Exploring Pre-1800s Children’s Literature
Mehnoor Khan
Mentor: Professor Lara Saguisag

Abstract
The textbook From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850 (Fourth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2015) explores different themes and plots in the book and gives a holistic understanding of the historic pre-1800s era. It includes children’s texts dating back to 1000 A.D., including Puritan cautionary tales, Christian lyrics, fairy tales, and fables. The most prominent and significant theme that can be seen in several pieces is the construction of gender. I will explore the representation of gender in these pre-1800 texts. Children's stories and poems of the period illustrate the responsibilities of fathers and mothers, of sons and daughters. Hopefully, this poster will provide a better understanding of how children's literature constructs gender in past and present literatures.

Background
Charles Perrault was a French poet, writer, and fantastic storyteller. However, he is famously remembered for his collection of fairy tale stories written for children. He had a peculiar start by being a lawyer and worked in various royal buildings. He started to gain scholarly attention in 1660 with his iconic love & light poetry. He was elected as a member of the Royal Academy of France in 1660 with his iconic love & light poetry. He was elected as a fellow of the Royal Academy of France in the 1800s era. As the story

Objective
We will be exploring a deeper analysis of a woman’s role in each of Charles Perrault’s famous fairytales. We will discuss, “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Little Thumb,” and “Ricky of the Tuft,” by sharing brief summaries of each and then carrying on to a deeper analysis.

Illustrations
Charles Perrault Little Red Riding Hood Little Thumb Ricky of the Tuft

Short Summaries

Little Red Riding Hood
- The classic called Little Red Riding hood, is about a gorgeous girl with exceptional qualities whom her mother and grandmother adore.
- There was a jacket made specifically for the girl, and it suited her so well they called her Little Red Riding hood.
- The girl asks her family to take her sick grandmother and meet a wolf on the way to the house. The wolf asks her where she’s going, and she overshares. The wolf plans to go to the house first, eat the grandmother, and then eat the daughter and that’s exactly what happens.

Little Thumb
- Let's start with Little Thumb, which has many other variations of the title names, such as Hopp-o-Thumb or Little Poucet published in 1697.
- Little Thumb is about a woodcutter and his wife, who had seven children. The youngest Little Thumb.
- The parents become so poor that it would be poor to abandon all the children in the forest.
- The story continues with the mother overcome with grief, saying, "Ah! And can you yourself have the heart to take your children out along with you on purpose to abandon them?" but after much persuasion, she agrees.
- It's a compelling moment when Perrault describes the mother's feelings "She would not consent to it. Yes, she was poor, but she was their mother. However, after having considered what a grief it would be for her to see them perish with hunger, she at last consented and went to bed in tears.”

Ricky of the Tuft
- This story is about a queen who gives birth to a boy, but everyone says he is "ugly" and useless. He had very little hair on his head as the story describing it as "was born he had a little tuft of hair upon his head thus the name Ricky of the Tuft was born with little tuft of hair upon his head thus his name. From his features he was ugly and the Queen worried about her child’s future. The fairy assured her that if her son met a woman who truly loves him everything will become equal. Later the Queen heard about a young friend of hers who was also a Queen of another country had two twin daughters.
- One of the twins was a beautiful girl but lacked intelligence while the other twin was atrocious looking but was clever in people's company. But the beautiful twin was so clumsy that she would often mishandle pouring tea or simple things that should be done with grace.
- As the story goes she fell in love with the Prince Ricky of the Tuft and there strengths completed each other. Ricky’s cleverness was also given to the beautiful twin while Ricky was given the beauty of the twin.

Illustrations

Deeper Analysis

Little Red Riding Hood
The objective of this short story is simple for children to understand. The moral summarizes the entire story but also the message Charles Perrault is trying to convey. He is trying to express that the young ladies in that time period are inexperienced and naive believing anything and anything. They need to be careful about who to choose as their accomplices, perhaps giving light to a class difference.

Little Thumb
This story may not seem relevant at first but it truly had some powerful themes laced throughout it. The mother right from the beginning has to make the hardest decision to give up her children. Perrault might be alluding to the great famine that was happening across Europe. With several mothers having to make the decision to give away their children or just abandon them. I do think in the story the children are shown as a blessing since they bring good fortune.

Ricky of the Tuft
In this short story Charles Perrault is trying to express that the love is magic that can change anything. The prince has faults but when the princess falls in love with him she no longer realizes his faults or hers. In the moral I believe Charles Perrault conveys that love can change the imperfections in many things.

Conclusion
Today we read about the modern versions of fairytales, but the truth is the classic fairytales have been long forgotten. Perrault’s writing style has revived them and his morals in them showcase his thinking of the Pre-1800s Children’s Literature. From the three different short stories analyzed I learned about the how the past literature paved the way for the future literature.

Acknowledgement
I would like to thank my Mentor Professor Lara Saguisag for guiding me through a new world of fairytales.

Citations
• "Little Thumb". Perrault: Little Thumb. https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault08.html.
• Demers, Patricia. From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850. Fourth ed.