

Introduction

Books from our childhood (...) are the most important books in our lives. There is no doubts about it. Those books could be even forgotten or blocked out but they are still shaping us without our awareness¹.

Number 45 of our quarterly is devoted to an issue that has always been very important for pedagogy and is perhaps today particularly relevant: values and anti-values. The papers are focused on the medium that has become more and more appreciated by pedagogues, teachers and educators, i.e. books for children. Children's literature (with accompanying illustrations which are indispensable elements of a book for the youngest addressees) as art has a great power of conveying, shaping and maintaining values because it has an impact on emotions, remaining in human memory and the subconscious often for the whole life.

Kindergarten and elementary school children also go through subsequent stages of development in morality: they learn to tell good from evil, to recognize models and anti-models, they start to build his/her own hierarchy of values. At the same time, the child tends to identify with literary or film characters and considers them to be models of behavior. This is why adults' awareness and knowledge about the values transmitted by art (also literature) to children, are so important. It cannot be forgotten that, beside moral values, literature should give aesthetic and cognitive ones that shape the receivers' sensitivity and broaden their knowledge about the world. As Janusz Gajda writes:

“Introducing a person into the world of cognitive, ethic and esthetic values means above all creating given needs and inclinations, stimulating of curiosity in search of the truth, (...) developing of sensitivity and creativity.”²

¹ K. Koziołek, *Czytanie z innym. Etyka. Lektura. Dydaktyka*, Katowice 2006, s. 8. Translated by K.Z.

² J. Gajda, *Wartości w wychowaniu*, [w:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, red. T. Pilch, v. VII, Warszawa 2008, p. 39. Translated by K.Z.

The basic roles of children's literature – aesthetic, cognitive, activating and educational ones – make it possible to fulfill such tasks. Scholars, literary critics as well as pedagogues, have pointed this out for a long time now. In Poland, the most extensive research was carried out by Bogusław Żurkowski who formulated his claims and conclusions in his book *Literatura – wartość – dziecko* (Literature – Value – child; 1992). The author emphasizes another aspect that is crucial in the context of this quarterly subject: “The reader's address itself and the existence of axiologically active domains in literature, which somehow wait for child's answer, are not sufficient to implement the values unless an adult helps a child in reading in a proper way.”³ This is the task for parents and teachers, especially teachers working in kindergartens and the first classes of primary school. The Foundation “ABCXXI All of Poland Reads to Kids” has been helping them to do so for years. In 2007, its founders wrote the book *Z dzieckiem w świat wartości* (Guiding a child into the world of values) that is highly recommended (look a review in nr 24 of our quarterly). However, reflections and considerations on the subject are still necessary, both from literary and pedagogical (as well as psychological) points of view. One of the aims of the papers included in this issue of “Elementary Education in Theory and Practice” is to inspire further discussion among scholars and practitioners on the possibilities of children's literature in influencing the world of values of our youngest pupils and the ways of using it in education.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

³ B. Żurkowski, *Literatura – wartość – dziecko*, Kraków 1999, p. 95. Translated by KZ.