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PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

ŽENSKÉ POSTAVY V LITERATÚRE PRE DETI A MLÁDEŽ

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**Soňa MORAVČÍKOVÁ**

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### **Abstrakt v štátnom jazyku**

Tak ako sa mení spoločnosť, tak sa mení i pozícia a rola ženských postáv v literatúre pre deti a mládež. I keď v starovekých mýtoch a legendách sú ženy zobrazované v pozíciách silných a mocných hrdiniek, ich zobrazenie postupom času mení charakter a ženské postavy sa stávajú skôr pasívnymi nositeľkami krásneho tela bez výrazných charakterových črt. Aby sa postava žien znovu prebudila, prichádzajú feministické organizácie a zaoberajú sa nie len problematikou zobrazenia ženskej hrdinky, ale i vyrovnaním počtu ženských a mužských postáv v literatúre pre deti a mládež. Na druhej strane ženské postavy v modernej literatúre zohrávajú rôzne úlohy a nachádzajú sa v rôznych žánroch od historických noviel až po fantastickú literatúru. Americké, kanadské i britské autorky predstavili ženské hrdinky v nestarnúcich dielach a niektoré z nich sú spomenuté aj v tejto práci. Nachádza sa tu i pohľad na úlohy a pozície ženských hrdiniek v literatúre pre deti a mládež v minulosti a v súčasnej literárnej tvorbe.

### **Abstract in a Foreign Language**

With the society changing, the position and role of female characters in children's literature has been undergoing changes as well. Even though women in ancient myths and legends were described as powerful and brave heroines, with time they started to assume a rather passive role and beauty is often their only characteristic feature. To revive female characters, the feminist organizations and authors started to deal not only with the issue of dispalying of women figures in literary works but also with the uneven number of male and female characters in children's and juvenile leiterature. On the other hand, female protagonists play various roles and occur in various genres from historic novels to fantastic literature in modern writing. American, Canadian and British authors introduced female characters in everlasting works and some of them are mentioned also in this work. Further on we will also take a look at the roles and positions of female heroines in the literature intended for children and juveniles in the past as well as in the present time.

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1 History and background of female characters in United States and gender inequality in children’s and juvenile literature</b> .....	<b>8</b>
1.1 Female characters and feminist literary theory and its influence on children’s literature .....	9
1.2 Female characters in Canadian children’s literature and their background .....	13
1.2.1 The issue of homelessness in Canadian children’s literature with a girl protagonist .....	14
1.2.2 Variety of genres with female protagonist in Canadian children’s literature.....	15
<b>2 Female orphan characters in children’s and juvenile literature written in English</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Characteristic of Sara Crewe in the literary work A Little Princess .....	20
2.2 Character of Mary Lennox from The Secret Garden.....	22
2.3 Character of Anne from Anne of Green Gables .....	23
2.4 Minor female characters from Anne of Green Gables, Marilla Cuthbert and Mrs. Rachel Lynde .....	24
<b>3 Female roles and characters in family stories</b> .....	<b>26</b>
3.1 The role of the mother in Little Women.....	27
3.2 Little women: description of major characters .....	28
3.2.1 Margaret March, the oldest one from the March Sisters.....	28
3.2.2 Josephine March, the protagonist of the novel.....	28
3.2.3 Elizabeth, the third March sister.....	29
3.2.4 Amy, the youngest and the most genteel one from the March sisters.....	30
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>List of Resources</b> .....	<b>37</b>

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## Introduction

Female characters perform an irredeemable position in children's and juvenile literature. Women or girl protagonists are situated into the most varied versions, shapes, situations and roles. The intention of the following chapters is not only to introduce female characters, but also bring in various viewpoints and aspects associated with femininity in general or with concrete female protagonist. Folk tales, fairy tales, novels, or narratives display womankind through various characters, from grandmothers, mothers, daughters, to the witches, princesses or fairies. To step into the world of the female characters, we need to know something about their origin, creators and background. The first chapter of this work begins, in the first part, by looking at female characters in children's and juvenile literature. Special attention is paid to gender inequality between female and male characters and protagonists in the stories intended to the children and juvenile audience. This part also introduces the problematic of the already mentioned gender inequality and gender stereotyping from a feminists' point of view. Whereas the feminist theories pay an attention to the role of women in classic stories and fairy tales, we will focus on the female characters in these stories. Especially through the feminist theories female character has experienced significant changes over the last fifteen years.

The goal of this work is also to introduce famous or less known literary works and female characters as protagonists, individualistic, independent, and autonomous entities. Mostly the American Feminist scholars and authors of children's literature discuss the gender stereotyping problematic and press for satisfaction and equation between male and female characters, and both, the authors, and the protagonists, will be introduced in the first chapter of the work. The fact that the female characters have their deserved position in the children's literature vindicates their representation in Canadian literature. An intention of the part with girl and woman protagonists in the Canadian children's literature is to demonstrate the resilience of the feminine gender. Women protagonists play variety of roles in number of genres and literary themes.

Female characters have been appearing in the literature intended to children and juveniles since its beginning. Children's world is always different from the adult's one, thus literature has to be written otherwise. To attract children's attention and to satisfy their demands, the author has to focus on a catching and interesting theme. One of them is the theme of an orphaned child and the second part of this work focuses especially on

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orphaned girl representation in children's and juvenile literature. Some readers may find their own destiny in such theme, and others can identify with protagonist and live the experience through their stories. An English writer, Frances Hodgson Burnett, introduced such protagonists in her literary works. Novels as "A Little Princess" and "The Secret Garden" are consummate examples of orphaned characters, which enraptured the audience with their timeless topic. As well as Frances Hodgson Burnett, Lucy Maud Montgomery has demonstrated that the orphan theme draws attention not only to children's audience. A little orphaned girl Anne, from "Anne of Green Gables" is another example of female main orphan character in literature for children and juveniles. The literary work Anne of Green Gables is moreover attractive by dominance of female characters, as are Marilla Cuthbert and Mrs. Rachel Lynde. No less attractive topic, then is the orphan one, is the theme from and about family environment. One of the first writers of such stories is L. M. Alcott and her best-selling novel, Little Women. The lives of main characters, Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, and their loving mother Marmee, is one of the family stories, which has been popular among young readers ever since it was published. The main protagonist's characters and their life conditions will be described and compared in the last chapter of this work. Heroines of these stories bring in an atmosphere of particular period of time and position of women in society. Although it is not easy to define and concretize female roles and positions in children's and juvenile literature many of scholars and authors included the female subject into their works so as this work offers significant references about female characters in the literature for children and juveniles.



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# **1 History and background of female characters in United States and gender inequality in children's and juvenile literature**

Female characters occur in American literature from its beginning. The oldest stories which were spread from generation to generation also include female characters. These stories belong to American folklore and many of them are famous in countries almost all over the world. American folklore including legends, myths, folktales, sayings, anecdotes or songs reflect on human's beliefs, hopes and doubts, valour and pleasantries or fascination with the paranormal world, as mentioned Silvey (1995). Female characters in folklore play variety of roles and functions, whether it is in whole society, social groups or in family environment.

Many folk stories deal with creation of the world, formation of natural objects or the origin of human beings. While men often possess an enormous strength, which enables them to move with things or fight with mythical creatures, women play a role of mothers or some numinous beautiful beings, who often depend on the male hero. In Aesop Fables, which are popular in United States and all over the world, females are often objects of sexual longing or satire, as stated Lerer (2008). On the other hand, there also appeared folktale books in American literature, which picture women as protagonists. According to Silvey (1995), some notable books were written by an American author Paul Goble, which include transformation tales, such as "Buffalo Woman" (1984) or "The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses" (1979).

Considering many of folk tales, fables or myths with their protagonists have an unknown author they do not belong to particular country except for the stories with specific author, place, hero or heroine as are for instance Greek, Roman or Celtic myths. It does not matter where these ancient stories came from, they match the American feelings of the nineteenth century correctly, as mentioned Silvey (1995).

Although women characters appear in the American Mythology, their total number has always been incongruous with amount of male characters. As it is proved by numbers of researches, female characters, not only in the American children's literature, have always belonged to a minority. According to Davis (2006), in 1970s, S. Czaplinski performed a study of children's picture books, which won The Caldecott Awards in years

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between 1940 and 1971, where she focused on gender incongruities in pictures and texts. As Marks (2006) stated, The R. Caldecott Medal honors the best illustrators of children's books published in the United States every year. According to Spade (2007), researches by the year 1970 have demonstrated, that children's literature involves explicit and implicit evidence about essential power structures in the world, mainly those which refer to gender.

Considering texts, illustrations or biographies, female characters fall behind the male ones. Results of researches indicated that male characters outnumbered female characters, pictures of male outnumbered female ones, and biographies of male characters outnumbered those of females, as stated Zajda (2001). Suzanne Czaplinski's research proved that male characters outnumbered female characters in texts 65 percent to 35 percent and in pictures 63 percent to 37 percent. However the volume of female characters in literature descended since 1950 by 51 percent and through the 1960s by 23 percent, as mentioned Davis (2006). Several researches have found dominance of male characters in children's literature. Another example of evident inequality of gender presents Zajda (2001, p 121), where numbers show that in American children's books there are 2.3 males in the title for every female, 2.9 male adult central characters for every female, and for every female there are 2.4 male child central characters. Forasmuch the number and position of female characters in children's literature fluctuated for many years there come feminist literary theories to deal with and to clarify the sex inequality in literature.

## **1.1 Female characters and feminist literary theory and its influence on children's literature**

Literary characters like princesses, fairies, queens or witches are subjects of woman stereotyping in children's stories and books. Each of these characters represents a specific group, specific characteristic and their features are often similar if not even consistent. According to Haase (2004), A. Dworskin in "Woman Hating" (1974) says that fairy tale formalizes our cultural valuation and understanding male and female roles by constantly presenting of women as immoral, beautiful, and inactive while male character, in complete contrast, as kind, energetic, and valiant.

Feminist literary theory deals with the social and political intentions of feminism, and it focuses on literary scholarship and theory as a potential site of struggle and as a resource of possible changes, as stated Wallace (2009). One feature which is dominant among

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princesses, fairies and other magnificent fairy beings is in all conscience beauty. The feminine beauty ideal is one of the subjects of recent studies. Beauty ideal is socially created image through which physical appearance is one of female's most essential utility, and something which women should press for to succeed and this ideal is of course interest of feminist society, as presented Spade (2007).

Physical appearance of female characters in fairy tales is mentioned quiet often. According to Spade (2007), popular fairy tales retold by feminist authors often include females who differ from their earlier substitutes in wittiness, vitality, and independence but not in beautiful appearance. There are studies, which deal with this problematic, and numbers show a clear and noticeable distinctness among male and female mentions of appearance. The study of Grimm's Tales by the year 1970 shows, that the amount of male physical appearance references cover from 0 to 35 per story while the range for female character's appearance is from 0 to 114, Spade (2007). Another thing that was studied in connection with female beauty in children's literature is the age of female characters and range of references about their appearance. In the tales of Brothers Grimm 57 percent of young female characters represent beauty, whereas only 5, 2 percent of tales containing older women mention their beauty.

The Feminist theories draw attention to the gender stereotyping in fairy tales and strive for creation of unconventional female characters in children's literature. The idea lays behind new collection initiating less notorious tales with unconventional female characters, including collections as Alison Laurie's *Clever Gretchen and Other Forgotten Folktales* (1980), R. Minard's "Womenfolk and Fairy tales" (1975), and "The Maid of the North: Feminist Folk Tales from Around The World" (1981) written by Ethel Johnston Phelps, as mentioned Haase (2004). Female characters in these collections of fairy tales do not succumb to gender stereotyping, by contrast, institute female characters into various roles and positions. The collectors of women-centered fairy tales do not interpret a distinct image or definition of the heroine in fairy tales, as further mentioned Haase (2004).

Female characters in fairy tales were often symbols of silence, magnificence and last but not least submission. Before L. M. Alcott's "Little Women" most books were centered quiet clearly in keeping female characters in their supple position and inactive home-keeping function, as mentioned Hunt (2001). "Sleeping Beauty", "Cinderella", or "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", taken over by American Walt D.C. from Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales, are excellent examples of dreamy princess whose only mission is either to

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perform her duties or wait for a man to rescue her from an everlasting sleep. Hunt (2001) further mentioned, that the notion that the suitable and desirable aim for all women is a man, which appeared quite often in children's books in the nineteenth century still prevails, with little changes, in number of books for teenagers. Mostly the female authors of girl stories try to confute the stereotype of women waiting for a rescuer. An example of such story is admittedly "The Secret Garden" written by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Mary Lennox, the protagonist of this novel, is no inert dreamer who is awakened by a male hero, but instead of that, she is a leader of a male character, as mentioned Clark (2000).

Feminist theories bring in the problematic of stereotyping in children's books. In 1970s feminists played a significant role in modifying stereotypes in folktales and fairy tales, recovering old versions of forgotten tales and remaking tales for gender neutrality, as stated Salem (2006). Feminist literature brings new characters and roles for girls and women into the children's literature, different from nefarious stepmothers, witches and beautiful victims, Claire (1993). The author next mentioned that one of such books for those who are interested in problematic of gender in children's literature is Bronwyn Davies' "Frogs and Snails" and "Feminist Tales". The stories do not try to reshape the girl into the boy, but promote the equality of both genders.

Especially Brothers Grimm's fairy tales called attention of many scholars and feminist for its gender stereotyping. According to Haase (2004), Jack Zipes's essay "Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm? Socialization and Politi[ci]zation through Fairy Tales" (1879-1980), Maria Tatar's studies of male and female characters in "The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales" (1980), or Ruth B. Bottigheimer's "Grimms' Bed Girls and Bold Boys: The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales" (1987), are the examples of studies, where the author's main focus is on female stereotyping and representation of female characters in Brothers Grimm's Fairy Tales.

Non-sexist or anti-sexist children's literature does not support traditional gender roles, female and male stereotyping, prevalence of male protagonists, passive behavior of female characters and creative activities only by male characters, as mentioned Boles (2004). Feminist and anti-sexist books more often describe flexibility of female characters. According to Wolf (2004), women and men authors of children's literature rewrite the traditional tales and fairy tales and so offer non-sexist stories, as a result of women's movements. Grandmothers, mothers or daughters are shown in positions which are accredited to men, in many cases, male characters are not mentioned. American writers and

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publishers were not passive in production of books with feminist and anti-sexist theme. Vera B. Williams's "A Chair for my Mother" (1982), Louise Pfanner's "Louise Builds a House" (1987), Jeannette Caines's "Just Us Women" (1982). Most of these books with a woman as a protagonist are picture books intended rather for younger audience.

Feminist approaches show their presence also in the literature for juveniles or young adults. One of the authors who are not interested in presenting a monotonous picture of female character is Angela Carter and her collection of folktales "The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book" (1990) published in the United States, as stated Haase (2004). Another example of story for young adults is Robin McKinley's "Beauty" (1978), an excellent retelling of the famous story "Beauty and the Beast", as states Wolf (2004). The same author further mentions few more writers of stories with female protagonists, as for instance Gail Carson Levine and her "Ella Enchanted" (1997), the story about wise, energetic, and bright girl Ella, who bends gender lines in unusual and witty ways. The story of Ella is a retelling of the well know "Cinderella". Gail Carson Levine has written several other ravishing retellings in her rubric The Princess Tales (2002) as mentions Wolf (2004). "The Princess Test" (1999), the retelling of "The Princess and the Pea" and "Princess Sonora and the Long Sleep" (1999), the retellings of "Sleeping Beauty" are also works from Levine's rubric "The Princess Tales". These stories describe women in various positions and roles.

Female characters appear in women's fiction, popular genre of children's literature. Woman's fiction includes stories about women, which are addressed to woman, written by women. One of the first American authors of such books was Susan Warner with her literary works for children audience, as stated Baym (1993). Warner's books "Queechy" (1852), "Melbourne House" (1864), or "Mr. Rutherford's Children" (1853), are great and strong stories with female protagonists. Female writers have also taken up the male dominated sphere of science fiction and fantastic literature, where Ursula K. Le. Guin was successful with her fantasy works, as is for example "Earthsea Trilogy" (1968) with a forceful woman character, as stated Goodman (1996).

Over the last few years, feminist theoreticians have been working hard to repulse the myth of women's and girl's passivity, but we also need to keep a balanced outlook of what happens to boys when they are forced to fight with dragons, and than rescue and marry princesses whose character is more dead-alive than living, as mentioned Wolf (2004). Feminist literary theories in literature for children and juvenile address gender role

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stereotyping in accustomed, award-winning, and actual texts, and feminist readers can actively react on sexist beliefs, explore stereotypes and role models, ask for greater variety, representation, comprehension, and celebration of women. (Wallace 2009).

## **1.2 Female characters in Canadian children's literature and their background**

Considering Canada is a relatively young country, where only settlement had not started till the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we should not expect many books exclusively intended for children's audience. Although Lucy Maud Montgomery, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Sir Charles G. S. Roberts obtained international praise in the twentieth century, not many Canadian books for children were published until the 1970s, as stated Cooper (1999). On the other hand, in the last thirty years the Canadian's children's literature has acquired an international status and at the end of the 1990s, children's literature in Canada has showed its potential, as further mentioned Cooper (1999).

As it is typical for many cultures, more topics and styles occur in certain period of time, and of course, also gender of protagonists changes one after another. We can observe that female or girl protagonists of Canadian children's literature prevail in books written by female authors. The problematic of migration interested Canadian writers and publishers more than the anti-sexist theme. In the times of migration, not only authors for adults were interested in this theme, but also within children's literature this topic has met with significant reactions. According to Cooper (1999), lot of survival sagas combine more than one style. The migration, the exile, and the nomadism are all figures which help writers to investigate the illusory quest for stabile identity and the possibility of resistance, as mentioned Reimer (2008). Especially the topic of the migration associated with domestication attracted Canadian writers.

The most rewarded story in Canadian children's literature is a narrative where the protagonists pushed of a primary home by the judgments and attributes of forceful adults, and make a voyage to a foreign place, and after a sequels of changes that occupy most of the story, home is understood to be a product of human shaping and a place, where previously quarreled characters finally turn to good, as observed Reimer (2008) The Reimer's theory can symbolizes or at least indicates an immigration and associated changes in Canada. These life tested protagonist will be in our case girl protagonist.

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### **1.2.1 The issue of homelessness in Canadian children's literature with a girl protagonist**

The elements of previously mentioned kind of narrative occur in a lot of books written by Canadian writers. They were mostly women, who entertained female or girl characters in the literature for children and young adults. As Reimer (2008, p 1) stated, an example of this narrative pattern in the most flourishing book in the history of literature for children in Canada is Janet Lunn's *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*, which won five awards in the years after its publication in 1986. Her literary works "Double spell" (1968), about the twins who met a ghost from 1840s Toronto, "The root cellar" (1981), a time – shift novel about Rose, a sorrowful child befriended by young people, involved in the American Civil War, "One hundred shining candles" (1990), or "Twelve dancing princesses" (1979) are the stories about and with girl protagonist, as mentioned Silvey (1995).

Already mentioned Lunn's novel, "Shadow in Hawthorn Bay" is a story with historical and mythic elements about a young woman Mary, who hears Duncan's voice, who is her cousin from Canada. Mary, as a Scottish immigrant escapes to Canada to find out why only she can hear the voice which is so far away, and as an opposite of female stereotype, meets lots of strangers, migrants, vagrants, and experiences through varied life situation and involvements. On the other hand, the tip-off on women stereotyping occurs when Mary meets Luke and latter marries him.

The most considerable subject matter of the novel is homelessness. Mary, the protagonist of the story also experiences homelessness through to journey from Scotland to Upper Canada. Mary chose to survive as a vagrant as far as her ship sails, sleeping outdoors and searching for food in the forest, as mentioned Reimer (2008). This situation was not the only Mary's experience with homelessness. Mary got to know with many passengers who wanted to find a new home to live. Reimer (2008) further mentioned that Mary met with homeless also through her conversation with strangers on the board of ship. Focusing on the middle of "Shadow in Hawthorn Bay", where the protagonist is a homeless child, scenes allow to the reader to see text's ideological achievement of home, Reimer (2008).

Janet Lunn is not the only Canadian author of children's novels, who wrote about homelessness in connection with girl or women characters. In Deborah Ellie's "Looking for X" (1999), and Elizabeth Wennick's "Changing Jareth" (1999), encounters with

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characters without home is not denied but sought out by the primary child characters. These works have won or at least been nominated for literary awards, Reimer (1999).

Maybe even more resonant name of Canadian children's literature is Lucy Maud Montgomery and her books about the unique Anne, which are read all over the world also in present days. As Cooper (1999) remarked, for decades, fictional settings for a young Canadian girl's in connection with land has been Montgomery's rural landscape in her Anne stories. "Anne of Green Gables" (1908), "The Story Girl" (1911), "Emily of New Moon" (1923), "The Blue Castle" (1926) are examples of Montgomery's stories with girl character as a main protagonist. According to Silvey (1995), Montgomery's two best-known and best-developed female characters are Anne and Emily who even if they may fulfill their womanly duty by marrying the "prince next door" they firstly loudly and angrily criticize the way in which girls, orphans and other power less members of society are unheard and banal. Although "Anne of Green Gables" belongs to home seeking and domestic genre of Canadian children's literature, we will deal with her character in the chapter about female orphan characters.

### **1.2.2 Variety of genres with female protagonist in Canadian children's literature**

However the seeking for home theme and theme about immigration has impressed quite lot of Canadians authors, there come also new topics to the national literature, where also female characters have their appreciable representation. By the year 1980 Canadian authors and publishers of children's literature expended their sphere into new themes and genres, which were for example themes of a multicultural society, time travel fantasy, novels about social history, or picture books, as mentioned Cooper (1999).

Ten years after expansion of genres in Canadian children's literature, new female protagonists are introduced to young reader. According to Cooper (1999), in 1990s comes new group of adolescent characters whose focus on initial and affective more than physical concerns. More stories about female protagonists show their connection with land and especially the countryside is many times the best inspiration for Canadian authors. Canadian wilderness is strong and forcible metaphor for both the suffering and healthful in the female protagonist's lives coming-of-age stories "Bone Dance" (1997) by Martha Brook, Jake Macdonald's "Juliana And The Medicine Fish" (1997), Jan Andrewse's "Keri" (1996) and "Sharla" (1998) by Budge Wilson, as further mentioned Cooper (1999,



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p 29). These books are intended rather for juvenile or young adults because they can identify with protagonists of their age.

Another notable genre of Canadian children's literature is historical fiction. These novels and stories about Canadian life with female protagonist preserve until now. As Cooper (1999) stated, there has been an enhancement of women characters and publishing of social histories describing life as was lived in other periods of time through social manners, values, and day-to-day occurrences, are published more than fictional stories about a specific historical facts. Which means that women's real problems, duties, and life trials are more interesting for both adult and young audience than made up stories about fictive event or character. Historical fiction for young adults is often rough in tone and atmosphere, reflecting on physical suffering, merciless overwork, and restricted rights of women and girls in past ages, but on the other hand, writing also illustrates the flexibility and straightness of the child characters, as stated Cooper (1999). Janett Lunn's "The Hollow Tree", Jeane Chatel's "The King's Daughter", "Laura's Choice" by Connie Brummel Crook, or Susan Merritt's "The Stone Orchard" belongs to the historical fiction of Canadian children's literature with the female as a protagonist.

Already mentioned Canadian author Janet Lunn brought a new and different sight to Canadian historic books. According to Silvey (1995), informational literature, which includes also historical books, have expanded in numbers and quality, and brought such treasures as are "The Junior Encyclopedia of Canada" (1990) and "The Story of Canada" (1992) written by Janet Lunn and Christopher Moore. The same source further states, that "The Story of Canada" is the first illustrated overall history of Canada not only for children, and its publishing is considered as Canadian children's event of that time. Besides of historical events, civil disorders, wars and nation – wide change, there are described lifetimes of women important for Canadian culture from Native - born till big names of these days. *"Lunn says she has recently heard that the reason there aren't any books on women is because there aren't any women to find." "It's not true," she says. "Don't tell me there's nothing on women-on Nellie McClung, on Emily Murphy, or even earlier people."* Reed (1992). An epoch making women of Canadian history have been introduced to young readers through the investigative blood of Janet Lunn.

However the historical books and their protagonists attracted many authors and readers, there is also Canadian fantastic and fiction literature which also includes more or less famous female characters. Fantasy and historical literature can not stay far from each other,

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because they often blend together. A lot of stories and characters from the past are sometimes just figments of author's fantasy. One kind of such fantasy is called time-slip fantasy. According to Bainbridge (1999), in time-slip fantasy, the protagonists transport into the past and they learn something more about themselves or about other people through the traveling in time.

Canadian children's literature also introduced these kinds of stories with girl protagonist. Well known Canadian time-slip fantasy stories with female character are Margaret Laurence's "The Olden Days Coat" (1979), "The Doll" (1987) written by Cora Taylor, "The Secret of Sentinel Rock" (1996) by Judith Silverthorne, Margaret Buffie's "Who is Frances Rain" (1987), Kit Pearson's "A Handful of Time" (1987), or Barbara Haworth Attard's "Dark of the Moon" (1995), as stated Bainbridge (1999). Protagonists of these stories are most often little girls, who through some special circumstances move into the past, where they meet with their grandparents in the same age as are themselves or try to live as a people from former times.

Canadian high fantasy including female characters has also its representation in the national literature. In this kind of literature protagonists often fight against the evil, befriends with strange creatures or as it was in time - slip fantasy travel to the different period of time. In accordance with Bainbridge (1999), the main conflict of these stories is often between good and evil, and the quest often stands for a way of personal growth and self – examination of the heroine. To pick out just few of them, we can mention "Margaret and the Rats of NIMH" (1990) written by Jane Conly, "A Wrinkle in Time" (1962) and "A Wind in the Door" (1973) by Madeleine L'Engle, as mentioned Bainbridge (1999, p 100).

Fantastic stories have some common features with science fiction literature. As Silvey (1995) mentioned, related with fantasy is specially science fiction, and Canada can be proud of science fiction author Monica Hughes and her story "Keeper of The Isis Light" (1980) with a girls as a protagonist. The author does not specialized only in science fiction books, but also in sensitive stories with female characters as is "My Name is Paula Popowitch" (1983) where the protagonist is desperate girl Paula who tries to find out who is her father or "The Promise" (1989), about ten – year old princess who found a new sense in her life. As wide is Hughes's range of genres, even wider is variety of female characters in Canadian children's literature.

However is Canadian children's literature relatively young, as we have already mentioned, girls and their live experiences are published constantly. As the time passes and

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changes female characters changes simultaneously. According to Silvey (1995, 118), books become more concerned with character's crises in their lives, and emphasize their determination to succeed through a self - examination of themselves. Female characters are in progress through their creators and if we are talking about national theme, historic, fantasy or fiction stories in Canadian literature, there have always been a space for a girl to give to book its special tone and atmosphere.

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## **2 Female orphan characters in children's and juvenile literature written in English**

When considering reading a book with orphan theme, we as readers, expect heart-rending, dolorous and affective story. Kimball (1999) pointed out, that orphans in literature symbolize one's separation from each other and from society. According to Kimball (1999) these children without parents and often without whole family represent the possibility for people to rediscover themselves.

Misfortune and deprecation but also happy endings and changes for the better are subjects of many literary works. Concerning on orphan theme, there are numbers of characters in children's literature acting by their own without family. Orphan, in the real world so as in the literature, is a child, whose parents are dead or missing. Considering this definition of orphan character, there is score of such protagonists in the children's and juvenile literature.

Orphaned boy's stories are often with adventurous and humorous theme. The fact, that main protagonists are orphans, is not emphasized or it is at least suppressed. Probably the best known literary male orphans are Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Fin, Harry Potter, Frodo Baggins and many others. On the other hand, there are lots of classic children's stories about orphaned girls. They are often more thoughtful and they rather include a moral message. To mention only a few of them, named can be Rebecca of Sunny brook Farm, Heidi, Sara Crewe in *The Little Princess*, Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*, and Anne of Green Gables. The last three mentioned characters are going to be described and compared in more detail.

Female orphan characters, which we are going to analyse, are displayed in Frances Hodgson Burnet's famous literary works *A Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden*. In *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature* (2001) is stated, that Frances Hodgson Burnett moved from England to Long Island in 1924, and from the same source we know, that her earlier works were rather for adults but the book *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which was intended for children, received the state of best/seller. Her novels became famous not only in the print productions but also in the form of film.

One of the topics of her works is worthiness of personal grave. The author exposes it in each of her works. According to Burnett (2002), the example of such character is shown in timeless classic which affects both adolescent and children alike. *A Little Princess* has

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been studied and discussed by many critics. Kutzer (2000) states, qualities of this literary work are comparable with qualities of the fairy tale Cinderella. Rapid change of welfare to the absolute poverty and then final comeback are main common features of these, at first sight different, literary works.

## **2.1 Characteristic of Sara Crewe in the literary work A Little Princess**

The famous character of the story, who is an orphaned and abused little girl named „Sara Crewe, appears for the first time in Sara Crewe; or What Happened at Miss Minchin’s“. The story was remade into the fuller „A Little Princess: Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe, Now Told for the First Time“ (1905), as is described in The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature, (2005). Comprehensive introduction of the book is written by published author and editor U. S. Knoepflmacher. His consummate prelude is an entrance to the whole story, united with short memoir of Frances H. Burnett’s bibliography.

One of the most dominant phenomena in children’s stories is imagination. Whether it is „Alice in Wonderland,“ „Anne of Green Gables“ or „A Little Princess“, the imagination is an inseparable part of each of these stories. According to Grenby (2008), the Little Princess, as was Sara called by her father, uses imagination to easily bear her life in poverty. Her endless imagination helps her to solve cruel situations, which happen to her through the whole story, moreover, she is also popular among the girls from the school exclusively because of her made-up stories. Sara as well as her friend Becky lives in poor conditions in a school attic. The place is small, cold, dark and dirty, but girl’s fantasy helps them to change the loft into the nice and warm roomage, full of imaginative things and food. Nevertheless, Sara needed not to be taught to tolerate her poorness. As Grenby (2008) states, the story appears as moral tale, because it shows to children the strength and the power, which is needed to deal with misfortune. Although Sara needed not to be taught to tolerate her poverty, she needed to be taught how to limit her imagination.

Besides the imagination there is also space for describing of Sara’s appearance. These external features and temperament of the main protagonist Sara Crewe are described in the very first chapter of the book. *“She sat with her feet tucked under her, and leaned against her father, who held her in his arm, as she stared out of the window at the passing people with a queer old-fashioned thoughtfulness in her big eyes. She was such a little girl that*

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*did not expect to see such a look on her small face*”, written by Burnett, (2002). Sara’s tiny body and lantern jaws sometimes evocated remorse and another time enviousness. However is Sara described, there is still some space for the reader to imagine her physical features.

On the other hand, her initial or character qualities are described by her behaviour and joviality. Cvetkovic (2010) describes Sara’s character as remarkable, clever, wise and completely different from her intolerant commander Miss Minchin. Although she lost her fortune her strong character doesn’t change at all. Sara’s wisdom is shown also by her global knowledge and fluent speaking in French language, which she had learnt just by listening to others. Her strong and positive character is best exposed in the seventh chapter, when she celebrated her eleventh birthday. Miss Minchin organized big festivity for Sara on purpose of expectation of check with lot of money from Sara’s father. There were only little ladies on the party and Sara asked Miss Minchin if the young servant girl Becky can stay too. Miss Minchin found the idea funny and queer but she allowed it. Becky is another servant child, who is under the Miss Minchin’s control. Despite of fact, that she is from low class and takes care about house-hold, she is in the same nature as other little ladies at the school.

Sara’s world and staying at Seminary school turned upside down, when her father’s solicitor, Mr. Barrow, came to announce a terrible message. *”You don't come to tell me that Captain Crewe is“* *”He's dead, ma'am,”* Mr. Barrow answered with jerky brusqueness. *”Died of jungle fever and business troubles combined”*, written by Burnett, (2002).

The Indian Gentleman is the title of the tenth chapter. His appearance shows how uncertain one’s destiny can be. In this case it is Sara’s destiny, which is going to be examined.

The Indian Man was a friend of Sara’s father. After the Mr. Crewe’s death, the Indian Man wanted to find the Sara and give her the money, which belonged to her. They were living next to each other without knowing it for a long time. Sara did not even dream how possession she owns. Whatever position she had to face up, her character had not changed through the whole story. This example of huge courage in the little body has its earned position in the children’s literature for hundreds of years.

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## 2.2 Character of Mary Lennox from *The Secret Garden*

“The Secret Garden” and “A Little Princess” were both written by Frances Hodgson Burnett. According to Butts (1987), the writer started to build her new house in the spring time in 1909, and interested in gardening and planting, begun to write her most favourite book, *The Secret Garden*. In addition to the author, these two works have more in common.

The main protagonist Mary Lennox is a lonely girl, who was born in India. She grew up without any interest of her parents and she never felt love or tenderness. Mary was brought up only by Indian servants, who were changing quiet often, because of Mary’s ignorant character. Mary is described as strong and independent woman, who does everything what she wants, goes everywhere she wants and says whatever comes into her mind. Unlike the Sara, Mary’s character is changing through the whole story. From ill-mannered and rude girl has become a careful young lady. Mary Lennox, or Mistress Mary Quiet Contrary, as she was called right because of her unfriendly spirit appeared as lonely and unwanted milksop. Nobody wanted to be with her, nobody wanted to play with her and that is why, she was most of the time by her own. All the same she was alone, when a killing disease came and plundered her home. She was only girls who survived destroying cholera.

Mary had no place to go, and it worried her more than the death of her parents. There was just one human being, who could undertake a responsibility for this little orphaned girl. As Russell (1991) stated, Mary is initially unpleasant child placed in an unpleasant and sumptuous home, but very mystical. Her uncle Mr. Craven, who was not interested in her as well as her parents, lived in the Manor in Yorkshire. In the same way, as it was with Sara Crewe in *A Little Princess*, Mary has moved from her home-place far away, and as well as Sara, she immediately found a little mate about her age.

On the other hand, Mary also found a male friend, who does not appear in *A Little Princess*. The boy is her cousin, who lives in his room and never goes out. Kimball (2002) states, that Colin as well as Mary lives in separation from people in the house. He is afraid of death and it causes his isolation from others. Mary and Colin has become a friend even though, they are both bloody-minded and quarrelsome. Her character began to change when her new home and its surroundings offered to Mary plenty of secrets. The most delicate secret, which she was interested in, is the locked garden. Something forbidden and unallowable means for Mary, and for each little girl, a thing, which must be disclosed.

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The garden can symbolize many things for many people. Relating to Carpenter (2006), the exposition of victorious struggle with life has inspired crowd of young women all over the world to believe in their own gardens. Both protagonist, Sara so as Mary, found joy and happiness in the simplest things. Although Sara had to imagine things, and Mary had to wait for finding of her comfort for a while, both of them showed, how pleasing can be a childhood. Carpenter (2006) next mentioned that remembrance of best-known garden all over the world still exists, and represents the universal phrase for the unseen and redeemable. Since Mary has found the key from the secret garden, she found sense of her and Colin's life too. According to Russell (1991), The Secret Garden celebrates the potencies of family life, but is not a traditional domestic tale.

### **2.3 Character of Anne from Anne of Green Gables**

Not only in the past but also in present times the characters of Sara Crewe and Mary Lennox are those characters, which many young girls can relate to. A resembling example of such protagonist is well known orphaned girl with red hair, Anne from Anne of Green Gables. The author of ageless Anne is Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery. As Gillis (1983) stated, after the Anne was launched to the reader, L.M. Montgomery realized that she had produced a best seller. Anne of Green Gables has been published in about fifteen languages including French, Italian, Finnish, Norwegian, Polish, and many others, and the character of Anne was honoured even by Mark Twain, as defines Gillis (1983).

Anne and her character symbolize not only spontaneous, vibrant and unusual nature for the readers, but she is also symbol of difference, novelty and uniqueness for those, who have met with immigration. The first decade of the twentieth century is the time, when „Anne of Green Gables“ was written and published. This period is characterized by enormous wave of immigration in Canada, as disclosed Robinson (1999). „Anne of Green Gables“ is considered as a girly novel, and cast up is also mostly by female protagonists.

Anne was raised in an orphanage surrounded by children from various backgrounds which influenced her in both, good way and bad way. She always had a hard time when it came to being alone, but she also had hope and faith that things will change for better. The absence of parental authority affected Anne's character, and when she was adopted by the Cuthbert siblings, this often showed in the way she faced her new day-to-day problems.



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As for Anne, she lived in her imaginary world as intensively as in her real world. The reason for her to create this parallel world was to escape from the reality that surrounded her in the orphanage. This was a way how to make her days happier and more colourful and thus she developed a powerful and amazing asset that would come helpful many times throughout her life. Cooper (1999) describes Anne as the outsider in an unknown world, who is vastly associated with nature. Anne's imaginary is also linked to nature. She imagines that the bridges crumple up and nip her, or that the trees are talking to each other. Anne also often makes up names for things or people. As an example can be "Bonny", as a name for geranium, or the "Snow Queen" for cherry tree. Hepzibah Jenking, the girl from the Asylum, was renamed to "Rosalia DeVere", just because Anne believed, that these names are more magnificent.

Anne's manners are energetic and youthful but sometimes too spontaneous and irrational. She is an "explosive" type, who always solves every problem and situation right at the moment without thinking it through. An example of her spontaneous acting can be the situation when she dyes her hair green by mistake. Robinson (1999) justifies this situation as Anne's desire to belong to the new community. However Anne tried to acclimatize herself in each collective, her unpredictable temperament puts sometimes her efforts down. As Epperly (1999) remarked, the situation when Anne broke a slate over Gilbert's head, after he libelled her, thematizes the explosion of female temper in a time of male authority. On the other hand, as the book proceeds, we can notice that Anne starts to learn how to control her emotions, and her decisions become more and more rational and responsible.

## **2.4 Minor female characters from Anne of Green Gables, Marilla Cuthbert and Mrs. Rachel Lynde**

Although Anne is the main character of the novel, there are also Marilla Cuthbert and Rachel Lynde, whom attention is also paid to. The Cuthbert siblings, Marilla and Matthew always hoped for a helping hand on their farm. When the high time came, they decided to adopt a little helpmate, who will land a hand with household. Everybody, who did know about that idea, was expecting a little Canadian boy, but it was a girl, who came to Marilla's and Matthew's house. We can impliedly observe the occurrence of the patriotic signs, especially at the beginning of the story. As Robinson (1999) stated, Marilla tried to

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persuade as herself as Mrs Lynde, that the same nationality, which means Canadian nationality, means also common bond, which keeps the hazard of foreignness at a minimum.

Marilla had no previous experience with children and the only way of raising a child she was familiar with, was the way she was raised herself. As we have already mentioned, Marilla had patriotic approach for almost everything, including her upbringing style. According to Robinson (1999), Marilla is not convinced that Anne's motivation to participate in a school concert is truly patriotic, and suspects an element of enjoyment behind this action. We can notice here, that Marilla sometimes takes her passion for patriotism too seriously.

In the beginning, Marilla kept the distance and decided to raise Anne firmly in the old fashioned way. Marilla used orders and prohibition as the main tools of education. She tried to convert Anne into a well-educated and well-behaved young lady, and what was the most important, to convert Anne to the believer and eager Christian. The example of Marilla's trial is when she teaches Anne how to pray to God.

Marilla didn't understand how to find a way into the soul of a child. She, being an older lady herself, that never had children of her own, forgot what was it like to get lost in an imaginary world that children create and that Anne would run to so often. As time passed, Marilla was able to find some sense in Anne's humour, but she would never express that on the outside, like any other emotion. It was rare to catch Marilla smiling and she would only do so, if she thought no one else can see her, especially Anne.

Even more strict and patriotic character of this novel is Mrs. Rachel Lynde. According to Robinson (1999), Mrs. Lynde is the local lookout and sometimes invasive watchdog. The narrator increases the expected orphan's difference through her character. Mrs. Lynde can not bear the matter of a new orphaned foreigner in "her" city. She tries to persuade Cuthbert, that the idea of a little orphan in their house is entirely *wrong*. As an example of her attitude we can excerpt from Montgomery (2004, p 60), "*Well, I hope it will turn out all right,*" said Mrs. Rachel in a tone that plainly indicated her painful doubts. "*Only don't say I didn't warn you if he burns Green Gables down or puts strychnine in the well-I heard of a case over in New Brunswick where an orphan asylum child did that and the whole family died in fearful agonies.*" Mrs. Lynde often and apparently exaggerates her doubts to induce a possible risk. As the novel ends, even such authority as Mrs. Rachel Lynde, is positively affected by Anne, Cooper (2003).

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### 3 Female roles and characters in family stories

Sara Crewe, Mary Lennox and Anne Shirley are main protagonists of stories with orphan theme, but on the other hand it is a family, which plays an important role in their lives. The previous works are also classified as stories with family theme. The Secret Garden by F.H. Burnett, Anne of Green Gables by L.M. Montgomery, L.M. Alcott's „Little Women“ and many others belong to the Domestic Realism, as remarked Russell (1991). Family stories are interesting for a young reader by always current theme about family. It was Louisa May Alcott, the American writer, who identified with this type of writing, since she wrote about her own childhood life and about American family life in nineteenth century, with all its ups and downs, as further mentioned Russell (1991). We can observe that L. M. Alcott's literary composition focuses on girl novels. Not only family story „Little Women“ (1868), but also „An Old – Fashioned Girl“ (1870), „Aunt Jo's Scrap-bag“ (1872) or „Eight Cousins“ (1875) are clearly defined as girl novels, as mentioned Alberghene (1999, p 43).

The term Domestic realism includes also stories as are „Jacob Have I Loved“ by Katherine Paterson, or „The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew“ by Margaret Sidney. Both of them are literary works with family theme background. Each character has to cope with their not always easy situation, and it is also the mother, who is ready to help with family and life difficulties.

Female characters perform different roles in different space of time. Women form fifty percent of population, and they have played crucial mission in social and cultural life, but this is not reflected in the hero myths, as stated Hourihan (1997). Myths and legends were spread by oral form, and most of them were not intended for children's ear. Dominance of female characters in the stories about gods and heroes is perceptible. Hourihan (1997) next remarked that there are just few women in these stories, and most of them have function in domestic sphere. However there are some attributes of domestic life in these ancient, or any other younger stories, we can not consider them as family stories.

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### 3.1 The role of the mother in *Little Women*

As we had already mentioned, the first sign of domestic realism appeared in 1867, by L. M. Alcott's "*Little Women*". The story is enacted in the time of American Civil War, the time, when members of family stick to each other more than ever, and mothers are the heads of their families. The mother of the March children, from *Little Women*, is women, whose husband was sent to war, as an army chaplain. Marmee, as she was called by her daughters, is a charitable person, who works hardly to feed her children, but she also thinks of those, who are in even worst conditions than her family. Such character is proved in the situation, when Marmee, the mother of four girls, gives their breakfast to hungrily family living in poor room, without any warmth or food.

According to Russell (1991), for Alcott, the family is permanent source of intensity and stability, and the parents are role models for their children. Mrs. and Mr. March are icons for their girls, although Mr. March is in contact with them just through telegrams and letters. All March girls love their mother and they are loved by her equally. They do not have to compete for her, as stated Alberghene (1999). The little women want to be like their mother and father, and demonstrate it at every possible opportunity. They showed it also in already mentioned part, when they all agreed with their mother, to donate their food to another poor family. Girls, with inner expectancy, that their mother will be proud of them, give their breakfast without any protest.

Besides Marmee's joviality and role model, there is also strength as her significant attribute. She is lone working mother and misses her husband, and what is more, Marmee has no idea when or if her spouse will come back to home. Nevertheless, she always has an effort to help her girls and stand by them when they need it. She also has a power, to open the letters from her husband, and read it to their daughters, even she does not know, what message is going to be written there. As Keyser (2000) stated, the letter from the Mr. March unites the miscellaneous family at once. Mrs. March teaches her girls that although their father is far away, they have to fulfill their duties and help to each other.

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## **3.2 Little women: description of mayor characters**

Little women, Margaret as Meg, Josephine as Jo, Elizabeth as Beth and the youngest of the March sisters Amy, are of course the most important characters of this novel. Each plays an essential role in their family. According to Alberghene (1999), the March family learns in a resembling way how to cooperate with each other and how to change siblings' rivalry into an ability to deal with coevals. They all have their unplanted opinions, and unique characteristics, which make the novel attractive not only for young readers, but also for many adults. Each of the March girls is unusual, and with their mother, they form one undivided entity. Their unity gives them their decided identities, but they must, in self-preservation, modify these identities, as remarked Alberghene (1999).

### **3.2.1 Margaret March, the oldest one from the March Sisters**

Although Jo is considered as a protagonist of the novel, we will concentrate on Meg at first, for she is the oldest one. Sixteen year old Meg, with full name Margaret March, is beautifully curved, fair girl, with big eyes, brown hair, and pale hands, which is not proud of, as described her Alcott, (1953). Meg is the oldest one, and she wants to show it to her younger sisters. They all like playing Pilgrims, and as the time passes, Meg feels too old for doing such things. She plays a role of wise and responsive daughter and sister, and tries to resemble to her mother. Meg explains to her sisters, that the Christmas time is not about presents, but sacrifices, as she had heard from her mother. Meg also plays a role of tutor for her sisters, and as the only one represents the femininity in the elegant sense. The March family is linked to a strong bond that can not be broken. When Meg marries John Brook the family feels regret more than joy, as stated Alberghene (1999). It is mostly Jo, who considers marriage as needless thing, which divide the family instead of knot it together.

### **3.2.2 Josephine March, the protagonist of the novel**

The novel Little Women is considered as rewriting of L. M Alcott's autobiography, family experiences and of national history, as mentioned Alberghene, (1999). Josephine March, called Jo, represents the author herself. Jo is apparently different from her sisters and from their mother to. She is described as boyish, racy and independent girl, who does

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not care about her visage. Her one beauty was her hair, which was often bundled in a net, to do not bother her attention, as stated Alcott (1953). Jo does not feel comfortable as a girl and emerges it clearly mostly in the first chapters of the novel. Her behaviour and manners are more male than female, she wishes to fight in the war with her father, and plays a role of a brother to her sisters, as stated Thacker (2002). During playing the Pilgrims, Jo takes each possibility to play boyish roles with big enthusiasm. She is often lectures for her boyish vocabulary and behaviour.

According to Alberghene (1999), Jo is interested in writing like L. M. Alcott, and she focuses on domestic fiction. She publishes literary work, which is probably antecessor of *Little Women* itself, the humorous and truly story. Alberghene (1999) next added on, as the author, as Jo, forgoes the writing of the thrillers and self-prohibited from writing her own books. Jo spends her spare time mostly by writing the stories. Jo can not forgive her little sister Amy for destroying her manuscripts and thus causes bed atmosphere in the house. Amy throw Jo's story to the fire, and asks for forgiveness, but pressure is not on Amy, but Jo to forgive her sister and thus retrieve the family harmony, as mentioned Keyser (2000). It is usual, in the March family, that the older sister should take responsibility for the younger one, so Jo latter forgives to her sister.

Jo, as the first from four sisters makes a friendship with a boy. Teddy Laurence, called Laurie, the charming boy from their neighbourhood, became a member of the March family. As Keyser (2000) stated, their friendship for many readers means the most memorable aspect of *Little Women*, which challenges gender stereotypes. Jo, with her feminist attitude, considers Laurie as her brother, while he is falling in love with her. Jo, focused on her writing career, left her home, sisters and Laurie to find out if she can work as a real writer. Even she is persuaded that she does not need the men in her life, she meets German professor Bhaer, who attracts her attention in such way that they decided to get merry. Earlier Jo deemed marriage as an end to her sisterhood, but later finds out, that it is a promise of a return to childhood, as remarked Keyser (2000). Sooner or latter, all of the March sisters find out a love in their lives except of Beth.

### **3.2.3 Elizabeth, the third March sister**

Elizabeth called Beth is the only one from four sisters, who never experienced love, except the one in her family. According to Keyser, (2000, p 44), the narrator signalizes that Beth and those like her are too good to live, and admonishes readers to appreciate such

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people before it is too late. Beth is the best example of “working and waiting”, she does her work more successfully than her sisters, but nobody notice her tears or her sacrifices, as stated Keyser (2000). Her shyness never lets her go out of their house, and her household duties become her only joy.

Beth is shy and simple, but musically talented and her biggest passion is playing on piano. She plays on an old family piano, which is not good any more and Beth longs for a new one. When she gets a new piano from her neighbour Mr. Laurence, the author somehow signifies her quiet near sickness. The piano which she received belonged to Mr. Laurence’s death granddaughter. It did not last a long time, and Beth fell ill.

Elizabeth, as a second hand of her mother, takes care of a poor German family, where the youngest child infected her with Scarlet fever. However Beth overcomes her sickness, her health conditions are still very bad. In the second half of the novel Beth dies. It can seem, that her death has brought some positive changes into the girl’s characters. Jo March promised to her sister she will care about the household and she keeps the promise, and Amy realizes that the world does not revolve only about her. As Shmoop Literature Guide (2010) stated, Beth mostly plays and sings hymns and her connection to ethereal art intensifies the idea, that Beth’s place is in Heaven, not in the parlor.

### **3.2.4 Amy, the youngest and the most genteel one from the March sisters**

Character of Amy is described as the most different from her older sisters. Amy, from her early age, behaves as a young elegant little lady with everything that goes with it. Adorned dresses, hand made accessories or clothes peg, which suppose to adjust her nose according to her ideas. Amy’s most noticeable opposite is specially Beth. Since Beth lives for others, her younger sister Amy lives for others only in the sense that she is the focus of their attention, as remarked Keyser, (2000). Another characteristic that differs Amy from her sister is her intention to achieve her goals. Amy, interested in drawing, is determined to leave her home to study the art. She goes to Europe, where she can fulfill her dreams, by the help of her Aunt March. According to Alberghene (1999), Amy, unlike Jo, does not give up or change her mind about the in response to criticism from the side of her family.

On the other hand, Amy has also some common features with her sisters. She shares her elegant style and noble representation of herself with the eldest one Amy, but this is probably the only thing, which they have in common. As Eiselein (2001) stated, Amy’s closest bonds are with Meg, who shares her social interest in preservation of feminine,

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grace and traditional appearance. To compare the youngest one with the protagonist Jo, we can observe some common features, which are their ambitions and courage, but as we already mentioned, Amy is more resolved and does not allow to anything to destroy her visions. According to Eiselein (2001), Amy is the most determined and competitive of the March sisters because she still dreams of being a great artist, while Jo's main goal is just earn the money

Amy is independent in her behaviour and in expressing herself. She always acts in the same way and never changes her mind. Amy is incompilant and unable to by anyone other than herself unlike her older sisters who are able to change themselves into different roles, as mentioned Keyser, (2000). The same source further adds on, that Amy's characters can be already more settled than the characters of her sisters, or on the other hand, it can be also better flexibility and maturity of her older sisters.

Marmee, Margaret, Josephine, Elizabeth and Amy, are not only main characters of Little Women, but also main characters of L. M. Alcott's life. The author's quarrelsome and problematic relationship with the members of her family, which she idealized in Little Women, indicates that she viewed the Victorian family realistically, as stated Alberghene (1999). However are the literary characters similar to the real Alcott's family, they were attracting the reader's attention for decades

Even the literary work "Little Women" was intended mainly to girl audience, there are surely also boys, who red the book especially because of its exciting and riotous theme. Female readers take a pleasure in the novel because the text also encourages rebellion, and provides an experience of division and self-division, as remarked Alberghene (1999). Mostly the rebellious nature of the novel brings us an image of a girl and a woman in the nineteenth century. It tells a true story about an independence of a woman, that their position in the world and in the society is equal to position of a man.



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## Conclusion

The main purpose of this work, was to illustrate and emphasise the position of women in children's and juvenile literature. Authors of children's books created colorful female characters, through which we can observe their features, transformations, and their intrinsic messages. After the analysis of female roles we hit an evident distinctness between the number of male and female characters in children's literature and their position in it. By the year 1980, the American authors became interested in the issue of gender inequality in children's literature more than in the years before. Feminist critics play a crucial role in that time. Many of women characters and protagonists, especially in fairy tales were inactive, docile, and submissive creatures whose only asset was beauty. Although heroines from ancient myths and legends were also powerful and strong women, an arrival of fairy tales performed witches, stepmothers, or princesses and brought also gender stereotypes and gender inequalities. On the ground of feminists' involvement and participation mostly the female authors began to create new-broom female characters. Many of them also focused their attention to retelling of old fairy tales to the new and non-sexist stories with a girl as a strong, independent, and active protagonist.

Not to focus only on classic stories and fairy tales, we also concentrated on modern novels with female characters and protagonists. We chose popular characters from popular stories, that have impressed many children and juveniles and their themes are still alive and actual. Therefore the purpose of this work was also to touch the orphan's theme in children's and juvenile literature and to describe inherent features. After the walk through the analysis of the characters, we can observe some common features as well as differences among the female orphan protagonists. Sara Crewe from „A Little Princess“ as well as Mary Lennox from „The Secret Garden“ are an excellent example of orphaned girls. I chose these two characters because of their timelessness and current topic. The theme of orphanhood has impressed as Frances Hodgson Burnett as Lucy Maud Montgomery, the Canadian author of children's and juvenile literature. Her eternal protagonist Anne from the novel *Anne of Green Gables* was described in the second chapter of this work. „Anne of Green Gables“ is also special with female cast up which consist also of Marilla Cuthbert and Mrs. Rachel Lynde who were also described in the second chapter. The novel about lifeful and unplanted Anne was chosen not only because its always actual topic, but also because all of mentioned characters are autonomous women with their own features,

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attributes, and opinions. During the study of female characters in children's and juvenile literature we also came across the domestic or family stories, where we focused on „Little Women“, a famous novel written by an American novelist Louisa May Alcott. The feminist elements which were mentioned in the first chapter of this work appeared also in the last chapter through Josephine March, the protagonist of Little Women. Jo with her three sisters and their mother are examples of female characters who overcome their life difficulties without any striking interventions of male characters. The March sisters, Anne from Anne of Green Gables, Mary Lennox from The Secret Garden or Sara Crewe from A Little Princess vindicate that inactive women without their own opinions change into independent and strenuous characters. The purpose of this work was to introduce variousness and background of female characters in the literature intended for young readers, and concrete characters were the excellent resources for performance of our intention.

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## Summary

Ženské postavy existujú v literatúre pre deti a mládež od dávneho rozprávania príbehov z jednej generácie na druhú až po modernú literatúru dnešnej doby. Ako sa mení spoločnosť, tak aj ženské postavy menia svoje postavenie v literatúre. I keď ženy v starovekých mýtoch a bájach zobrazovali silu a moc, postupom času s príchodom rozprávok prichádza aj akési zaradenie ženských a mužských postáv do určitých aktivít a pozícií. Okrem vzniku stereotypov si môžeme v detskej literatúre všimnúť i nepomer v množstve mužských a ženských postáv v rozprávkach a knižkách pre deti a mládež. Výskumy Amerických vedcov a autorov ukazujú, že v druhej polovici devätnásteho storočia mužské postavy či už sa to týka hlavných postáv, vedľajších postáv, alebo postáv z obrázkových knižiek, značne prevyšujú postavy žien a dievčat ako hrdiniek či vedľajších postáv. O spomínané stereotypy a problematiku nevyváženého pomeru ženských a mužských postáv sa zaujímajú nie len autori, ale aj feministické organizácie. V rozprávkach, ktoré poznajú deti skoro na celom svete, je mužský hrdina vykreslený ako šľachetný, aktívny, najčastejšie princ, a ženská postava je často čakajúca kráska bez konkrétnejších charakteristických vlastností a črt. V snahe zbaviť rozprávky týchto stereotypov, prevažne ženské autorky začali písať príbehy o sebestačných hrdinkách, ktoré hrali vo svojich príbehoch hlavné úlohy. Či už sa jedná o staré mamy, matky, dcéry, alebo vnučky, každá z nich figuruje v rozprávke v nezvyčajných, často mužských úlohách. Notoricky známe rozprávky ako je Popoluška, Šípková Ruženka, alebo Snehulienka a sedem trpaslíkov, sú výborné príklady v ktorých sú muži akčnými a ženy len čakajúcimi na záchranu alebo prebudenie. Tieto, i mnohé iné rozprávky boli prepísané a prerozprávane do modernejších podôb, kde je ženská postava vykreslená ako aktívna a čulá hrdinka. Takéto podoby rozprávok môžeme nájsť napríklad v tvorbe autorky Angela Carter, alebo Americkej spisovateľky Gail Carson. Nielen žánre rozprávok ale aj vedecko-fantastická literatúra sa stretáva s hrdinkami v novom podaní, kde dovtedy hrali hlavné úlohy mužskí hrdinovia. Susan Warner, alebo Ursula K. Le Guin, sú autorkami fantastických príbehov, kde hlavnú rolu zohrávajú ženské postavy, ktoré svojou šikovnosťou a dôvtipom dokážu riešiť často neľahké situácie. Feministické teórie sa nezaoberajú stereotypmi týkajúcimi sa len ženských postáv, ale skúmajú i vplyv mužských hrdinov na mladých čitateľov. Nahliadnuc do literatúry pre deti a mládež v Kanade, skôr ako problematiku pohlavie a stereotypu, si môžeme všimnúť tému imigrácie, ktoré je pre tento štát príznačná. Častými dielami kanadských autorov sú príbehy, v ktorých je hlavná hrdinka odsunutá dospelými,

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a je nútená odísť na neznáme miesto, alebo do neznámej krajiny. Tento druh príbehu sa často končí návratom a uvedomením si, akú hodnotu má domov a rodina. Podobný príklad hrdinky je zobrazený v diele kanadskej autorky Janet Lunn, v ktorom protagonistka odchádza zo svojej krajiny do ďalekého neznáma, a cestou stretáva mnoho zaujímavých ľudí a príbehov. Okrem témy imigrácie sa v tomto diele nachádza takisto i téma bezdomovectva. Nie len Janet Lunn, ale i autorka Deborah Ellie píše v svojich knihách o hrdinkách bez domova. Pravdepodobne meno autorky a hrdinky ktoré najviac rezonuje v kanadskej literatúre je Lucy Maud Montgomeryová a jej Anna zo Zeleného domu, kde tému migrácie môžeme čítať medzi riadkami. Postavy známej kanadskej autorky sú aktívnymi a živými hrdinkami a často kritizujú postavenie žien v spoločnosti. Kanadskí autori predstavili ženské hrdinky v rôznych žánroch a pozíciách. Historické príbehy, ktoré opisujú životy žien a dievčat v rôznych časových etapách sa stali populárnymi ako medzi autormi, tak aj medzi detskými čitateľmi. Kanadske spisovateľky Jeane Chatell, Connie Brummel, alebo Susan Merritt sú jedny z autoriek, ktoré predstavujú ženské postavy ako protagonistky takýchto noviel. Kniha *The Story of Canada* od už spomínanej kanadskej autorky Janet Lunn je tak isto dielo, ktoré popisuje historické udalosti, ktoré sú významné pre Kanadu a jej obyvateľov, kde okrem významných udalostí autorka spomína i významné ženy kanadskej spoločnosti. Príbehy ktoré predstavujú ženskú hrdinku ktorá cestuje v čase, stretáva sa so zaujímavými osobnosťami a často krát rieši rôzne situácie, sú tak isto obľúbené u detí a mládeže. Ďalšie žánre kanadskej literatúry, kde ženské postavy vystupujú ako hlavné protagonistky sú napríklad fantastická, alebo vedecko-fantastická literatúra. Tak ako spomenuté žánre majú spoločné znaky, tak i hrdinky z niektorých vybraných diel majú podobné osudy. Postavy ako Sara Crewe, Mary Lennox alebo Anna Shirley z diel *Malá Princezná (A Little Princess)*, *Tajomná Záhrada (The Secret Garden)* od spisovateľky Frances Hodgson Burnett a *Anna zo Zeleného domu (Anne of Green Gables)* napísaná Lucy Maud Montgomeryovou, majú spoločné nie len obdobie kedy boli publikované, ale ich hlavným spoločným menovateľ je život siroty. Protagonistky týchto diel sú svojské a originálne mladé dievčatá, ku ktorým osud nebol vždy priaznivý. Ich autorky ich vykresľujú v situáciách v ktorých si musia poradiť i bez pomoci rodiny, kde zmysel pre humor a predstavivosť zohrávajú hlavnú úlohu. Práve postava Sara Crewe je prirovnávaná k postave popolušky pre ich podobný osud. Sarin príbeh sa odohráva v dievčenskej škole v Londýne. Jej tvrdohlavá povaha ju často krát privádza do rôznych problémov, ktoré zvláda hlavne vďaka veľkej predstavivosti. Sara, ako jediná z dievčat sa priatelí so slúžkou Becky, ktorá si ju ako aj ostatné dievčatá obľúbila hlavne kvôli

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príbehom, ktoré Sara vymýšľa a následne rozpráva vo voľných chvíľkach. Rozvážnosť, múdrosť a predovšetkým predstavivosť hlavnej hrdinky sa ukáže aj po tom ako ju riaditeľka dievčenskej školy pošle bývať do opustenej izbičky po tom, ako prišla správa o smrti jej otca. Po všetkých krutých chvíľach prichádza šťastný koniec, keď Sara nadobúda majetok ktorý jej právom prináleží. F. H. Burnettová tak ako v Sarinom prípade, tak aj v prípade Mary Lennox predviedla aký silný môže byť príbeh malej siroty. V tomto diele je hlavná hrdinka skôr nešťastná a drzá dievča, ktorému nebola dopriata láska rodičov, a tak ako aj Sara odchádza do nového prostredia anglického mesta Yorkshire. Práve prostredie tajomnej záhrady prebúda u Mary novú nádej a hrdinka v nej nachádza nový zmysel života. Spolu so svojim chorým bratrancom zažívajú v záhrade veci, ktoré ich detské duše nikdy pre tým nezažili. Tretí príklad ako príbeh siroty môže nadchnúť množstvo mladých čitateľov je večný príbeh ryšavého zasneného dievčaťa, ktoré svojou predstavivosťou prekvapuje nie len jej opatrovateľov súrodencov Cuthbertových, ale i všetkých obyvateľov kanadského mestečka Avonlea. Príbeh je pre túto prácu vhodný nie len pre jeho hlavnú ženskú hrdinku, ale i pre množstvo ďalších ženských postáv vo vedľajších úlohách ako je napríklad Marilla Cuthbertová alebo slečna Rachel Lyndová. Aj keď sú hrdinky zo spomínaných diel siroty, je to práve rodina, ktorá hrá dôležitú úlohu a poslanie v ich životoch. V tejto práci sú takisto spomenuté diela s rodinnou tematikou, a pozornosť sme sústredili hlavne na dielo plné ženských postáv, Malé Ženy ( Little Women) od spisovateľky Louisa May Alcottovej. Bola to práve táto spisovateľka, ktorá ako medzi prvými začala písať diela o rodine v 19. storočí so všetkými jej kladmi i záporami. Kniha Malé ženy je akousi autorkinou autobiografiou, kde vyjadruje jej postoj k spoločnosti a k postaveniu žien v tomto období. Hlavná predstaviteľka Josephine Marchová a jej štyri sestry žijú v chudobných podmienkach len s ich matkou. Príbeh sa odohráva počas Civilnej vojny do ktorej ich otec vstúpil ako kaplán, za čo ho Josephine veľmi obdivuje. Každá zo sestier je inej povahy a iných názorov a tak medzi sestrami vznikajú menšie či väčšie problémy. V tejto práci je tak isto vykreslená neľahká úloha matky, ktorá ako osamelá žena musí zvládať mnoho povinností bez mužskej pomoci. I keď Malé ženy boli napísané hlavne pre dievčatá, príbeh oslovil i opačné pohlavie pre jeho znaky rebélie. Táto kniha hovorí príbeh o snahe žien stať sa nezávislými a rovnocennými s mužmi. Takéto hrdinky môžeme nájsť ako aj v minulosti, tak i v súčasnej literárnej tvorbe. Práve to bolo hlavným zámerom celej práce, ukázať že aj v svete detskej literatúry sa nachádzajú postavy žien, ktoré bojujú so svetom a so svojimi problémami a neboja sa povedať svoj názor nahlas.

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