considering sound here, not syntax, and finds it very imperfect, "meaningless babbling" of "long strings of sounds" (Jesperson 108), yet there is an analogy. It is because adults speak to children in an established language that the child ceases babbling and forms words. If adults

babbled back, children would never learn. The same holds true for syntax. Children will not perfect it without models. Children's literature should not lag behind its readers' abilities. Apparently serious authors for children (among whom are the four covered in this study) do not severely trim their syntax.

What children cannot handle is too much new information at once in the form of too many strange words. Words do not represent an interconnected set of rules that can be internalized. Semantically, words are arbitrary and individual and must be learned individually over time. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the greatest differences this study found between the two genres were in the range and type of words used.

Alan Garner, in his address to the Tenth Annual Conference of the Children's Literature Association, spoke on this matter of word choice when writing for children. He estimates that children "by the age of five, use about two thousand words, by the age of nine, six thousand (or eight thousand, if encouraged to read). By the age of twelve, the child will have a vocabulary of twelve thousand words" (Garner 7). This, he notes, is one-third of his own (and a typical writer's) vocabulary. Does this discrepancy bother him when he writes for children? He says,

> My experience, over twenty-seven years, is that richness of content varies inversely with complexity of language. The more simply I write the more I can say. The more open the prose as the result of clarity, the more room there is for you, the reader, to bring something of yourself to the act of translating the story from my subjectivity to your own. . . . The reason why I have no dilemma over choosing the one shared word in three is that the vocabulary I use in writing is almost identical to the twelve thousand words of childhood and of most adults. They are the words of conversation rather than of intellectual debate; concrete rather than abstract; natural rather then imposed; Germanic rather than Romance.
>
> (Garner 7)

One phrase especially of Garner's may hold the key to style in children's books: "words of conversation." The Germanic, natural, concrete qualities of juvenile prose may very well flow from the fact that children's authors try more consciously than authors for other audiences to sound as if they were talking. Two reasons make this an effective strategy for children's books. For one thing, a conversational style is easier to follow. One study by F.E. Engleman found that fourth to seventh graders "preferred factual content written in conversational style and read it faster than narrative expository style" (Klare 88-89). Another reason is that children's literature remains more closely linked with an oral tradition than adult literature now is. It keeps many of the conventions

that create a bond between teller and listener in the oral tale. Perhaps the increase of the pronoun you found in this study reflects this. Also children's books are often intended for reading out loud which means that, if successfully composed, they will sound natural and allow for exchange between reader and listener (as between teller and listener in an oral culture).

Walter Ong, distinguishing between orality and literacy in his book The Interfaces of the Word, holds that, "It is at least likely that in some way a child in technological society today passes through a stage something like that of the old oral culture," but he adds, "only somewhat like the old, for it remains a child's stage and cannot be protracted into adulthood" (299). He is connecting the oral tradition with formulaic repetition rather than casual conversation, but the distinctions he makes between natural "mother" or "native" languages, picked up by mouth in infancy, and "male languages," the intellectual ones (like classical Greek and Latin), learned at least partially by eye, is important here. Almost all of the characteristics that proved typical of the children's samples in this study are also characteristic of oral language: brevity of units, lexical repetition, and concrete basic words.

As far a length is concerned, we do not normally speak in long involved sentences, and the interactive nature of conversation, speakers responding to, interrupting each other, inhibits long stretches of monologue (the equivalent of lengthy paragraphs). We repeat words more often in speech than in writing, and, unless the subject is technical or academic (tainted by our literacy Ong would have it), we tend to converse in concrete words which are basic to the language. We do not, however, when conversing, tend to concretize by means of elaborate modification--strings of adjectives, adverbs, or prepositional phrases. And these did not prove characteristic of the children's passages either. Because speech must exist in time, simple sequential linking by coordinators may be more likely, but all types of conjunctions (most are from the Germanic base of the language) are natural to English. Also note that in the children's samples there is a marked increase in dialogue, which is a deliberate, direct imitation of oral language, of conversation. Early in this study I mentioned that sound is an important element in children's literature. This aspect of style was not analyzed directly, but the conversational "sound" of children's books has, in a sense, been indirectly assessed by adding together the more

significant statistics of this study.

Writers who use a conversational tone as an invitation to the reader may, when aware of a specific audience, appproximate the level of diction they think that audience will respond to. When the audience is children, the dialect of childhood is an appropriate choice. I have been trying to define this dialect throughout this study. It is, it seems, "the words of conversaton," as Alan Garner notes, and shares much with everyday adult speech. If the differences found between the two sets of samples are not that great, perhaps it is because they need not be. The qualities of the adult samples that differ most from the qualities of the children's (greater lengths, less repetition, Latinate vocabulary) mark adult genres as more bound to literary than to oral conventions.

One last issue should be raised. The study shows a large syntactic range in the juvenile genre, but a more limited vocabulary. The implications of this limitation are diverse and not necessarily negative. There is, as we have been discussing, the naturalness and clarity that everyday words can foster. Beyond this, authors and critics have noted that some of the stylistic features of juvenile prose can be related to those often associated with poetry. As George MacDonald put it, child language is

close to the child way of seeing things--the poetic way. By this he means that children share a tendency with poets to pry under the literal meaning, to uncover the hidden metaphor in words and phrases. The unsophisticated freshness of vision at the beginning of life is precisely what the sophisticated artist tries to recapture. Good authors for the young use this tendency of the child to question words. Rebecca Lukens, in her chapter on style, spends some time on word play, figurative language, and metaphor in children's books, and Ursula Nordstrom (former publisher of Harper Row Junior Books) pays a compliment to children's literature when she says, "The really great and lasting picture books are the closest art form to the finest lyric poetry" (Hearne 148).

That children can appreciate this poetic approach to language is confirmed by experiences like those of Kenneth Koch who spent some time teaching children to write poetry. Describing the success of the experiment, he says, "Treating them [the children] like poets was not a case of humorous but effective diplomacy as I had first thought; it was the right way to treat them because it corresponded to the truth" (Koch 29). This was not merely because of their sensitivity to words. On the use of repetition, Koch says, "Repetition is natural to children's speech. . . . It left

their poetry free for the kind of easy and spontaneous music so much appreciated by contemporary poets" (21).

Clearly, the difference between literary style for adults and literary style for children is not mere simplicity and not a simple matter to analyze. The differences are often nebulous and their significance even harder to capture. This study shows, for instance, that the assumptions about limited syntax are not always true. Even a clear-cut case like length, where a relative brevity is well established, has complicated causes. Authors writing for children may cut back as a concession to the shorter attention span, or they may be harbingers of a continuing trend toward shorter sentences. Increased lexical repetition may be a patronizing choice or a method of poetic patterning. The favoring of everyday, Germanic words over intellectual, Latinate ones may be a simple avoidance of difficult vocabulary or a clever ploy to create a conversational, reader-involving text. These are issues with no obvious resolutions. This study has, however, shown one thing clearly: The language of children's books is a rich field for further stylistic studies.

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