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Introduction

Before video games, DVDs, CDs, television, and even radio, American children (today's grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents) commonly entertained themselves by reading books and stories. Most popular were magazines, which offered fiction, poems, articles, games, puzzles, contests, pictures, and even news items and recipes for the whole family. In a time when children were expected to share in the daily workload, and when little money could be spent on leisure activities, publications that offered something for all ages were the most practical. One weekly newspaper, such as the *Youth's Companion*, or one monthly magazine, such as *St. Nicholas*, was about all that many families at the turn of the century could afford. Fortunately, both the *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* contained well-written and beautifully illustrated materials. And because the periodicals were prestigious and paid their contributors well, many of America's greatest authors published works in them.

It seems a loss to our culture that children's magazines today do not have the impact that they once did. Periodicals were important in the social, cultural, and educational development of the children of America's past, and today they are our best sources for learning about the history, attitudes, values, and aspirations of previous generations. The stories, poems, and articles not only reveal what Americans wanted their children to learn, believe, and remember but also reflect society's interests and beliefs at the time.

Children's Periodicals

The first children's periodical in the United States, titled *Children's Magazine*, appeared in January of 1789. Although it only ran for four issues, it instituted an important American tradition, and other publications quickly followed. In the years following the Civil War, juvenile periodicals flourished with approximately sixty publications—half of which were Sunday school papers—in circulation between 1865 and 1885. From 1885 to 1905 the number increased to seventy-five, two-thirds of which were religious periodicals. By 1900, however, many magazine subscriptions had begun to decline, except those closely identified with the major publishing houses.

The *Youth's Companion*, one of the two best known children's periodicals in the United States, began in 1827 and continued with great popularity and financial success for 102 years. This family-oriented weekly newspaper grew out of Nathaniel Willis's religious newspaper, the *Recorder*. The early issues seem forbidding to readers today; they contain moralistic stories set in minuscule type espousing seventeenth-century Puritan values. Although Willis did try to entertain his readers, his editorial beliefs were straightforward—he wanted to save his readers' souls. By the late 1860s, new editors under the invented name of Perry Mason & Co. had taken over. Although the magazine still looked uninviting, and moralizing and sentimentalizing often prevailed, an increasing emphasis on adventure began to appear as the editors tried to discover what young readers wanted to read rather than what adults thought they should read.

One reason for the *Youth's Companion's* wide appeal was the mix of fiction and nonfiction, short stories and serialized novels, poetry, articles on science and history, puzzles and games, handicrafts, recipes, and news articles. Each issue contained eight to sixteen pages; at one point the publishers proclaimed that each year the newspaper offered the equivalent of two thousand pages, all for one dollar and fifty cents. The list of authors published in the *Youth's Companion* is impressive: Jack London, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Gladstone, Sir J. M. Bar-

rie, Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mark Twain, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Theodore Roosevelt.

The magazine remained in existence for so long partly because of several successful experiments. So that readers would not outgrow the publication, the editors subtitled it “The Companion for All the Family” and featured material for all ages. They began the practice of enticing young subscribers to sell subscriptions by offering many high-quality items that could be purchased with premiums. By 1884 the *Youth’s Companion’s* weekly circulation was 200,000, larger than any other literary paper in the world. By 1890 the subscription list had reached 440,000. Due to many factors, including the Depression, the newspaper ceased publication in 1929, and the United States lost an institution. Although the *Youth’s Companion* merged with *American Boy*, by 1941 that magazine had discontinued publication too.

The other giant of family periodicals was *St. Nicholas*. It began in 1873 and was published by Scribner’s, which also circulated *Atlantic Monthly*. Founder Mary Mapes Dodge, who wrote *Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates* (1865) and other children’s stories, was determined to establish a quality magazine, one her own children would enjoy. In July 1873 Scribner’s declared that the new magazine would be dedicated to “the work of instruction, culture, and entertainment.” *St. Nicholas’s* pages contained highly readable articles on science, history, biographies, and books, but Dodge’s chief goal was to provide imaginative stories and poems that genuinely appealed to boys and girls. She only accepted works from the best writers—such as Louisa May Alcott, L. Frank Baum, Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, Mark Twain, Theodore Roosevelt, Dorothy Canfield, Kate Chopin, and Kate Douglas Wiggin—as well as republishing the works of Longfellow, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whittier or well-written material by lesser-known authors who wrote strictly for children.

In 1898 the St. Nicholas League premiered, offering gold and silver badges for “good writing in prose and verse,” and the editors published their subscribers’ own works in the magazine. Many young people who would later become famous writers contributed to the League—Ring

Lardner, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Elinor Wylie, Bennett Cerf, and Edmund Wilson. *St. Nicholas* influenced not only writers of the day but trained writers for the future.

Historical Resource and Regionalism

Among the stories published in these periodicals were exciting accounts of the American West that depict the frontier's formative years. The fiction gathered for this anthology begins in the 1890s, when the settlement of the American West was fairly well-established, allowing writers to render firsthand accounts of their pioneer experiences. This date, according to Frederick Jackson Turner, marks the closing of the frontier as indicated by the 1890 census. This collection ends with the period following the First World War, which brought a shift in focus from western expansion to events with a more national and international bias.

New England writers dominated the American literary scene before the Civil War, but with the increasing ease of transportation throughout the nation, more and more readers wanted to learn about the life and landscape, the "local color," of once-isolated regions. Periodicals such as the *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* followed these literary trends and embraced their readers' interest in America's environmental and social diversity, regularly publishing regionalist writers such as Joaquin Miller from the Northwest, Jack London from the West, Charles Lummis from the Southwest, Kate Chopin from the South, and Sarah Orne Jewett from New England.

Works of literature also reflect the social and historical circumstances of the time in which they are written. One historical context emphasized repeatedly in these stories is the accepted myth of the ability to rise from rags to riches, to "make good," to realize the American Dream. Buoyed by the success stories of men like Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, and John D. Rockefeller, who all began humbly, and aggrandized by writers such as Horatio Alger, many adolescent narratives illustrated that with pluck and a little luck, anyone could succeed. Given the belief in the limitless opportunities on the American frontier, it is no wonder that this theme dominates children's fiction about the West.

Children's roles in the settlement process have been, until recently, largely undocumented, and these stories add to that growing body of knowledge. In many ways, the experiences and expectations of childhood have changed dramatically, from the economic role of children in the family to their place in society; these stories exhibit the diversity of experiences from all corners of the West and from various age groups.

Transformations

The audience for both the *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* from the 1890s to the First World War was middle- and upper-class families who staunchly believed in the world of the American Dream. These mothers and fathers desired to shape the attitudes of their children to value the Puritan work ethic, individuality, self-reliance, personal responsibility, courage, patience, and fortitude. Although the stories were sometimes conventional and didactic, the characters were meant as models for young people to emulate during a time of rapid social, technological, and economic change in a world that was becoming increasingly urban, industrial, and impersonal.

The awakening of the self to its potential, or its limitations, is an important theme in literature. Such initiations, while experienced at all stages of life, are often most crucial in the identity development of adolescents. Stories about the transformation or maturation of young adults written in the American West at the turn of the twentieth century mirror the political and cultural "growing up" of the West. Adolescents' loss of innocence and their gaining of experience reflect both the country and society.

The typical initiation involves three stages. The first phase necessitates a separation or withdrawal from the "world," either mentally, spiritually, or physically, in order to prepare for the change about to occur in the individual. The stories of the pioneer experience and the settling of the West all begin with a physical separation of men, women, and children from established homes and the emotional separation from families and friends as they withdraw into an unknown and often hostile

environment. Once settled in the West, young people often face crises while separated from adults and must act on their own.

The second stage, the transformation, is related to the quest myth, in which the hero must undergo a series of ordeals in passing from ignorance or innocence to social, physical, spiritual, or intellectual adulthood. The psychological basis for this phase is founded on the need of every human being to “prove” himself or herself. The young protagonist must overcome “dragons” or “monsters” or complete seemingly impossible tasks to reach a specific goal. The West provided ample monsters to slay: wild buffaloes and hungry wolves, “savage” Indians, prairie fires, droughts, floods, and grasshoppers. Adapting to the new land itself and coping with loneliness were perhaps the most horrible monsters of all. The West proved an excellent testing ground for self-realization.

With the successful completion of the task, a transformation takes place as the protagonist is awakened into a new awareness of the possibilities within himself or herself. Ideally, he or she returns to society with a new identity and takes his or her rightful place as a fully realized member of the group. The West demanded great strength from its pioneers and allowed only those who showed courage, both physical and mental, to remain and prosper. It is such a test—the innocent pioneer versus the complex frontier—that forms the conflict in these initiation stories of the West.

Although it is not surprising to find the awakening theme prevalent in stories about the West, the gender differences are interesting. Even though the stories about young men reaching adulthood had various plots and settings, their tasks were mainly physical tests, often demanding unrealistic heroism in overcoming a wild animal, stopping a wild-fire, subduing a wild Indian, or capturing a desperado. Young women, too, came into conflict with natural phenomena, such as prairie fires, flooding rivers, and stampeding cattle. However, their physical mastery of the elements of the West was not only a feat of strength or cunning but also a test of emotional fortitude. The young men, of course, had to show courage in their conquests, but their bravery was already a “given.”

As prescribed by nineteenth-century society, all men were born courageous and only awaited the opportunity to prove it to the world, especially in the testing grounds of the untamed West. Typically for young female protagonists, their tests taught them moral rather than physical courage, a quality essential for facing the real, psychological tests that the settling of the West demanded of women. Unfortunately, their reward for exhibiting independence and heroism was often a marriage proposal and a diminishment to traditional, docile behavior.

Much of the fiction found in family periodicals such as the *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* illustrates not only these awakening themes but, at the same time, depicts the myths and attitudes held by the general public about the West. The most interesting myths seen in these texts are those which surround society's view of the frontier woman. Until recent research uncovered new information about western women, the accepted theory was that society viewed them as reluctant and usually passive partners in the westward movement. Many stories in these early periodicals do present them as such. However, an amazing number of tales represent pioneer women as active participants and as adventure-seekers as well.

Many myths are at work in much of children's literature at the turn of the century, especially given the didactic purposes of most editors. However, many other stories explode these myths and present realistic views of the complexity of the lives of young men and women in the West. When read together, a true picture of our Western heritage emerges, allowing us to not only understand the commonly held beliefs of our parents and grandparents but to also discover what it was really like to come of age in the American West.

Póh-hlaik, the Cave Boy



Charles Fletcher Lummis

St. Nicholas, OCTOBER 1903

The Puye Pueblo (translated as “pueblo ruin where the rabbits assemble”) in the Jemez Mountains is about thirty miles north of Santa Fe and was once inhabited by the ancestors of today’s Santa Clara Pueblo Indians. A part of the ancient Anasazi culture in the Four Corners region, the dwellings were carved into the two-hundred-foot volcanic cliff face and were home to over 1,500 Native Americans from 1250 to the late 1500s. Today, the Puye Cliff Dwellings, comprised of over seven hundred rooms and ceremonial areas, is a national landmark owned and operated by the people of the Santa Clara Pueblo, who still hold ritual dances and ceremonies there.

“Póh-hlaik, the Cave Boy” recreates the lifestyle of the ancient cliff dwellers through the experiences of a Native American boy and his family. The story not only explains the unique culture of the pueblo community, with its clans, sacred societies, and political system, but also highlights how family love and values were not much different than they are in modern society. Póh-hlaik’s intuition, common sense, and heroism save not only his family but the whole pueblo.

Charles Fletcher Lummis (1859–1928) walked 3,500 miles from Cincinnati to Los Angeles in 1884 to take a job with the *Los Angeles Times*,

reporting on his journey as he traveled and making a national name for himself. He came to hold a deep respect and love for the Southwest, its people, and its traditions. In 1892 he published *Some Strange Corners of our Country: The Wonderland of the Southwest* and *A Tramp Across the Continent*. After a stroke forced him to give up journalism, he lived for a while at the Isleta Pueblo on the Rio Grande south of Albuquerque and wrote *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (1893), which describes the culture of the Native Americans of New Mexico. He became the editor of *Out West/The Land of Sunshine*, which encouraged other writers, such as Mary Austin, to authentically portray and promote his beloved region. A flamboyant character who traditionally sported his trademark corduroy jacket and Mexican sombrero, Lumis was a pioneering photojournalist, author, editor, ethnologist, advisor to President Theodore Roosevelt, center of a group of regional authors, and activist for Native American rights. He also founded the Southwest Museum of Los Angeles.

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Five hundred years ago the cloudless sun of New Mexico beat as blinding white upon the Pu-yé as it does to-day, and played as quaint pranks of hide-and-seek with the shadows in the face of that dazzling cliff; stealing now behind the royal pines in front, now suddenly leaping out to catch the dark truants that went dodging into the caves.

Now the sun and the shadows are the same, and play the same old game—on one side with eager fire, on the other with pleased but timid gentleness. The playground has changed with the centuries, but not so much as to seem unfamiliar. It is the same noble cliff, lofty and long and castellate, towering creamy and beautiful amid the outpost pine groves of the Valles wilderness. From a little way off there seems no bit of change in it.

But ah, what a change there has been, after all! For the very silence of silences lies upon the Pu-yé. Only the deep breath of the pines, the sudden scream of the piñonero blue jay, ever break it now. And time was when the Boy Sun and the Shadow Girls had here a thousand mates in

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their gambols: mates whose voices flew like birds, and with pattering feet amid the tufa blocks, and the gleam of young eyes—three things that sun and shadows have not, nor had even when they were so much younger. Once these jumbled stones were tall houses against the white face of the cliff; and the caves into which the shadows crowd so were homes.

Then the great cliff of the Pu-yé was not lonely. Hundreds of faint smoke-spirals stole up its face. Here and there among the gray houses strode stalwart men with bow-case on shoulder, and women bringing water in earthen jars upon their heads. As for children, they were everywhere: sitting in the tufa sand and sifting it through their fingers; shouting “*hee-tab-oo*” from their hiding amid the great pumice blocks fallen from the cliff; chasing each other over the rocks, into the caves, down the slope, in that very game of tag which was invented before fire was; making mud tortillas by the pools of the drying brook; hunting each other in mimic war among the pines, or turning small bows and arrows to bring down the saucy piñonero, whose sky-blue feathers should deck bare heads of straight black hair.

Póh-hlaik, up by the cliff corner near where the estufa of the Eagle clan showed its dark mouth, was enjoying himself as much as any one—and a little bit after the game of the sun and the shadows. He was a tall, sinewy lad, with strong white teeth coming to light very often, and supple hands that could bend a bow to the arrow head. Just now he was down on all fours, crouching, pouncing, charging, and roaring in blood-curdling wise when he had breath between laughs. *Mo-keit-cha*, indeed! I would like to *see* the mountain-lion with such contented victims! Póh-hlaik’s were half a dozen brown little sisters and cousins who laughed and shrieked and ran and came back to be devoured anew by this insatiate monster. Sometimes in a particularly ferocious rush some one got tipped over or had a toe stepped on by *Mo-keit-cha*; and then she would make a lip and start off crying—whereat the ravening beast would pat her on the head with clumsy tenderness, and call back her dimples by a still grotesquer caper.

But before the victims had been devoured many more times apiece, a sweet, clear voice of a woman came ringing:

“Póh-hlaik!”

“Here, little mother! What wilt thou?” And the cougar of a moment ago rose on his hind legs and ran obediently on them to where a woman leaned through the tiny doorway of a cave. The adobe floor was spotlessly clean, and her modest cotton tunic shone like snow. Floor and tunic and feature should have looked strange enough to the unguessed and unguessing world beyond the seas. But in the face was a presence which any one should know, down to a smallest child, and anywhere—the mother look, which is the same in all the world.

“A goodly man will he be!” she murmured absently, with soft eyes resting on her strong young son. “Ay! It is to seek thy father, carrying this squash and dried meat of the deer. For by now he will be hungry, so long as he is in the estufa. And pray him come, if he will, that he may hear the baby, what is says.”

Reaching back, she brought forward a little flat cradle with buckskin flaps laced across it; and from under its buckskin hood peered a brown lump of flesh, with big eyes black as tar.

Ennah, handful-warrior!

Ennah, little great-man!

she crooned, tossing the bundle gently on level palms. A funny little crack ran across the fatness, and the eyes lighted up as if they really knew something; and from that uncertain cavity came a decided “dă-dă”—which is just as far as a baby of his age gets with all the civilized progress of this year of grace 1903. We start about even; and it is fairly wonderful in knocking about the world to find how little difference there is, even in the first speech. There is no home nor blood where “papa” and “mama” are not understood. English words? Not a bit of it! They are *human* words, everywhere current, everywhere dear—perhaps remnants to us, with a few more of childhood, of before the Tower of Babel. And everywhere is as great joy when the uncertain lips first say “dă-dă” as was now in the house of Kwé-ya.

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“Already he is to talk!” cried Póh-hlaik, with a delighted grin; and patting his mother on the shoulder and the baby on the cheek, he went running and leaping over the rocks like a young deer. Directly he was at the Eagle people’s estufa, where the men of his father’s clan all slept as well as counseled; for in the queer Indian society, which was not society at all, the men lived in their big sacred room, the women and children in their little houses. Póh-hlaik entered the small door, and stood a moment before his eyes grew used to the darkness. Then he saw his father sitting by the wall smoking a rush, and went to him.

“Here is to eat,” he said, handing the bundle. “And my mother says if you will come! For already the small-one calls you!”

“He does? It is good—I will go.” The tall, stern-faced Indian rose with slow dignity which was belied by something in his eyes and voice. Like some men I have remotely heard of in more modern times, P’yá-po was not so “weak” as to betray feeling. But he was strong enough to *have* it—and sometimes a very tiny token of it would leak out in spite of him. Now, though nothing would have induced him to show unseemly haste, he was clearly losing no steps; and already the stately strides had carried him several yards as he turned to say to Póh-hlaik:

“Son, at the White-Corn people’s estufa, if thou see Enque-Enque, tell him I would speak with him before the night.”

“So I will say,” answered the boy, respectfully, turning to go to his own estufa—for since his mother was of the White-Corn people, so was Póh-hlaik. With Indians almost everywhere descent is reckoned from the mother’s side, and not, as with us, from the father’s. Furthermore, a man cannot marry into his own clan, so his sons belong to a different estufa.

Sure enough, Enque-Enque was at the Man-house of the White-Corn clan, and he received the message with a grunt. He was a little sharp-faced man, with the look of one gone sour. If P’yá-po with his mighty head and frame had a lion-like air, this other as clearly suggested the fox. Even the acute features contributed less to this than a way he had of cocking his chin down and to one side, and looking at something

else, but seeing you. And it is a thing I have had occasion to learn, that when you are with one of these men who sees all you do without using even “half an eye,” you will have none too many eyes to watch him if you use all you have.

Enque-Enque did not so much as look at Póh-hlaik; but the boy (who could have given lessons in these things to any one of us, if able to phrase what he knew) understood that the subordinate Shaman had weighed his face to a feather. Not that there was any secret to read there—he had merely delivered a message of which he knew no import back of the words. He did not *like* Enque-Enque; but trust an Indian face to say nothing of that—and as for his tone, it was the respectful one which no Pueblo boy ever failed to use to an elder. And now he suddenly felt *afraid* of his father’s fifth assistant—suddenly, without the slightest tangible excuse, for nothing had happened.

“Shall I say to my father anything?” he ventured at last.

“I will go,” answered the man, shortly—which Póh-hlaik needed no interpreter to tell him meant also “Now clear out, boy.”

“But that is a queer one!” he was thinking to himself, as he went skipping down the slope. As he turned to come away, he had caught a glimpse of about an inch of notched reed projecting from the lion-skin case on Enque-Enque’s back. “For the feathers are put differently, and it will be longer, too—since it stands above the rest.”

It was a very trifling matter to annoy any one; but that arrow seemed to stick in the boy’s mind. You can have no possible notion how tiny a thing the Indian will notice, nor how much it can say to him; for he has kept the eyes that nature gave man to start with, and that we civilized folk have largely frittered away.

At the foot of the slope, where some enormous boulders hid him from the village, his trot dropped to a walk; and presently he sat down upon a block of tufa and began looking very intently at his feet. Whatever he saw there did not serve; for in a few minutes he rose, with a still clouded face, and began climbing a zigzag trail to the left. Here the cliff tapers into a long slope; and after a short trudging over the pumice fragments,

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he came upon the brow of the mesa among the junipers. A little farther yet, and he suddenly stepped from the woods into a large clearing, in whose center stood a great square pueblo, three stories high, built of tufa blocks from the same white cliff. Here were other brown folk, little and big; for this was the “up-stairs town” of the cave pueblo, its ultimate refuge and fortress, and the permanent home of some of its people.

“Ka-ki!” sung out a voice; and a boy of Póh-hlaik’s own age came scrambling down a ladder from the tall housetops. “I was just to go for thee. Come, let us make a hunt in the cañon, if we may find the Little-Old-Mountain-Man* — for now he is very fat.”

“It is well!” answered Póh-hlaik, brightening. “And if not him, we’ll at least get trout.”

Both boys had their bow-cases on their backs, and in five minutes they had descended the slope and were crossing the plateau to the brink of the cañon. This rift in the upland, four hundred feet deep, was shadowy with royal pines and musical with a lovely brook—as it is to this day. Póh-hlaik and Ka-be descended the precipitous side noiselessly, and began creeping along the brook in the thick underbrush. Fat trout flashed in the pools; but the boys paid no attention to them, for from a thicket on the other side of a little natural glade came the “gobble-obble-obble” and then the *skir-r-r!* of the wild turkey.

“No!” whispered Póh-hlaik to his companion’s suggestion. “We will wait here—for he will come out to the brook with his family. But if we try to get to the other side, he can run without our seeing him for the bushes.”

They lay quietly in a thick clump of alders, grasping each his bow, with an arrow at the string. The gobbler repeated his cry—and suddenly it was echoed from behind them! The boys exchanged startled looks, and Ka-be was about to speak, but Póh-hlaik put his finger to his lips, with a curious flicker in his eye.

Just then there was a faint sighing sound overhead; and close in front

*The wild turkey.