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Undertaking everyday initiatives by kindergarten teachers related to presenting works from the canon of children's literature for children

Abstract

Systematic, daily contact with books promotes the child's comprehensive development. It stimulates intellectual and emotional development and allows children to express themselves. The article will present examples of initiatives taken by kindergarten teachers aimed at introducing children to works from the canon of children's literature and the encourage youngest to associate with literature.

Keywords: kindergarten teacher, preschool child, children's literature

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel przedszkola, dziecko w wieku przedszkolnym, literatura dziecięca

Introduction

Literature in the life of a child fulfills an important role. A. Baluch (1993, p. 15) says that children's literature is a natural introduction for children to fiction. Childhood influences the development of the literary habits of children, which we can see this in their reception of art and artistic creation. Literary works helps children understand themselves and others, to survive the bad times as well as multiply the good moments of your life. The reality presented in children's literature, helps children understand the world, which is dominated by concepts and symbolic thinking.

Benefits of daily reading aloud to children. As the research and experience of reading families, kindergartens and schools confirm, daily reading aloud to children for pleasure:

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- 1) satisfies their essential emotional needs — for love, attention, stimulation, etc.
- 2) creates strong bonds between children and the adults who read to them
- 3) supports the psychological development of a child
- 4) raises self-esteem
- 5) teaches language, builds up vocabulary, and enables fluency of speech
- 6) prepares for independent reading and writing
- 7) teaches independent thinking skills — logic, cause and effect, and critical thinking
- 8) fosters imagination
- 9) improves concentration, promotes calm
- 10) exercises memory
- 11) allows children to acquire vast general knowledge
- 12) facilitates learning and helps to achieve success at school
- 13) teaches children values and enables them to recognize the difference between good and evil, as well as to develop moral sensitivity
- 14) develops a sense of humor
- 15) is a great pastime
- 16) protects them from addiction to television or computers
- 17) is a healthy escape from boredom, failure and problems
- 18) protects them from the dangers of mass culture
- 19) prevents antisocial behavior
- 20) creates a lifelong habit of reading and searching for knowledge (Proclamation of the “All of Europe Reads to Kids” program, http://80.48.62.162/ckfinder_pliki/files/Packet%20All%20of%20Europe%20Reads%20to%20Kids%20EN.pdf).

What to do to make our children like reading? The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that in Europe, 37–45% of students declare that they do not read for pleasure. The interest of the young generation in reading has therefore become one of the official goals of the educational systems of individual countries (based on: <https://calapolskaczytadzieciom.pl/category/dla-edukatorow/czytanie-dzieciom/>, <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisainfocus/48624701.pdf>).

Organizing initiatives related to presenting works from the canon of children’s literature to preschool children may be the answer. In Poland and in Europe, undertaken a number of initiatives, through which children have a chance to associate with literature.

Organizations and program related to presenting works from the canon of children’s literature to preschool children

“All of Poland Reads to Kids”

ABCXXI — All of Poland Reads to Kids Foundation (until January 2006 known as “ABCXXI — Emotional Health Program”) was established in December 1998 by Irena Kozmińska, who now leads the organization as its Pres-

ident. An additional project which affected the children's book market was a publication of a 23-volume collection "All of Poland Reads to Kids", including outstanding but not obvious books for children. On June 1, 2001, the Foundation initiated the national campaign "All of Poland Reads to Kids" aimed at raising awareness about the importance of daily reading for children. Scientists and practitioners claim that reading aloud to children teaches them language and thinking skills, develops their memory and imagination, and provides knowledge and moral ideals, and strengthens their self-esteem.

September 29 is The National Day of Reading Aloud. It was announced by Polska Izba Książki for the first time in 2001, four months after the inauguration of the foundation's social campaign "All of Poland Reads to Children", when the topic of reading was noticed in our country. We propose that all kindergartens and schools start reading aloud to children on this day! (based on: <https://calapolskaczytadzieciom.pl/calendar/ogolnopolski-dzien-glosnego-czytania/>).

"Family reading"

As part of the program RodzinneCzytanie.pl encourage to the creation of Reading Family Clubs in libraries, kindergartens, schools and other educational and cultural institutions. The meetings are intended to be an opportunity to promote regular reading of valuable literature to children, a place to exchange impressions, and an opportunity to build parent-child bonds (based on: <https://calapolskaczytadzieciom.pl/dzialania/projekty/>).

"All of Europe Reads to Kids"

Program aimed at raising readers — educated, cultural and wise people — through daily reading aloud to children since their earliest childhood: at home, kindergartens and schools. The Program in Europe: "All of Europe Reads to Kids" is to facilitate an exchange of experiences and good practices between different organizations and provide a working platform for those who are willing to launch campaigns promoting reading to children in their countries. The campaign "ABCXXI — All of Poland Reads to Kids" foundation has developed effective methods of realizing programs promoting reading to children for everyone who cares about the future of the young generation and our common future (based on: <http://80.48.62.162/all-of-europe-reads-to-kids-information-packet>).

International Children's Book Day

Since 1967, on or around Hans Christian Andersen's birthday, April 2, International Children's Book Day (ICBD) is celebrated to inspire a love of reading and to call attention to children's books. Each year, a different National Section of IBBY has the opportunity to be the international sponsor of ICBD. It decides upon a theme and invites a prominent author from the host country to write a message to the children of the world, and a well-known illustrator should design a poster. These materials are used in different ways to promote books and reading. Many IBBY Sections promote ICBD through the media and organize activities in schools and public libraries. Often, ICBD is linked to celebrations around children's books and other special events that may include encounters with authors and illustrators, writing competitions or announcements of book awards (based on: <https://www.ibby.org/awards-activities/activities/international-childrens-book-day>).

International Board on Books for Young People

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) is a non-profit organization, that represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together. IBBY Greece is the official sponsor of International Children's Book Day 2023. The chosen theme is 'I am a book, read me' by Vagelis Iliopoulos. The poster is the result of a collaboration between author Vagelis Iliopoulos and illustrator Photini Stephanidi. Together, they wanted to celebrate the power of children's books in promoting the values of equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as connecting people through tolerance and understanding (based on: <https://www.ibby.org/awards-activities/activities/international-childrens-book-day/icbd-2023-sponsored-by-ibby-greece>).

The Polish Section of IBBY was established in 1974. Each year, the Section organizes the Book of the Year contest, in which writers, illustrators and reading promotion activists can participate. Since 2000, the Polish Section of IBBY has presented an annual medal for lifetime achievements to outstanding Polish authors and illustrators. The Section takes part in organizing exhibitions of children's book illustration and symposiums — both Polish and international. It supports reading promotion among young people in cooperation with libraries, bookshops and publishing houses. The Section is an important source of information about Polish children's books; both in Poland and around the world (based on: <https://www.ibby.org/ibby-worldwide/index.php?id=448>).

IBBY in Europe has sections and branches in 34 European countries. IBBY Europe has a Facebook page that relays information on Children's literature and reading in Europe and abroad, and a newsletter, published in April and November, that promotes the activities of the National Sections in Europe (based on: https://www.ibby-europe.org/about_IBBY_Europe).

IBBY European Regional Conference 2023. On Thursday, March 9, 2023, the third IBBY European Regional Conference took place in Bologna. Several IBBY sections from all over Europe worked together to organize the conference, with the theme painfully relevant across the whole of Europe: Finding a safe home in books. Every child has the right to a safe home. Yet, children all over the world often face moments of doubt, insecurity, fear, loss or threat. This is where the power of stories comes in, because books can offer shelter, give hope and create awareness. Stories have the potential to show you that you are not alone, and that others are in the same situation. Books can offer ideas and scenarios that are beyond our own imagination, showing us a different and, perhaps, a better world (based on: https://www.ibby-europe.org/sites/default/files/IBBY_European_Regional_Conference_2023.jpg; <https://www.ibby-europe.org/node/762>).

Examples of initiatives taken by the kindergarten to encourage children to associate with children's literature

To get the answer to the following question: What initiatives take kindergartens in Krakow in order to present the children's works from the canon of children's literature and encourage them to associate with literature? I conducted a research survey among 30 pre-school teachers who work in the public and the non-public kindergartens in Krakow.

Kindergarten teachers gave examples of initiatives taken by the kindergarten to encourage children to associate with children's literature:

Regional Public Library in Krakow

The Regional Public Library in Krakow organizes open integration activities for children of an artistic nature "Animals made of string and wire". In workshops, children will be able to make their favorite fairy-tale animal from yarn and decorate it using creative wires. (based on: <https://www.rajska.info/zajecia-otwarte-dla-dzieci>).

Regional Public Library in Krakow organizes for preschoolers presentation of the library and its collections and familiarization with the basic tasks of the

Table 1. Examples of initiatives taken by the kindergarten to encourage children to associate with children's literature

Response categories	Number of responses
Daily aloud reading (during morning classes, classes, rest and free time)	25
The Kindergarten Library	22
Participation in the national campaign "All of Poland reads to kids"	20
Creating book corners: variables related to the topic of classes and children's interests	18
Cooperation of kindergartens with educational and cultural institutions: The Regional Public Library in Krakow, Pedagogical Provincial Library of Hugo Kołłątaj in Krakow — participation in workshops	17
Puppet shows	17
Meetings with Polish authors of children's literature	12
Organizing meetings with children and parents during which a piece of children's literature is read	10
Cooperation of kindergartens with educational and cultural institutions: Kijów Centrum Cinema — participation in workshops	6
Cooperation of kindergartens with educational and cultural institutions: Museum of Japanese Art and Technology Manggha — participation in workshops	5

Own scientific description.

library. During classes, children will learn about, among others: various forms of books, from the oldest to modern ones. At the end of the classes, children design and make bookmarks. During the first visit, children can visit the book-binding workshop in the Library and select departments.

Literary tram classes — a special tram line has been launched in the Foreign Language Lending Room and Workshop, which will take children on a journey full of fun and books from all over the world. The yellow wagon was designed and sewn by participants in "For yourself, for others". The project will stop, among others, at: at Paddington Station, in Moomin Valley and at Villa Śmiesznotka. Eligible for travel: children in grades "0" and students grades I–III of primary school.

A box full of legends — during classes, children learn the role and meaning of legends. During the workshops takes place: reading aloud the legend of Queen Jadwiga's Foot and working on the text. At the end, the children go to the Church of the Carmelite Fathers on Piasek, adjacent to the library, to see a stone ashlar with an imprinted image of a foot — the so-called Queen Jadwiga's footer (based on <https://www.rajska.info/zajecia-dla-przedszkolakow>).

The Pedagogical Provincial Library of Hugo Kołłątaj in Krakow

The Pedagogical Provincial Library of Hugo Kołłątaj in Krakow, by different authors' classes encourage and promote reading among children, is preparing for a conscious and active participation in cultural life, it stimulates curiosity, take the topics of education and learning.

The prepared educational offer includes the following classes for preschoolers:

Once upon a time..., when books were written by hand, workshops were present the history of the book, especially the period of hand-copying the text and the gradual introduction of decorations and illustrations. Children will learn the terms scribe, manuscript and initial. During classes, children decorate the initials of their names, which are then used to make their own book-marks. An additional attraction is visiting the Library, especially places normally inaccessible to readers.

Dinosaurs in the Library: educational classes during which we will tell interesting facts about dinosaurs, read various children's books about dinosaurs, and talking about their lives. Preschoolers will have the opportunity to program the Photon educational robot, "touch" dinosaurs using augmented reality, and perform art work.

Girl on the throne — Saint Jadwiga, Queen: classes present the figure of Saint Jadwiga in an accessible form. During the workshops, a PowerPoint presentation and the literary work *Queen Jadwiga* by Marta Galos are used, which help children get to know Jadwiga of Anjou better. Children will make illustrations for the presented literary work, which are then pasted into a previously prepared book. A nice accent at the end of the classes is the visit of Queen Jadwiga...

Colors of emotions: reading activities with elements of bibliotherapy and offline coding about emotions. By listening to and discussing books about emotions, preschoolers will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and develop emotional intelligence and social skills.

Who are you? — patriotic education: during the workshops, an animated *Polish National Symbols* (published by the Institute of National Remembrance) and books helping to shape patriotic attitudes from an early age are presented. Together, we create "our patriotic book". After listening to the poem *Catechism of a Polish Child (Who are you?)*, the class participants take on the role of illustrators. Children take the book with them to kindergarten.

Tiny Giant — Jan Matejko: classes present the artist's life and work in an accessible way. By showing curiosities and anecdotes related to the Artist, they present the figure of this great resident of Krakow. During the workshops,

a PowerPoint presentation and the text of Anna Świrszczyńska's song *O Janie Matejce i panu Kajetanie* are used. In the final phase of classes, children divided into two groups and compete by solving a crossword to check what they have learned.

Dragon not only Wawel Castle: educational activities during which children learn the history of the Wawel Dragon using the magical kamishibai theater. During the workshops, various children's books about dragons will be presented. Preschoolers will have the opportunity to solve quizzes and riddles, play on the Magic Carpet and do art work.

Creating a book: getting to know the library and talking about the basic elements of book construction. Work with a selected literary text (a poem for children) — joint reading and discussion. Children's art work — coloring previously printed illustrations to the text, pasting the text of the poem into a prepared book.

Jan Brzechwa's Zoo: children will learn about the animals that are the heroes of the short poem *Zoo* by Jan Brzechwa. They solve puzzles and complete tasks using the Photon educational robot. At the end of the class, they fold a fox using the origami method (based on: <https://www.pbw.edu.pl/images/oferta-educacyjna/krakow/dlaszkol/przedszkola/20230901.pdf> <https://www.pbw.edu.pl/dla-szkol>).

Kijów Centrum Cinema

Kijów Centrum Cinema organizes "Watching on screen". There are special film screenings for children in an intimate, 32-seat Studio Room. Every day from Monday to Sunday, where the youngest viewers can feel the magic of the world created by masters of animation, creators of family films, and classic fairy tales. Kijów Centrum Cinema has a huge archive of children's films, of which the oldest productions date to 1967! (based on: www.facebook.com/kijow.centrum; https://czasdzieci.pl/krakow/katalog/id,744402-kijow_centrum.html).

The Museum of Japanese Art and Technology Manggha

The Museum of Japanese Art and Technology Manggha organizes meetings with children from the age of three years, during which famous people read to a small audience and fairy tales. Sometimes reading fairy tales in Japanese is combined with a tasting of the specialties of Japanese cuisine, or tea ceremony. Among the readers of the children's fairy tales were: actors, journalists, and priests and politicians.

Almost every day, our museum is visited by groups of pupils and students, to view our current exhibitions, but also to take part in additional activities prepared specifically for them. We hold educational exhibits targeting the youngest age group as well (<https://manggha.pl/en>).

Museum lessons for preschoolers: “Travel around East Asia” — a series of three museum lessons aimed at children aged 5–6. Each meeting includes a guided tour of a selected exhibition, as well as an educational story and artistic activities presenting the culture of one of three countries: Japan, China or South Korea. (based on: <https://manggha.pl/lekcje-muzealne>).

The Kindergarten Library

The Kindergarten Library is a nationwide social campaign for kindergartens. As part of it, in the years 2018–2023, established 600 libraries throughout Poland. The campaign includes, among others, workshop activities promoting culture, with detailed elements of literature and illustrations, among children and educators.

Each institution participating in the campaign receives a trunk with 11 books and workshop materials for conducting readings and workshop meetings. The set of donated books (attractive novelties and Polish and world classics in new editions) can not only become the basis for building a kindergarten library — it is also the basis for a whole range of activities that make the campaign attractive and effective. The most important of them are meetings with the authors and illustrators of the donated books and the implementation generational readings with the participation of seniors who take part in regular meetings with children. A key feature of the campaign is the involvement of teachers and educators themselves, who, thanks to the materials received, can work with children in an interdisciplinary manner, developing an active interest in books. As part of the inauguration of the campaign, meetings and a typography workshops are held in each kindergarten, led by an author or illustrator of children’s books.

The trunk contains mainly 11 books that are selected by an elected member of the program board of the Children’s Literature Festival. The list of titles includes the most valuable contemporary children’s books, as well as classic books in attractive, new editions.

In addition to the books, the trunk contains: 25 sets of worksheets in A3 format (11 cards in each set), 25 folders for storing the worksheets, a set of grandma and grandpa’s puppets, a set of typographic paper listening glasses for each child, a guide for teachers, and a diploma for the senior taking part in the project, a diploma for the kindergarten, and a door sticker for the kindergarten

(based on: https://bibliotekaprzedzskolaka.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/informator-nauczyciel-BP-2023_wnetrze.pdf).

The organizer of the kindergarten library project is the Brain Burza Foundation, which has undertaken the most important statutory task of promoting reading among children, youth and adults. The rules of the program are as follows:

1. The project involves the inauguration of Kindergarten Libraries in public kindergartens.
2. Each inauguration is a workshop on creating your own, personalized typography book.
3. Each inauguration is a joint reading of books with the preschoolers' grandparents and grandmothers, which is an inspiration for further creative activities.
4. Each kindergarten participating in the project receives a mini-library — a bookcase containing 10 new publications.
5. Each child participating in the project receives sheets/work cards for carrying out workshop activities, and teachers receive instructions and creative aids.
6. The project will be continued by kindergartens over the next three months with the participation of invited grandmothers and grandfathers.
7. During subsequent readings, with the participation of grandmothers and grandfathers, children complete worksheets to create their own personalized book.

The motto of the program is “Connect generations by reading together. Grandparents read to children in kindergartens!” (based on: <https://biblioteka-przedzskolaka.pl/>).

Summary and conclusions

Analysis of the results of the research allows for the conclusion that:

The majority of respondents prefer daily aloud reading children's literature to children by teachers at different parts of the day: during morning classes, classes, rest and free time.

Most of the evaluated Krakow's kindergartens take part in the program “The Kindergarten Library” and the campaign “All of Poland Reads to Kids”.

Most of the surveyed teachers undertake cooperation with educational and cultural institutions:

— the public library, museum, cinema to encourage children to associate with children's literature by participating in workshops.

Most of the evaluated Krakow's kindergartens organize the book corners (variables related to the topic of classes and children's interests).

In addition, evaluated Krakow's kindergartens organize: meetings with children and parents, during which a piece of children's literature is read and meetings for children with well-known and respected authors of children's literature.

At the end, I will quote the words of I. Koźmińska, who says, that reading is capital for life: "How to read children? Every day. With engagement. With the conviction and joy that we are giving children excellent capital for their whole life!" (based on: <https://portal.librus.pl/szkola/artykuly/czytanie-kapital-na-cale-zycie>).

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