

# 4<sup>th</sup> IBBY Africa Regional Conference

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**THEME:** Rethinking Contemporary  
Literature for Children and Young  
Adults in Africa.



# TIME TRAVEL IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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# 1. Introduction

What is Children's Literature?

- Depends on: Cultural context

How children are perceived

## 2. Definition

“It is literature that addresses the needs of children irrespective of age”

Lynch Brown and Tomlinson define it as:

“Children’s literature is good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages through prose and poetry; fiction and non-fiction”

### **3. Children's books need to:**

- Teach and encourage children to read
- Stretch their imagination
- Be engaging, attractive and appealing

## 4. Children's books should:

- Draw children into their world and logic convincingly
- Enable children to buy into that world's values and lessons
- That is what the paper terms **“Time Travel”**

## 5. What constitutes a good book?

- Attractiveness – colour
- Enduring with universal appeal
- Exhibit quality in terms of techniques, illustrations, layout and design
- Has the ideal font size and shape
- Printed on good paper quality



6. In Zimbabwe it has been a challenge for one reason or another to capture these elements BUT several books have come close to attaining this level viz:

- Albert Nyathi's - *My Daughter (2016)*
- Nyathi and Mabasa's - *My Son (2016)*
- Fortune Tazvivinga's - *River god uNyaminyami (2013)*

- Farai Nyandoro – *The unwelcome visitors (2016)*
- Ben Chirasha's - *Traditional Tales of Zimbabwe (1988)*
- Charles Mungoshi's - *Stories from a Shona Childhood (1989)*
- Stephen Chifunyise's - *Takura and the Talking Branch (1995)*

## 7. Benefits of quality:

- Desire for children to read
- Colour sets the tone for the book and makes objects realistic
- Glossy or quality paper is durable

## 8. Effects:

- Children love books they can touch and feel without the risk of tearing them

# 9. Layout and design

- Positively competes with the other media TV etc.
- Pop out fonts suitable for younger children
- Small fonts unsuitable for children's literature

**10. Contemporary** children's literature in Zimbabwe. Challenges address:

- Environmental degradation
- Diseases: HIV and AIDS
- War and poverty
- Racial conflict, Cultural diversity and Inclusivity
- Gender discrimination

## 11. Facts

A good message in a book needs to be supported and complemented by good writing skills to retain the interest of children. Presentation is also important.

## 12. Poetry.

- Normally meant to be performed
- Brings out the imagery in the stories
- Children enjoy poetic language
- Message carries both the literal and metaphoric meaning
- Use of the poetic power of allusion
- Capturing and presenting traditional taboos in the modern idiom
- Hunter vs predator and vice versa



## 13. Prose

- In Zimbabwe there are more children's books in prose than poetry
- Very little drama
- Wide variety of folk tales
- Reworked old material into contemporary works
- New creations/stories
- Reworking old stories is common internationally


- It is a way of preserving culture and tradition
- Old stories provide a wide base to address contemporary concerns
- To understand the characters in Disney's "Goldie and Bear" the African children need to have knowledge of English folktales, hence the need to use our own folk tales.

# 14. Examples

The classic Zimbabwean example on the use of myth and folklore is Tazvivinga's: "*The River god uNyaminyami*". This is a story on siblings rivalry on succession.

Use of practical issues is effectively demonstrated in Farai Nyandoro's: *"The Unwelcome Visitors"*. A story on protecting the livestock of villagers while observing the environmental concerns in Kenya

The story also demonstrates the transition from traditional values of exhibiting bravery and manhood by killing lions to the modern approaches of co-existing with wild animals.



Violence and bloodshed is shunned and a peaceful model of resolving intricate issues is provided.

## 15. Conclusion.

Children's literature seeks to:

- Address concerns of children
- Engage the children's interests
- Provide lessons from the past, on the present and into the future
- Package material in a child friendly way

- Sustain the interest and stir the imagination of children
- Inform and entertain
- Expose children to international material in terms of both time and space HENCE the need for **“TIME TRAVEL IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE”**



to achieve this,  
extensive research  
is vital.