

Children's Literature in the Digital Age

By Anna Tso

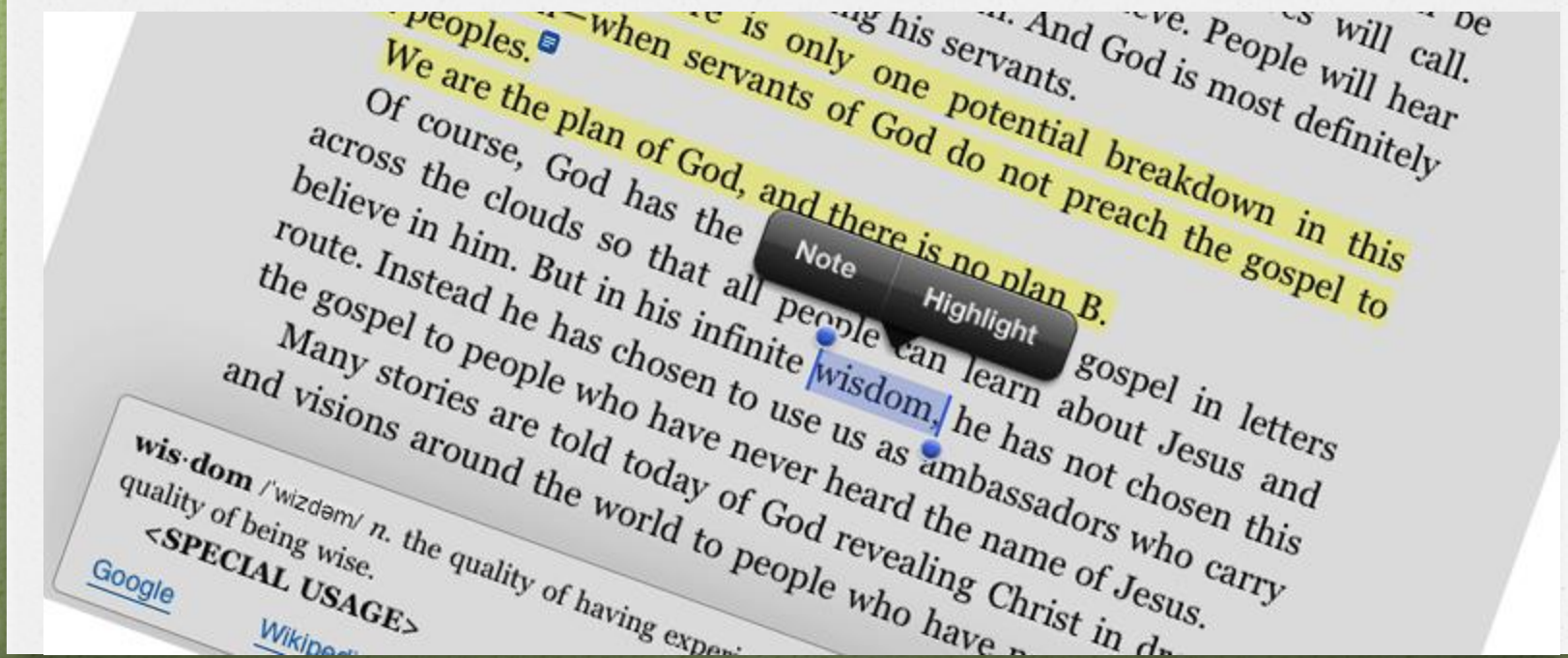
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In today's talk, we will examine the explosive growth in digital media for children's literature. We will focus on the following topics:

1. Features of children's e-books
2. The digital culture as reflected in children's books
3. Multimedia works based on children's literature
4. Digital animated films based on children's books
5. How a literary work is made into film, animation and products, and its reception

Children's e-books

- You have instant access to search all aspects of the book, your notes, highlights, and you even have instant access to a dictionary, Wikipedia search, or even a Google search on a selected area.



Learning made easy via e-book functions

- The digital medium of e-books allows touch screen, audio capabilities, reading level adjustment, internet connectivity, video embedding and animation capabilities, which all benefits children's learning.

Representing Meaning Though Different Modes

Linguistic mode: “dog” or “barking dog”

Visual mode:



Audio mode:

“Arf.”

Common audio-visual features of a well-designed e-book...

- Opens with a **theme tune** that plays over the cover.
- Pages come with **sound effects** that help create an atmosphere, providing a deeper learning experience children as they make sense of the scene.
- Uses **animations** to create **visual effects**.
- E-book sales rose 350% at Disney in the past year!

Example:

Disney's *Jumbo*, a digital book:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwLAFXryftE>

Better still...

- **Interaction** and **dynamism** are the basic components of multimedia presentations of texts in children's literature.
- Interactive **games** and **activities** in the digital book allow the child reader to physically interact with the story.

Example:

SpongeBob SquarePants e-book:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ-E3y7nsnw&index=13&list=PLUkYs6PcR9U0raS0UE99L90cRnr73hs99>

More importantly...

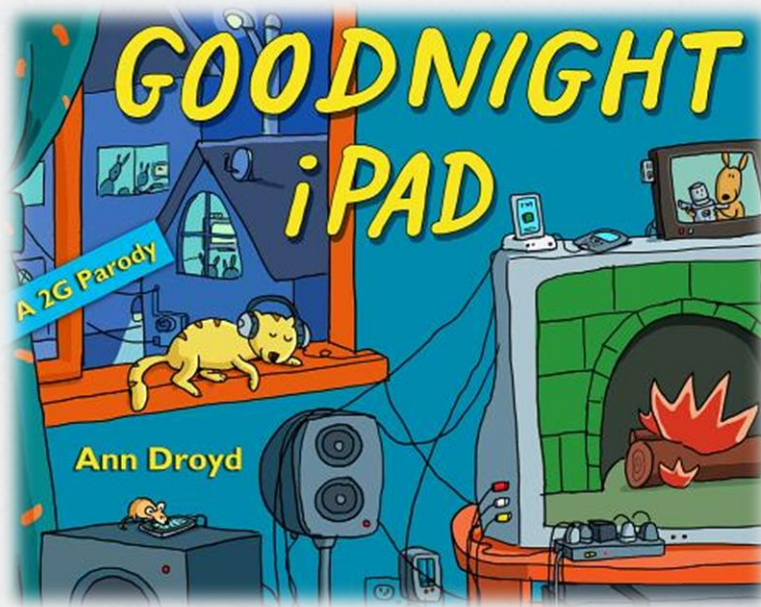
- The multimodal texts in digital books can encompass many forms of expression, including:
 - **Visual Meanings** (images, page layouts, screen formats);
 - **Audio Meanings** (music, sound effects);
 - **Gestural Meanings** (body language, sensuality);
 - **Spatial Meanings** (the meanings of environmental spaces, architectural spaces; 3D augmented reality); &
 - **Multimodal Meanings**

Example:

India's first augmented ABC book for kids:

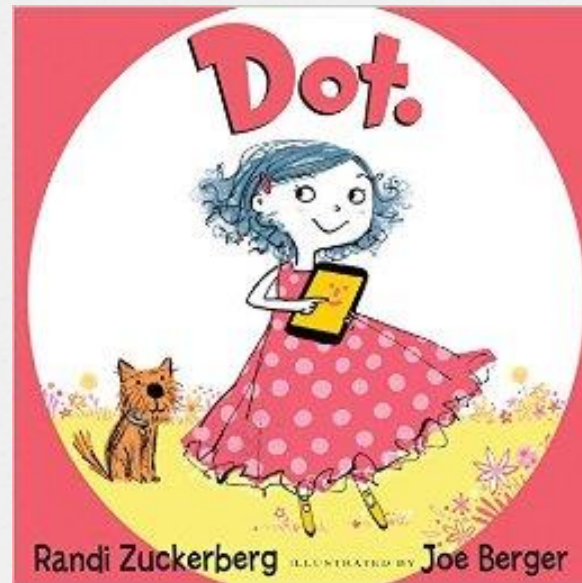
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J7vYWFaCoU>

The digital culture as reflected in children's books



o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ouOwpYQqic>

Randi Zuckerberg's *Dot*.



- o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oT09tOCQj4>

Classic fairy tales rewritten for tweeting and texting



- o “Thumbelina never got much bigger but **she did get her own reality TV show, so that's cool.**”

Alice in Wonderland

- o The crazy thing is that eventually even Alice began to doubt whether what she'd seen down the rabbit hole had ever really existed. And it didn't make her sad, there was nothing overly dramatic about it, it was just that now she understood how the world actually worked.
- o But then **she was tagged in a photo by an old friend, by the White Rabbit**. It was a faded picture of her and the Cheshire Cat, and, wow, it just brought her right back.

Fairy tale characters texting



Character Texting

In the space below, write a texting conversation between two characters from your reading at an important part of the story. Make sure that your texts connect directly to the text and demonstrate an in depth understanding of the characters' personalities and emotions.

Character 1: Goldilocks

Hi Big Bad Wolf. Its me Goldilocks. I was just at the three bears house. I was just looking for a place to stay but then they chased me out! I was wondering if you can get revenge?

Character 2: Big bad Wolf 5 minutes later

Sure! But its gonna have to cost something. After, send me 10 muffins then I'll do it. So where is their house?

Character 1: Goldilocks

OK, I'll send you the muffins. The bears house is a mile away from the three pigs house.

Character 2: Big bad Wolf

1 hour later

Hey Goldilocks! I did it! I got them so good! They ran so fast. They even thought I was a big furry monster.

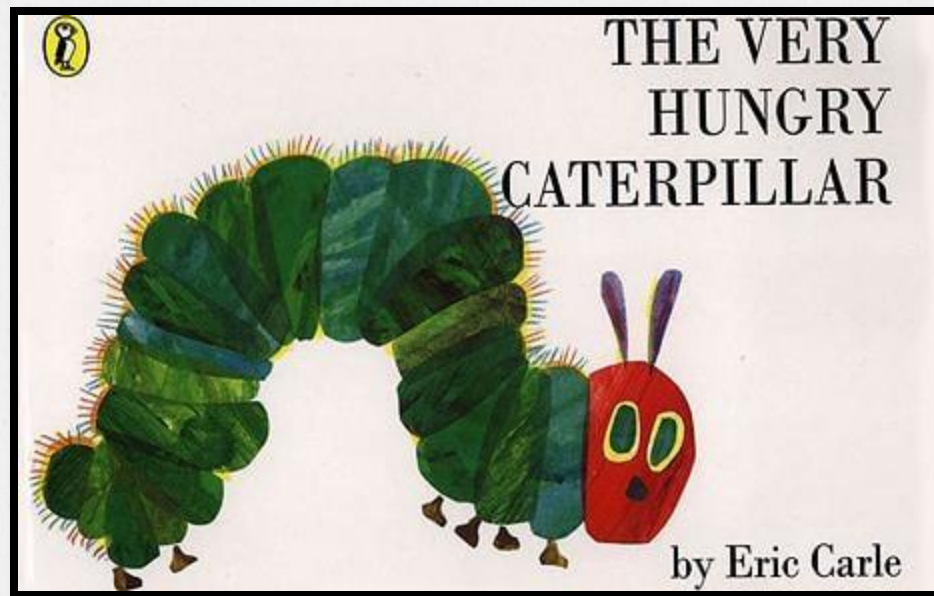
Character 1: Goldilocks

Good job! And the muffins are on their way. Do you like blueberry muffins?

Character 2: Big bad Wolf

I love them! Well my job is done. bye!

Multimedia works based on children's literature

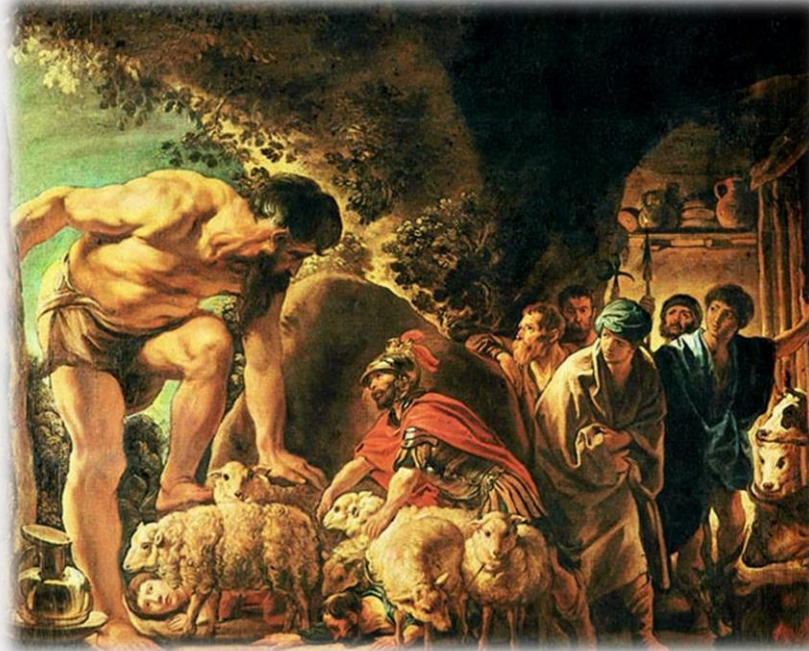


- o The faithful, unabridged digital version:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75NQK-Sm1YY>

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Multimedia works based on children's literature



An example of abridged digital versions of world's classics

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv2d0-dRrHI>

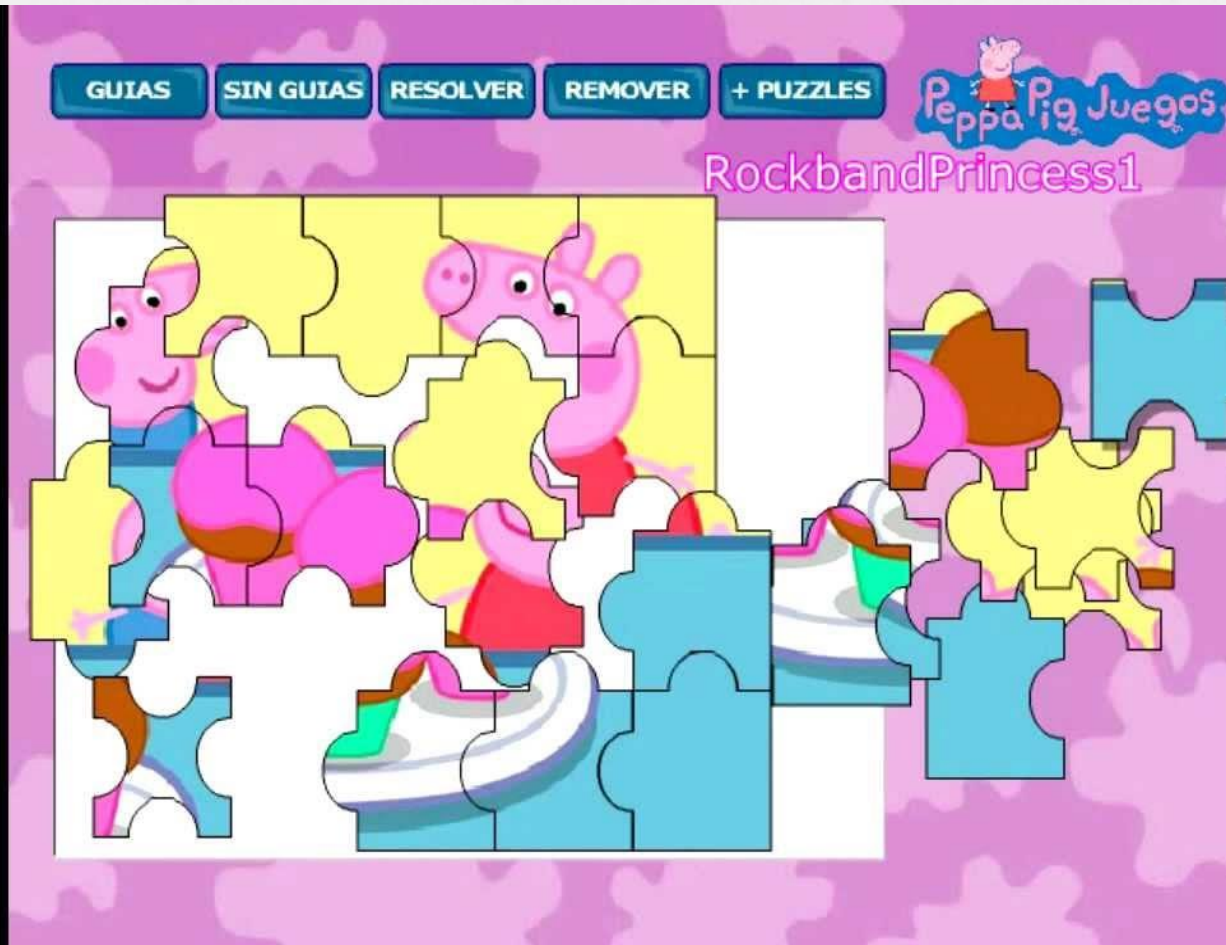
Picturebook apps



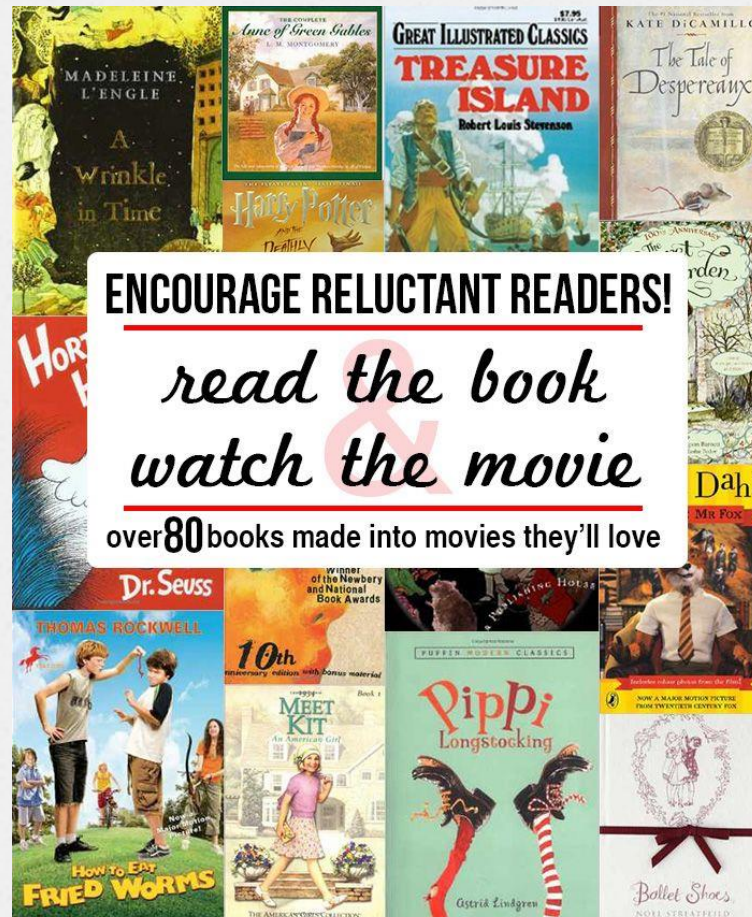
Painting games



Puzzle games



Digital animated films based on children's books



a fantastic list by *Andrea's Notebook*

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The narrative tradition

- o The point of view defines the setting in motion of the story. It is, actually, a question about who is telling the story to whom and how. It can be:
- o The **first person point of view** - a character who takes part in the story or observes it is telling us about it and is giving his/her opinion.
- o The **omniscient narrator point of view** - the narrator knows and can everything - even read minds and see different places simultaneously.
- o The **third person limited point of view** - the narrator knows almost everything, but his possibility to read minds is limited to one person. The thoughts of individual characters are of great importance for a prose text, since in such a way a specific character becomes the central one, and we can follow the story through his eyes.
- o The **dramatic point of view** - Here we are not aware of the existence of the narrator, since the author does not comment on the story, but he only describes a scene by telling us what is going on and what the characters say. In this way the reader has the impression of witnessing the story.
- o **Stream of Consciousness or Interior Monologue** - this is a kind of first person narration, with the only difference that the characters do not tell the story consciously. It is, in fact, “an interior look”, as if there was a microphone or a camera inside the hero.

Limitations of Digital animated films based on children's books

- o The omniscient narrator point of view, the third person limited point of view and the stream of consciousness require from the narrator the ability of immersion into the character, into his thoughts and feelings.
- o They do not have an adequate media/film equivalent. “A film can show us characters thinking, feeling, and speaking, but it cannot show us their thoughts and feelings” (George Bluestone, Novels into Film).

How a literary work is made into animation and marketing products

The Little Prince (2015)

o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGAtsGgyzw4>



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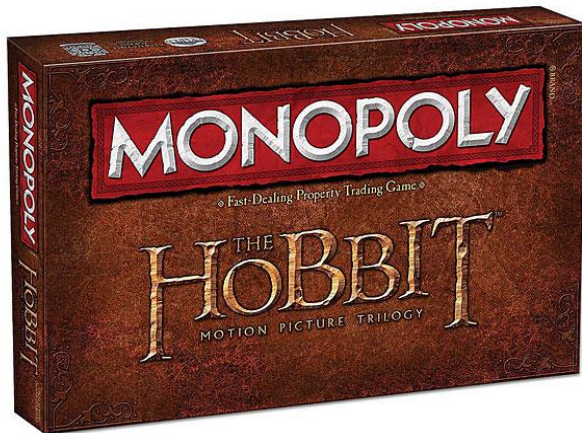
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How a literary work is made into film and marketing products

The Hobbit (2012)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDnYMbYB-nU>



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Digital film version vs. literary text

- o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5rhgSylpH8&t=5s>
- o Read chapter 5 of *Hobbit*.
- o Compare your experience of *Hobbit* in the two different forms. Which one do you prefer? Share with us your ideas.