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## THE ENVIRONMENTAL FUNCTION OF ANIMAL CHARACTERS ACROSS DIFFERENT LITERARY GENRES

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## ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ФУНКЦИЯ ПЕРСОНАЖЕЙ ЖИВОТНЫХ В КОНТЕКСТЕ РАЗНЫХ ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫХ ЖАНРОВ

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*Abstract.* This article explores the remarkable versatility of animal images and characters through their function in literature. The representation of animals in literature has emerged as one of the powerful tools for promoting environmental awareness and advocacy. Across diverse literary genres, the use of animal imagery and characters serves a multitude of functions in catalyzing ecological consciousness. In lyrical nature writing, vivid descriptions of animals and their habitats evoke emotional resonance, inviting readers to appreciate the fragility and resilience of ecosystems. Allegorical narratives, meanwhile, employ animal protagonists to challenge societal norms and expose environmental injustices through metaphorical storytelling. Even in children's literature, charming portrayals of animal characters serve as accessible gateways for young readers to the natural world.

*Аннотация.* В этой статье исследуются образы животных и их функция в литературе в контексте различных жанров. Представление животных в литературе стало мощным инструментом для повышения экологической осведомленности и пропаганды. В различных литературных жанрах использование образов и персонажей животных выполняет множество различных функций в активизации экологического сознания читателя. В лирических произведениях о природе яркие описания животных и их местообитаний вызывают эмоциональный отклик, приглашая читателей оценить хрупкость и устойчивость экосистем. Аллегорические повествования, в свою очередь, используют животных-протагонистов, чтобы бросить вызов социальным нормам и разоблачить экологическую несправедливость через метафорическое повествование. Даже в детской литературе очаровательные портреты персонажей животных служат доступным средством, через которые юные читатели могут осознать значение природного мира.

*Keywords:* animal characters, literary genres, environmental awareness, nature writing, allegory, children's literature, anthropomorphism, ecosystem preservation.

*Ключевые слова:* персонажи животных, литературные жанры, экологическое сознание, литература о природе, аллегория, детская литература, антропоморфизм, сохранение экосистем.

Across the vast expanse of literary genres, the depiction of animals has long played a vital role in shaping the human experience. From the allegorical fables of old to the lyrical musings of



modern poetry, the animal world has served as a canvas upon which authors have painted their visions of the world, revealing profound insights into the human condition [1]. The following table demonstrates briefly the specificity of animal literary function in the context of various genres:

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Specificity</i>
Fables and Folktales	Animals are commonly used as protagonists or supporting characters to convey moral lessons, social commentary, or universal human truths.	The anthropomorphized animal characters allow for the exploration of human behaviors in a more accessible, allegorical manner.
Poetry and Lyrical Works	Animals are often used as symbolic or metaphorical elements to evoke emotions, describe natural phenomena, or explore philosophical and existential themes.	The vivid imagery and poetic language used to describe animals can create powerful, evocative representations that transcend the literal.
Novels and Short Stories	Animals may serve as central characters, supporting roles, or symbolic representations to drive the narrative, develop themes, or provide insight into the human condition	The depth of character development and narrative allows for a more nuanced exploration of the relationships between humans and animals, or the animals' own inner lives.
Nature and Environmental Writing	Detailed descriptions of animals and their habitats are used to raise awareness, promote conservation, or reflect on the interconnectedness of the natural world.	The scientific accuracy and observational details in this genre aim to educate and inspire readers to appreciate the complexity and fragility of the animal world.
Children's Literature	Animal characters are often used to engage young readers, teach moral lessons, or explore themes of friendship, adventure, and personal growth.	The anthropomorphism and whimsical portrayal of animals in children's books can foster empathy, curiosity, and a connection to the natural world.

In the realm of fables and folktales, the anthropomorphized animal characters serve as symbolic representation for our own virtues and vices. As Aesop's cunning fox in "The Fox and the Grapes" reflects human tendency towards self-deception, and the plodding tortoise in "The Tortoise and the Hare" embodies the triumph of perseverance over overconfidence, these animal-led parables offer timeless lessons in an accessible, allegorical manner [2].

The poetic tradition, meanwhile, harnesses the power of animal imagery to evoke deeper emotional and philosophical resonance. William Blake's "The Tyger" conjures a sense of awe and wonder through its vivid portrayal of the majestic feline, while John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" employs the symbolic nightingale to reflect on the themes of mortality and the human experience. The duality of nature and the search for meaning is common theme in the Blake's poem "The Tyger". The tiger, a creature of both beauty and ferocity, symbolizes the duality of nature, the presence of both good and evil, and the complexities of creation. This exploration of the paradoxical nature of existence is a universal human concern, prompting reflection on the meaning of life and the balance of forces in the world. "*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright, / In the forests of the night; / What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*" — lines 1 — These lines, from the opening of the poem, explore the duality of the tiger's nature, its beauty, and the mystery of its creation, prompting questions about the complexities of existence [3].

The confrontation with mortality and the search for meaning is reflected in "Ode to a Nightingale". The nightingale, a symbol of beauty and fleetingness, reflects on themes of mortality and the human experience. This poem speaks to the universal human experience of confronting death, the ephemeral nature of beauty, and the search for meaning in the face of impermanence.

*"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! / No hungry generations tread thee down; / The voice I hear this passing night was heard / In ancient days by emperor and clown"* [11].

These lines express the speaker's admiration for the nightingale's beauty and its transcendence of mortality, reflecting on the human experience of grappling with the ephemeral nature of existence [4].

Venturing into the realm of novels and short stories, the representation of animals takes on a more nuanced, character-driven approach. George Orwell's "Animal Farm" uses a dystopian allegory of farm animals to satirize the rise of totalitarianism [15].

The farm animals, initially seeking equality and freedom, fall prey to tyranny under the pigs' rule. This allegory reflects the universal fear of unchecked power, the corruption of ideals, and the dangers of social injustice. These themes are relevant to political discourse and social commentary across cultures: *"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."* [15].

This famous quote from the novel reflects the pigs' corruption of the original ideals of the Animal Farm, as they abuse their power and establish a hierarchical system that betrays the principles of equality. Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" depicts the elderly fisherman's struggle against a giant marlin, embodying the resilience of the human spirit. The marlin, a powerful and resilient creature, embodies the human spirit's capacity to endure hardship and fight against overwhelming odds: *"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish."* [11] This excerpt highlights the old man's resilience and determination in the face of adversity, as he continues to fish despite a prolonged period of unsuccessful catches. This theme resonates across cultures, where individuals often face challenges that test their limits and require them to draw upon inner strength [8; 16].

In the realm of nature and environmental writing, the depiction of animals serves an educational and advocacy-driven purpose. Annie Dillard's "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" offers detailed, lyrical descriptions of the natural world to foster a sense of wonder and contemplation, while Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" combines scientific observations with personal reflections to advocate for environmental preservation. In the works of nature and environmental writers Annie Dillard and Edward Abbey, the depiction of animals serves an educational and advocacy-driven purpose. In "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek," Annie Dillard offers detailed, lyrical descriptions of the natural world to foster a sense of wonder and contemplation. For instance, Dillard writes about the common water strider, describing it as *"a daintier and more delicate thing than any artist's model, with thin legs as straight and trim as needles, and a body as small as a grain of rice"* [9].

Through such vivid and poetic imagery, Dillard invites the reader to marvel at the intricate beauty of nature's creatures. Her descriptive prowess aims to cultivate a deeper appreciation and reverence for the natural world.

Similarly, in "Desert Solitaire", Edward Abbey combines scientific observations with personal reflections to advocate for environmental preservation. When describing the desert bighorn sheep, Abbey notes their *"massive, almost circular horns"* and their ability to navigate the treacherous terrain *"with the ease and assurance of mountain goats"*. However, he also laments the threats posed to these animals by human encroachment, writing, *"The bighorn is the noblest of all the desert's wild creatures, and the most vulnerable"* [1]. By blending factual information with emotive language, Abbey encourages readers to value the fragile ecosystems and their inhabitants, and to recognize the need for their protection. Both Dillard and Abbey use their depictions of animals as a means to educate and inspire their readers' deeper understanding and appreciation for the natural world. In the context of children's literature, the representation of animals takes on a whimsical, character-driven form. A.A. Milne's "Winnie-the-Pooh" anthropomorphizes a group of animals to

explore themes of friendship and personal growth [4]: *"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said Piglet at last, 'what's the first thing you say to yourself?'* *'What's for breakfast?'* said Pooh. *'What do you say, Piglet?'* *'I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?'* said Piglet" [14].

This exchange between Pooh and Piglet highlights the value of friendship and the importance of diverse perspectives within a community. The anthropomorphized animals, representing different personality types, highlight the importance of friendship, acceptance, and the value of diverse perspectives. This resonates with the human experience of forming bonds, navigating social dynamics, and finding strength in shared experiences. Another example of children book that serves as a powerful tool for raising environmental awareness "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss. Dr. Seuss's beloved children's book "The Lorax" is a fable that chronicles the plight of the environment and the struggle between industry and environmental preservation. At the heart of the story is the Lorax, an anthropomorphized character who "speaks for the trees" and confronts the Once-ler, a business magnate whose greed and disregard for nature leads to the destruction of the Truffula trees. Through this conflict between the Lorax and the Once-ler, the story uses personification to create relatable characters that represent the key forces at play - the environment, environmental activism, and unchecked industrialization [5].

The Lorax, with its distinct personality and voice, becomes a sympathetic mouthpiece for the natural world, passionately defending the Truffula trees against the Once-ler's single-minded pursuit of profit. Notably, the story includes a poignant quote from the Lorax that directly calls readers to action, stating *"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better."*[16].

This not only reinforces the environmental message, but also encourages young readers to become involved in making positive change. "The Lorax" reflects Dr. Seuss's own views on critical issues like climate change and pollution. By couching these weighty themes within an engaging, anthropomorphized narrative, the story is able to impart important environmental lessons in a manner that resonates with children and inspires a sense of responsibility towards protecting the natural world. The emphasis on the "heterogeneity of the 'animal'" and the "the philosophical determination of the human-animal distinction" resonates with the ways animals have been both anthropomorphized and marginalized in the literary works discussed [7].

These literary examples demonstrate the remarkable power of animal characters to serve as a tool for environmental education. By evoking emotional resonance, challenging societal norms, and inviting readers to inhabit the perspectives of the natural world, authors have harnessed the representation of animals to inspire a profound sense of stewardship and a commitment to safeguarding the fragile ecosystems that sustain all life on our planet [13].

As the environmental crisis continues to unfold, the role of literature in promoting awareness and catalyzing action has become increasingly vital. The enduring legacy of animal characters in literature serves as a testament to the transformative potential of storytelling, reminding us that the power of the written word can be a powerful catalyst for environmental preservation and the protection of the natural world. Buell writes "Nature has been variously represented in literature as a domain of spiritual enlightenment, a repository of national or ethnic identity, a symbolic resource, a site of aesthetic pleasure, and an arena of environmental crisis". [6].

This captures the diverse ways in which nature, including its animal inhabitants, has been imaginatively and symbolically deployed in literary works to explore a range of themes and concerns. The symbolic use of animals in literature transcends cultural boundaries, tapping into universal human experiences that resonate across societies. This is because animals, as creatures

often perceived as "other," provide a unique lens through which we can examine our own nature and the complexities of the human condition. By using animals as symbolic representations, literature provides a powerful framework for exploring these universal human experiences. This allows readers from diverse cultures to connect with the stories on a deeper level, recognizing their own struggles, hopes, and anxieties reflected in the animal characters. This shared understanding fosters empathy, promotes cross-cultural dialogue, and ultimately strengthens the human connection to the natural world and to each other. The representation of animals can take on different roles and functions in other literary genres. In gothic novels, animals may be used symbolically to evoke a sense of dread, the supernatural, or the primal forces of nature [10].

For example, bats, wolves, or ravens could be employed to heighten the eerie, foreboding atmosphere of the narrative. In romantic literature, animals may be imbued with anthropomorphic qualities, serving as conduits for the expression of human emotions, sentiments, and the idealization of nature. Poets of the romantic era, such as William Wordsworth or Percy Bysshe Shelley, often invoked the beauty and purity of various creatures to reflect their reverence for the natural world. Garrard explores the use of animals in romantic literature, stating that "Romantic poets frequently anthropomorphize animals, imbuing them with human emotions and sensibilities in order to express their own reverence for the natural world" [10].

In modernist or postmodernist poetry, the portrayal of animals may be more fragmented, abstracted, or deconstructed, reflecting the disillusionment or alienation of the human condition. Garrard writes that "the representation of animals in modernist and postmodernist poetry reflects a broader crisis in human-animal relations, as traditional anthropocentric worldviews are challenged and undermined" [10].

Poets might use animal imagery to explore themes of existential crisis, societal decay, or the darker aspects of the human psyche. In animalistic short stories, the depiction of animals can serve as a lens through which to examine human nature, morality, and the complexities of the human-animal relationship. Hence, while the environmental writers highlighted in the original article employ animal depictions to educate and advocate, the representation of animals in other literary genres can encompass a wide range of symbolic, thematic, and narrative purposes, reflecting the diversity of human experience and artistic expression.

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