THE IMPORTANCE OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE:

STUDIES IN ELWYN BROOKS WHITE'S *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* AND *STUART LITTLE*

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that ***The importance of anthropomorphism in children's literature: Studies in Elwyn Brooks White's Charlotte's Web and Stuart Little*** is my own work and that that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have submitted the dissertation for originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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Date: __28/10/2022_____

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and my children. Thank you for your constant words of encouragement, prayers, support, understanding and love.

I appreciate the Almighty God for the divine inspiration, knowledge and understanding He has granted me throughout the study period, His grace has been my sustenance.

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ABSTRACT

The anthropomorphised linguistic and social world in which animals are given human voice originated in the literary genre of the animal fable. Over the centuries this has changed from being, predominantly moralistic stories for adults to one that is specifically directed towards younger children. This genre can be found in books, toys, songs, electronic medias etc. and regularly features animals as the central characters. The use of animals and other nonhuman characters in children's literature has become a well-known medium of entertainment for them and is one through which children can be educated with life lessons. The anthropomorphised animal characters are a reflection of children's affection for animals and carry with them many explicit and implicit messages about animal and human relationships.

Through the analysis of two children's literature texts written by E.B. White, *Stuart Little* (1945) and *Charlotte's Web* (1952), this study will focus on the importance of anthropomorphism in children's literature and consider how it can aid social skills development. Many of the illustrated social skills are those values that contribute to children's lives in order for them to demonstrate good behaviour in their society. The study will illustrate the importance of such anthropomorphism in children's literature and its use in teaching acceptable societal behaviour whilst contributing to the discourse on anthropomorphism in children's literature.

KEY WORDS

Children's literature, Anthropomorphism, Fairy tales, fables, social skills, Narratology, *Charlotte's Web, Stuart Little*, E.B. White.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Anthropomorphism a literary trope that has long been found in children's stories is one in which talking bears, talking pigs, witty spiders and even dancing trees are seen as human. This use of animal characters has been a common phenomenon for a long time and Azmiry, (2014:1) reveals that "animals are the perfect medium for conveying tangible concepts in an entertaining way" especially to children. Because children are able to form a connection more readily with animal than they are with human characters they are also able to identify themselves within those animals' characters. According to Chengcheng, (2020:1), children's stories often include anthropomorphised animals that would typically be encountered in nature. Therefore, as Yeganeh (2020:1) explains, "the messages and ideas are often conveyed by using animal characters with similar traits and feelings as children so that the story becomes more fascinating to the young audience". With this in mind, this study investigates the importance of anthropomorphism in children's literature and how it has the potential to aid their social skills development.

It is important to note that in children's literature, particularly African children's literature, anthropomorphism has emerged as an important term that explains how human attributes or character traits are given to nonhumans or animals. In the traditional African setting, the oldest grandmother in the village would relate captivating stories, such as the tortoise story, containing animal characters to present moral lessons intended to teach children virtues such as heroism and unity and to shun bad behaviour such as laziness and irresponsibility. Anna (2017:377) maintains that it is through myth and folktale, in particular, that children are empowered with knowledge that not only relates to their history and culture but also instils in them a positive attitude towards their environment.

The term anthropomorphism which is the focus of this study has been discussed negatively and positively by a variety of scholars in the field. Studies, such as those by Goldman (2014) and Ganea, Canfield, Simons-Ghafari and Chou (2014), whilst affirming both the positive and negative reception of anthropomorphised animals it also highlights the negative effect of

anthropomorphised animal stories in that they argue that anthropomorphism prevents children from assimilating accurate knowledge of the natural world. The findings of the Goldman (2014) study, entitled *When Animals Act Like People in Stories Kids Cannot Learn* shows that the use of anthropomorphised animals in children's literature only aids children in their journey to adulthood by seeing themselves as the anthropomorphised animal characters. Likewise, according to the study by Ganea *et al*. (2014), presentation of animals to children in human-like appearance and behaviour is likely to influence a child's view of the biological world as well as distorting accurate information. Through their portrayal of the negative aspects of anthropomorphism in children's literature these studies suggest that anthropomorphic animal characters give children false impressions about real life animals and as a result misguide them. However, despite the negative viewpoints put forward by these biology researchers, many authors of children's literature continue to use animal characters as a means of communicating messages to their readers, which are mainly children, as it is viewed as the most effective way to gain a child's attention. According to Azmiry (2014:4) "the more anthropomorphic animal characters, the more the younger age group enjoy". The present study argues that animal stories for children have a positive impact on children's behaviour and activities, which aids their social skills development.

Kracher (2002:242), defines anthropomorphism as "the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to any other nonhuman entity in the environment and includes phenomena as diverse as attributing thoughts and emotions to both domestic and wild animals". Ratelle (2012:17) explains that many eighteenth-century writers, who saw children as their audience, often used animals as didactic tools. Thus, animal characters are used as a tool or a method to teach children morals and other societal values.

However, Gallup, Marino and Eddy (1997:91) consider that "the use of anthropomorphism appears to be influenced by the perceived similarity between humans and animals and the extent to which people have developed an affectionate bond with them" which can be reaffirmed through interaction with animal characters in literary texts. In other words, humans develop dialogic relationships which involve interaction with other social agents, be it human or non-human, in order to satisfy their interactive desire. This in turn can lead to interaction with animals.

Many children's literary texts and media feature animal characters that make the storyline more

interesting and captivating to the reader specifically children. The question then is, how do children learn from such a text and does it positively contribute to the way they behave in society? This study raises such questions as: does the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature really aid the development of social skills in children? Do stories with animal characters influence moral attitudes in children? Do children understand the message inherent in the medium when animal characters are being used? With these questions in mind, the study explores the use of animal characters in children's literature as an aid to developing their social skills as depicted in two selected anthropomorphic texts authored by E.B White; *Charlotte's Web* (1952) and *Stuart Little* (1945). This study argues that the use of anthropomorphism in children's stories creates societal consciousness in the young when the animal characters are used to represent different aspects of individual behaviour that the children might encounter in society. The analysis of the two selected texts in this study reveals how anthropomorphic animals are represented to portray society in children's literature.

The use of anthropomorphism in literature reveals how each animal representation carries ideas and assumptions about human and animal relationships with it. The analysis of the selected texts in this study enables a better understanding of how animal characters are represented in literature with the aim of demonstrating how those anthropomorphic characters are used to represent societal values.

1.1.1 Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is understood as the attribution of human characteristics, behaviour and values to non-human characters such as animals and inanimate objects. This occurs frequently in myth, folklore, art and literature. In children's literature in particular, anthropomorphism is used to create stories and characters where the animals are portrayed as social agents within specific contexts to reveal actions that are related to people's characters in society. Many children's storybooks depict animals imbued with human-specific mannerisms through which children can learn morals and societal values. According to Sousa, Quintino, Teixeira and Rodriques (2017:257), anthropomorphism is seen as a tool that indirectly connects people, especially children, to the natural world in the absence of direct contact through the use of media, and one which has become

one of the most effective tools for public awareness due to its ability to influence human preferences. In other words, anthropomorphism serves as means of connecting people, especially children, to the natural world especially the ones that do not have direct access to the natural world such as wild animals. Using them as characters in children's literature helps these animals appear in a less frightening way as well as learning from the character depicted.

Different authors in the field have defined anthropomorphism, for instance, Servais (2018:9), defines it as a way to perceive/create patterns that connect people with animals and make them relevant according to the current activity. From Servais' definition, it can be seen that anthropomorphism aids human connection with animals along with the connection between animals and characters they portray introduces children to society and illustrates how they are expected to behave in society. According to Waytz *et al*. (2010:220), "anthropomorphism is the attribution of capacities that people tend to think of as distinctly human to non-human agents with humanlike mental capacities e.g. intentionality, emotion, cognition". This definition clarifies the difference between animism, which is the attribution of life to inanimate objects and anthropomorphism. Whilst the two are slightly different from each other, they also complement each other in the sense that when intention is attributed to an inanimate object, it is treated as if it has a mind of its own (anthropomorphism) and as if is a living being (animism). From the views of the authors on the term, as discussed above, the commonly held definition from within their explanations is the attribution of human character, appearances and feelings to animate or inanimate being which aids the relationship between non-human and human entities.

Root-Bernstein, Douglas, Smith and Verissimo (2013:1578), describe anthropomorphism as an important way in which people make sense of interaction with the non-human world. This implies that people can transfer human attributes to both animate and inanimate beings or objects often because of the situation or the environment they find themselves in, which leads to the question of why do people anthropomorphise? People naturally anthropomorphise without noticing it, especially when they are lonely. Loneliness can often prompt individuals to designate a character and a mental state to their pets; anthropomorphism manifests predominantly through interaction people have with the pets they share their lives with, behaving as if they are other humans. Cacioppo and Patrick (2008:5) assert that "human beings are the most social primate on the planet

who are made happier and healthier by connecting with other people". Anthropomorphism may then be influenced by a lack of social connections with other humans; this creation of a human from a non-human agent occurs because the anthropomorphized agent can replace the human for the purpose of social connection.

Human motivation to have a deeper knowledge of other social agents such as animals, nature etc. as well as having a social connection with them, also influences anthropomorphism by humans. This is the root of anthropomorphism in children's literature that features animal and other inanimate objects that portray human attitudes, this also connects children with animals especially those they do not have physical contact with. This connection contributes to children's love for animal stories because they are connected to most of the animals used in stories as pets. Mierek (2010:24) asserts that "in our relationships overtime with other selves, whether those selves are human or animal, we grow and develop, and in the process, we come to understand the other self-better as well". In other words, children's relationship with animals and other anthropomorphised objects are of benefit to their social skills development as they understand how they relate with others in society in a good manner.

Moreover, some attribution of a mental state to other species might be the result of interspecies behaviour recognition. Urquiza-Haas and Kotrschal, *et al.* (2015:168) state that "humans share a series of behaviour patterns and social brain and physiological mechanisms with other species since human beings can attribute their mental states and behaviour to other species like animals".

1.1.2 A brief history of anthropomorphism

The term anthropomorphism is derived from the Greek words *Anthropos* (human) and *Morphe* (shape or form), (Guthrie, 2008). According to Nicholas, Waytz and Cacioppo (2007:865), the Greek philosopher, Xenophanes (6th century BCE) was the first to use the term anthropomorphism when he was describing the similarities between religious agents i.e. gods and their believers and criticized the conception of humanlike gods. However, Lesher, (1992:23) explains that Xenophanes' main concern was not imagining gods in humanlike forms but rather imagining gods with humanlike minds. Fisher, (1996:3) asserts that "the root was originally a term used in theological contexts for views that characterized God in literal human terms, to view God as a

person with indefinitely amplified human powers and characteristics such as loving, just and knowing". Initially, anthropomorphism was used in reference to gods and the ascribing of human physical or mental features to them such that religionists use the term to describe the way human appearance and feelings are attributed to those gods. But by the 1800s according to Guthrie, (1993:40), it also meant a broader phenomenon that occurs not only in religion, but also throughout secular thought and action which is common in daily life, art and even science. By the mid-20th century, anthropomorphism had come to be used for almost any object including such as transport vehicles, as for example in *Thomas and Friends* (Awdry, 1996) and animals in such as in *Animal Tales for Children* (Elaturoti, 1998) and in almost any field of study covering science, art and literature (Guthrie, 2008). Certainly, anthropomorphism is nowadays not only restricted to religion but appears throughout nature and even among artefacts such as stars, storms, oceans, mountains etc.; even the earth itself is seen as alive and active. Therefore, anthropomorphism, as asserted by Waytz, Cacioppo and Epley (2010:2), reflects ideas from religious belief to animal domestication to artificial intelligence as well as dehumanization.

1.1.3 Categories of anthropomorphism

Fisher in Urquiza-Haas *et al.* (2015:167), asserts that there are two broad categories of anthropomorphism namely, imaginative and interpretative. Imaginative anthropomorphism according to Fisher, is the productive activity of representing imaginary or fictional animals as being similar to humans. Examples of such representations are the animal characters that are treated as human in animations, books, movies, drawings and oral tales. Representing the gods as being human-like or as having human-like characteristics such as personalities, emotions and interests is an example of imaginative anthropomorphism according to Fisher. Interpretative anthropomorphism is defined as the scientific explanation of an animal's physical behaviour in term of intentional action.

In addition to this, interpretative anthropomorphism is further subdivided into two groups which are, categorical and situational. Categorical is explained as ascribing mentalistic predicates (mental state and processes, cognitive and emotional, as well as verbs of action and predicates of moral character and personality) to an animate or inanimate creature. In contrast, situational

anthropomorphism occurs when an animal's behaviour is misinterpreted in a way that could possibly apply to that animal, in other words, attributing a meaning to an action when it may mean another thing. (e.g. interpreting a dog's wagging tail as a sign of happiness when it can mean hunger). This study will focus predominantly on imaginative anthropomorphism, that is, the representation of imaginary or fictional animals as human.

In children's literature, according to DeLoache, Pickard and LoBue, (2011:85), animals are mostly anthropomorphised to act as human because the authors of children's literature give more attention to animals than to any other kind of object in their environment. The young reader identifies more easily with the animal characters than they do with the human and therefore these animal characters are used to communicate moral and/or societal messages from which they can learn. This study demonstrates that in general, the transfer of human emotions and mental state, influences children's feelings and state of mind towards others in society.

1.1.4 Anthropomorphism and children's development

Anthropomorphism appears to be a common facet of human nature and an experience that cannot be avoided because it begins almost immediately from the very beginning of a child's development. As argued by Byrne, Marcus and Hanley (2009:37), these ideas are mainly formulated in early childhood as younger children intuitively use anthropomorphic ways of explaining their ideas, something which may be retained into adulthood. According to Epley and Waytz (2010:499), "Children develop anthropomorphism tendency by first developing a concept of self of human and later develop more understanding of other agents which makes them anthropomorphize when reasoning about animals or objects". Jacque Lanca (2006 :544) explains that "children at the age of six months through identification with their image in the mirror come to a first understanding of themselves." The child looks at the image in the mirror, ascribes certain characteristics to the image and transfers it to himself. Based on the Lacan and Jacque explanation, children perceive another human being in anthropomorphised animal characters through their encounters with anthropomorphised animal characters in their early stage in life; they learn from this character and develop their own personal character. According to Tahiroglu (2012:1), the attribution of human personality, emotions, beliefs desires and intentions to inanimate objects, is

an everyday phenomenon for children who readily talk to their stuffed animals or toys and similarly, adults talk to their cars. From Tahiroglu's words, we can see that inevitably, we all anthropomorphize automatically. A child's attribution of human characteristics to an inanimate object early in life is seen as natural behaviour due to the fact that many of them have access to non-human entities especially animals rather than human. Animals frequently appear in children's songs, books, the soft toys they cuddle with, and even the clothes they wear, which increases their frequent encounters and relationships with representations of animals, even those they may never encounter in their lives.

However, Urquiza-Haas *et al*. (2015:167), states that humans readily attribute intentionality and mental states to living and non-living entities. Children consistently attribute a human mental state or behaviour to any object they find around them intentionally seeing them as peers. This attribution starts with children's pretend play, because the objects used in the pretend play, which can be in human or animal form, are used to construct realities. Thus, the pretend play involves both anthropomorphization and imagination, one in which children invest personalities on dolls and other objects accepting them to be real, and which serves as part of their normal cognitive development. Servais (2018:5) gives an example, whereby a piece of wood can be anthropomorphised in play as a baby; although the child is responsible for the movements of the piece of wood they nonetheless see them as expressive movements and respond accordingly. The child sees the wood as a baby even when others see it as a piece of wood. Children believe that all non-human objects, especially the ones they have contact with during their pretend play are living entities and they view them as a potential social companions that they can relate to at any time. This gives them social support by unconsciously imbuing human characteristics to a non-human object and establishing a social relationship even when they know they are not human.

Therefore, anthropomorphism is a basic human attitude that begins in life from childhood and persists throughout, with the most anthropomorphised entities being animals. This is confirmed by Severson and Lemm (2015:3) who state that "from childhood to adulthood, both adults and children anthropomorphized animals mostly when compared to other non-human entities". The human tendency to attribute human behaviour to toys from childhood pretend play to the extent that many people share their home and heart with their pets, is evidence that anthropomorphism

runs from childhood through to adulthood. This study demonstrates that anthropomorphism is a form of interaction with the non-human that children implement early in their development and one that persists into adult life.

1.1.5 Anthropomorphism in children's literature

Anthropomorphized creatures of every kind are as old as literature itself and can be found in tales from Ancient Egypt, Greece and India (Saccardis, 2014:27). The use of animals as characters started from the narration of *Aesop's Fables* (c550 BCE) and *Panchatantra* (200 BCE). These fables were first narrated in story-telling form for both adults and children. They serve as the foundation for the use of animal characters in literature, to the extent that they have had great influence on some of the animal stories that exist today (Flynn, 2004:422). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2006), George Herbert Lewes was the first to extend the use of anthropomorphism to animals in his work first published in 1858. As argued by Rudd (2009:243), it is possible to trace a line of development from the fable, and later the bestiary, to more modern anthropomorphic animal stories, all of which exhibit an impulse to control behaviour, both human (through the edifying example of animals) and animal.

In most cases, human beings naturally and frequently attribute anthropomorphic features such as thoughts, feelings, motivations and behaviours to animals, artefacts, and natural phenomena, which has led to the integration of some animals into human social life, as pets and domestic animals. As explained by Servais (2018:4), the more the animals were considered similar or close to humans, the more they were endowed with mental capacities. Certainly, whether in a city, suburb or in the country our local environments are filled with a wide variety of animals both large and small. So, it would seem rather intuitive that these creatures would find a place in the stories we tell and write (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004:206). Having animals constantly present prompted their appearance in literature and motivated the attribution of human characteristics to them. According to Xouplidis (2020:314), "they can talk and behave as human, fall in love, give birth, paint, play and are members of human families: children, a parent or elder people".

For many years, adults have told oral stories to children not only to entertain, but also to impart important moral lessons that promotes pro-social behaviour in children with many of these stories

containing anthropomorphic animals.

Oral stories are also referred to as oral narratives which comprises culture, history and value of a particular society and can be in different forms such as myth, fables, poem, songs etc. In Africa these have served as a form of entertainment for many years through our grandparents. As a result these have become an integral part of African literature.

According to Smart (2016:14), the history of African literature from the pre-colonial oral form (such as folktales which pass down traditions, culture, morals and values of society) to the written form, began with the introduction of European children's literature that presented Africans ideas but with foreign concepts to African children. Several European books, even contemporary ones, still discuss relevant issues that are applicable to what happens generally in society including African society. African children's literature, as defined by Osazee (1991 in Smart 2016:13), is a literary creation which draws its subject matter from an African world view and is written in a language and style that the African child can comprehend. It promotes African culture and can motivate the child or young adult to better understand and appreciate their environment.

In a traditional African setting the grandparents would use captivating oral stories such as animal fables embedded with moral lessons to teach children virtues. This has long been a traditional means of entertainment, instruction and method of preserving culture as well as an instiller of morals and values and a space in which a child could achieve socialization and self-actualisation. African children grow up hearing stories that they later tell to their own children which reveal the historical record of the events in their past, their beliefs, gods, legends or warriors and their everyday concerns.

African literature for children is written based on issues surrounding a local community that need to be corrected or improved upon as well as a means of introducing children to the culture, acceptable values and those things considered taboo in that particular community. The literature also showcases fairy tales that discuss animals based on their appearance and why they act the way they do, such as in why tortoises have rough shells. This oral story was told by our grandparents to reveal why tortoises have a rough shell. Another example of such a story that explains why animals act the way they do is why mosquitos buzz (1975), *A West African Tale* by Verna Ardema. Africa children's literature is very important especially to African children as it contributes to the

forming of a true African child and relevant importance is explained.

African children's literature empowers the child with knowledge that relates to their history and culture as well as equipping them with a positive attitude towards the environment through myths, legend and folktales featuring human-like animals. Additionally, this literature can contribute effectively to the emergence of peaceful societies in the sense that the community is familiar with its culture and beliefs from a young age through the exposure to stories that reflect their society and guide behaviour towards maintaining peace in their society. The morals taught through children's books influence the readers and are intrinsically linked to a peaceful society, so one might see the effect of a book on children as one which promotes the good of society and develops social skills. Moreover, children's literature acts as an important tool in socialisation and the construction of cultural identity in that it reflects the tribal group the children belong to and socializes them with their culture. All of which lingers longer in their memories.

This study explores the use of animal characters to create societal consciousness and socialization in children in order to develop their social skills.

Animals are overtly anthropomorphized in children's media. Timmerman and Ostertag (2011:67) confirm that "it is common to see depictions of animals standing upright on two legs, wearing human clothing, inhabiting human homes, reflecting social class structures, gender identities, heterosexual norms, living in nuclear families, and sharing aspects of human physical form". Because children tend to learn more effectively from anthropomorphic stories rather than those with human characters, they are more inclined to act according to the moral lesson of the stories (Nicole *et al*., 2016:1). Larsen *et al*. (2015:5) asserts, that "books with prosocial themes have immediate effects in promoting children's real-word prosocial behaviour as long as the story characters are humans or can be constructed as human". This study demonstrates that the use of animal characters in children's stories aids their social skill development because it is through the characters in these stories that they are exposed to what happens in their society which can contribute to their knowledge of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour that in turn shapes their relationship with society.

Children's fiction often includes anthropomorphic depictions of plants and non-human animals (Gomez-Zwiep & Straits 2020:26). Initially, anthropomorphism first emerged in children's

literature during the Victorian era, for the benefit of educating and persuasion (Dunn, 2011:6). Subsequently it has become a consistent literary device used in children's literature and other media such as storybooks, television, movies etc. This reflects children's well documented affinity with animals as animals are regularly featured as central characters, and carry many explicit and implicit messages about human and animal relationships (Timmerman & Ostertag, 2011:59). The prominence of these anthropomorphized characters in movies and books is not surprising as children clearly prefer them to human characters (Geerdts, Van De Walle and LoBue *et al.*, 2016:6).

Authors of children's literature often believed that children were incapable of understanding complexity and so relied on the use of anthropomorphism (Wallace, 2018:24). Airenti (2018:8) asserts that animals fully or partially anthropomorphized are used in teaching children different aspects of mental and social life and moral rules. Anthropomorphism, according to Azmiry (2014:3), is an effective method used by authors to present characters with more effective communication abilities, that can submerge children into the story as well as being a tool to teach societal values and morals. Moreover, the characters are used to depict different attitudes reflected by humans in society such as stubbornness, arrogance, meekness, etc. with suggestions of how to relate to such people.

Additionally, anthropomorphism is widely used in children's literature to make those books fascinating and gripping as well as educative. Therefore, the role of anthropomorphism in children's literature is to draw attention to adult characteristics and to provide guidance for its young readers with respect to moral and appropriate behaviours (Dunn, 2011:5). Indeed, children's books are often written to teach morals, satirize humanity or to address and perhaps correct the ills in society as well as educating children about those societal issues they may encounter daily or as they grow into adulthood; it is an effective way to teach children about positive character traits. This study questions the reasons behind featuring animals in children literature and also considers how those anthropomorphic animals are used effectively to communicate with children and teach them societal values and morals.

1.1.6 The benefit of anthropomorphism to children's literature

The authors of children's literature use animal characters to illustrate societal behaviour for differing reasons. Firstly, it provides a means of conveying morals without highlighting any specific groups of people. Animals are used in children's literature to correct some of the ills in a society without giving offence as animals do not belong to any set of people.

Secondly, the use of anthropomorphism is a good way to introduce children to complex and sensitive issues such as death, homelessness, change, braveness, among others in more simplified manner. Anthropomorphism helps to reduce the complexity or fear attached to some of these sensitive issues by introducing them with simplicity and in less frightening ways through the use of anthropomorphized animals in children stories. This lightens the weight of painful and dangerous issues when compared to human characters. For instance, the issue of death can be depicted in a relatively light manner through the use of animal characters to show young readers that death is inevitable for all living things. The fact that animals are slaughtered for food, makes an animal's death look normal and not complex as it can become when human characters are involved.

Thirdly, anthropomorphism appeals to children because they easily connect with those animal characters that appeal to their imaginative minds. Since children are often already familiar with some of the animals used in the children's stories, they can easily identify with them and learn from them when they encounter them in a story. As asserted by Xouplidis (2020:315), "anthropomorphic animal figures are particularly appealing to narratives for younger children as they are easy for them to identify with and their characteristics, such as size, impulsiveness and need for affection". Likewise, animal characters are indirectly used to pass across messages to the readers which might not be possible or so effective if human characters were used. Burke and Copenhaver (2004:207), confirmed that "the use of animal characters has long provided intellectual and psychological distance and allowed us to critically explore that which we would not be comfortable exploring directly".

Furthermore, anthropomorphic animal books can also be used to introduce children to humour in literature, because children are often amused by pictures of the animals wearing clothes, cooking

and displaying other human characteristics, something they are only familiar with from human beings. Seeing animals displaying these characters serves as a source of humour for them. Moreover, anthropomorphism gives room for social exchange between people and animals. The use of anthropomorphism in literature aids social interaction between animals and human by viewing them as alternative source of social support and relating with them as part of social agents in society.

Lastly, since some animals, especially wild ones may be unfamiliar to young readers, presenting them as human when they put on clothes or portraying human traits such as talking, eating and writing can make them seem less frightening to children. This use of anthropomorphism then helps children to become familiar with animals they have not seen before and see them as less intimidating.

1.1.7 The appearance of anthropomorphic animal characters in children's literature

Anthropomorphic animal characters appear in children's novels in a range of modes, including entirely realistic i.e. animals that possess human traits but are still depicted with their physical features in their natural habitat. The animals in this category usually behave like real animals except that they can talk. Another are fully anthropomorphic animals which involve the appearance of animal characters in such a way that they possess human traits and behave like humans. i.e. they are extremely humanized such as living in a house, wearing clothes, bathing in tub etc. Children's literature features animal characters impersonating humans to appropriately communicate important messages to the reader. According to Jardin (2013:7), animals have often appeared instead of humans in the context of literature, either living in a human environment or interacting with one another and exhibiting human traits. This type of character may be less ideal for teaching children about animals but it is important to teach children social and moral lessons (Mierek, 2010:10). Many of the animals are used to represent a character are based on their real behaviour such as pigs being used to symbolize dirtiness, a wolf being used to symbolize threat etc.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In literary studies children's literature is acknowledged as playing an important role in the development of young minds and there is a growing body of research on this subject. Reynolds (2019:4), claims that the books children are exposed to as they grow up contributes to their social, emotional development as well as socializing them to their culture and the culture that surrounds them; a fact recognized throughout scholarly literature. Different writings in children's literature have discussed various thematic preoccupations such as love, obedience and trust etc. Therefore, the present study argues that animal stories for children can have a positive impact on children's behaviour and activities which in turn, aids their social skills development.

Anthropomorphised characters such as cars and trains, as used in the children's cartoon story *Thomas and his Friends* and animals have been a means through which messages are communicated to viewers and readers of literature for many years. This study investigates how these characters are used to mimic different human characteristics in society to guide the behaviour and attitudes of children so they become acceptable to society. This study examines how the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature has contributed to their social skills development. The importance of anthropomorphism, the effect of anthropomorphism on children's social skills development and related issues such as the representation of animals in children's literature is examined in relation to Elwyn Brook White's books, *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*. These two texts clearly showcase how anthropomorphised animal characters can be used to develop children's social skills, which is the main focus of this study.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the teleology and configuration of animal motifs and conceptualizations and how they aid children's social skills development. The didacticism lengths by specific animal metaphors are analysed to explore how they portray social messages and in particular, how they are used in the selected texts to teach children acceptable societal behaviours. The study illuminates the importance of anthropomorphism in children's literature as used to facilitate the development of children's social skills.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives are to:

1.   Describe the role and meaning of anthropomorphism in children's literature using the selected texts.
2.   Examine how the author of the selected texts, used the anthropomorphised characters to develop children's social skills.
3.   Integrate the impact of anthropomorphised characters in the texts on children's behaviour.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that the study explores are:

- What is the role and meaning of anthropomorphism in White's *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*?
- How did White, in *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*, use anthropomorphised characters to develop children's social skills and morals?
- How do the anthropomorphised characters in the selected texts impact children's behaviour?

In order to answer the research questions that guided this study, this thesis will focus on the selected children's literary texts to demonstrate how those novels encourage young readers through examples from a non-human perspective, to acquire social skills and develop a deeper understanding of societal issues they are likely to encounter.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The use of anthropomorphism in children's literature is not a new phenomenon, it has existed for a long time and remains in use with many contemporary children's literature texts still using it. The significance of this study is to understand how the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature contributes to their social skills development. The importance of anthropomorphism in children's literature is delineated in order to add to the relevant discourse and to our understanding

of the impact of anthropomorphised fictional animal characters on children's social skills development. By examining the different secondary sources in the field of anthropomorphism and children's literature, the study will contribute to research on the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature. This research also allows educators to gain a better understanding of the use of animal characters to teach children about life issues, especially those that are considered to be difficult for them through lessening of the weight attached to the different issues.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this research is based on the use of both primary and secondary sources. This study will rely predominantly on textual analysis of E.B White's *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web* by observing how White uses anthropomorphism in the two texts to develop themes through other literary devices and characterisation. The primary sources constitute the two texts *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*. These two texts are considered relevant in this study because they discuss contemporary societal issues that can affect children's lives in terms of how to behave and/or establish good relationships with others.

Likewise, the texts feature animal characters which is the main focus of this study. The text analysis focuses on the animal characters based on what they portray or represent; either good or bad behaviour in society and its implications. In addition, the internet, journals and critical works on literature in the form of secondary books will also be read to bring into focus the opinion of other academics for this area of interest. The secondary texts are concerned with the phenomenon of anthropomorphism in children's literature and how it facilitates social skills development, including published articles and other materials which explain anthropomorphism as a universal concept. These will assist in gathering information and formulating well informed ideas.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a narratological approach in the analysis of the selected texts by E.B White, *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*. According to Kafalenos, (2001:116) "narratology theory is suitable in analysing children's literature texts as it is a useful foundation to have before one begins

to analyse popular culture". Popular culture is expressed in children's narratives in terms of civic responsibilities and obedience to parental instruction. Similarly, Ogunyemi (2013:247) confirms that "narratology enables mature readers and critics to examine the structure of children's writings, their cultural artefacts and the ordering of time and space in narrative forms". The distinctive nature, structure and elements of narratology distinguish it from other theories used in analysing fiction as it takes into account each event and considers all the components i.e. the story, narrator and narration required for a good text analysis. This study employs narratology to analyse the selected texts with a focus on anthropomorphism as it relates to character actions, story events and other aspects of the texts to bring out the development of skills in children.

The word "narratology" according to Todorov (1969:96), is an Anglicisation of the French word *narratologie*. Genette (1990:7) takes narratology as the study of the form and functioning of narrative, while Meister (2009:329) defines the term as the study of the logic, principles and practices of narrative representation. Jahn (2005:2) explains that narratology emerged in 1966, that it was three years later that Todorov coined the term *narratologie* (Narratology) in his book *Grammaire du Decameron* (1969), where he defines it as the theory of the structure of narrative. Phelan (2005), points out that Todorov used this word in biology and sociology to suggest the science of narrative. The function of narratology is to reveal the structure behind a text (Genette, 1990:756). It also has a strong association with the structuralism quest for a system of formed description that can be applied to any narrative (Ogunyemi, 2013:346).

Narrative is present in every age, place and society, nowhere has been a people without narrative because humankind is all about history. According to Roland Barthes cited in Anggraini (2015:36);

> All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, trans historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.

Therefore, narrative applies to all points in human lives because humans always try to narrate their views, not only in fiction but in every day interactions. For instance, when looking at a picture or image, the audience will try to form a narrative, to interpret the story behind the picture in order to find or to understand its meaning. However, from the explanation given to narrative theory

above, it is, therefore, appropriate to use narrative theory in analysing fiction because it deals with all that makes up a complete literary text.

This framework aims to analyse the selected texts, *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web* by E.B White, with a focus on anthropomorphism and how it aids children's social skills development i.e. the narration of roles played by anthropomorphised characters in their depiction of society. Narratology can be defined as the study of the narrative i.e. the sequential recount of a story. The selected texts will be analysed through examination of the plot of each text and by integrating the analysis of the story in a discursive narrative in order to reveal the story behind each anthropomorphised character and also, provide insight into how the use of anthropomorphism may become an effective means for children's social skills development.

Secondly, the anthropomorphised characters and characterisation in the texts will be analysed by looking at how they are used to depict behaviours in society and what children are to learn from those behaviours as well as the anthropomorphic devices of the texts. The use of narratology theory is effective in the achievement of the analysis of the selected texts by applying the logic of the theory.

1.9   CATEGORIES OF NARRATOLOGY

There are three broad categories of narratology with several sub-components which will assist in analysing the motive for using anthropomorphised characters to represent society. These categories with their sub-components as identified by Jahn (2005) are listed and explained below. The first category of these is narration, which is the process or action of narrating a story which emphasises voice, focalization and the narrative situation. Voice reveals the narrator's relationship with the story, either first person, third person or an omniscient narrator. Focalization or mood centres on the perspective from which a specific story is told from the character's or narrator's point of view. Narrative situation aims at mixing components in order to achieve new interpretations. This study explores the selected texts, using the narration category by revealing the mood of each anthropomorphised character in a particular scene and the situation it depicts in society.

The second category is action, story analysis and tell-ability, which refers to a sequence of acts and events. According to Prince (2008:20), story analysis constitutes a story line on a narrative level of action and tell-ability which was originally introduced by Labov in 1972, and refers to what it is that makes a story worth telling. The actions performed by each anthropomorphised character in relation to their representation of human attitude in society is examined in the text to describe how the author uses them to reflect society to children.

The third category is tense, time, and the narrative mood. The tense of a story is determined by factors such as the time of the story, which changes as the story continues and is referred to as tense switch within the story line. Time refers to the handling of chronology, while duration covers the proportioning of the story time and discourse time. Time also reveals the period at which the text was written. The tense used in the presentation of the text by the narrator, either present or past, is examined during text analysis in order to show the actual time and period in when each text was written and its influence on the storyline and action of each anthropomorphised character.

Narrative occurs in our day-to-day activities as we recount our experiences through our conversations with friends, neighbours or family members. Narrative can be described as a chronological account of a story or event given by a narrator to a narratee. The selected texts are analysed, integrating different aspects of the texts in a discursive and rigorous narrative that answers the research questions in relation to anthropomorphism and their portrayal of society.

By analysing the two selected texts, the study will show that the author is aware of what happens in society and reveals contemporary society in his works through his use of the animal characters. The text analysis with the use of narratology will reveal how the animals are presented to represent society and their subsequent influence on children's behaviour. The elements of narrative theory that would be applicable to this research are time, plot, characters, narrators, theme and setting in relation to anthropomorphism.

The study argues that children's literature is a source that is capable of introducing children to their society as they mature; to know acceptable and nonacceptable behaviour in society. It also explains the use of anthropomorphised characters that aid in the development of children's social skills. Children easily identify and relate with these characters as they are presented to the impressionable young mind. The study investigates the way in which the selected texts use animal characters to

portray human attitudes, encounters through social relationships in society and how children's relationships with animals influences their attitude towards reading animal-based stories.

CHAPTER 2:LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the background of the study, outlined the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework and the research methodology to be used. The current chapter sets out to extensively review literature on anthropomorphism in children's literature. Multiple studies have been conducted on the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature covering the portrayal of both animate and inanimate characters. This study extends that research by examining the importance of anthropomorphic characters in children's literature and how they can be used to influence the social growth of children.

2.1.1   Children's Literature

The genre of literature covered in this study is that of children's literature. This is literature written to be read by or to children.

Children's literature, also known as juvenile literature, is a literary genre targeted at children and one that primarily caters for the interests of children. It employs the use of storybooks, stories and poems to explain the teleology of children and how these can be intensified in stimulating the child and society they find themselves in. As argued by McGillis (2009:259), children's fiction is a fiction inevitably conflicted between a series of binaries such as child/adult, knowledge/innocence, home/away, and safety/danger. This genre may also include folktales, fiction, drama, picture books, fantasy and fairy tales and is primarily enjoyed by children, although many adults can enjoy books in this category (Ogunyemi 2013:347). In the main, children's literature uses simple language to help children to understand the message and learn from the story. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (2005:3), argue that children's literature encompasses a range of relevant and interesting topics presented through the mediums of prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction, many making use of animals in their stories. Literature for children has become one of the most well-known modes of entertainment across the world for children from birth to adolescence.

According to Schwarz, in Kennedy, (1992:23), children are socialized and acquainted with

important aspects and features of their civilization. Ogunyemi (2013:349), reveals that salient themes are presented by writers of children's literature to support the development of specific ideologies in the minds of the children such as obedience, hard work, humility, loyalty and honesty. It also teaches culture, with children becoming familiar with culture through reading and by what is espoused in the texts. Children's literature can function as an eye-opener to new possibilities, difficulties and life situations in a form suitable for those who have limited life experiences as they mature. Because talking animals are a common feature within children's literature and these animals function like human beings, some can display good character to teach children good moral values whilst others show negative behaviours and consequences to deter children from emulating them. Therefore, the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature is a means of establishing morals and educating children on appropriate behaviour in society, all of which aids their social skills development.

2.1.2 A brief history of children's literature

Children's tales, even before the advent of the written word, were originally made for adults and only later adapted for children as a result of a gradually increasing perception of childhood as a period of life that was separate from adulthood. Early children's literature can be traced back to oral stories, songs and poems that were used in educating, instructing and entertaining children. However, Wehrmeyer (20l1:85) explains that since children's literature is invariably written by adults, it also reflects the view that adults have of children (often termed the child image) as well as the adult author's own ethical norms

The concept of childhood itself is a modern invention, indeed, before the mid-eighteenth century, there was no real notion of childhood. Ken (2012:5) argues that before 1865, children in the English-speaking world read and enjoyed adult novels, such as *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe, 1719) *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift, 1726) and *Aesop's Fables. Aesop's Fables* was written in the mid-6th century BCE by a former Greek slave and was meant to teach morals for adult readers but in later years came under the domain of children's literature. It was thus only in the 18th century that literature specifically intended for children began to appear. Rivera (2017:2) maintains that the market for children's books was clearly growing, consisting of spoken stories, songs and poems

for the moral and religious development of the young wrapped up as entertainment

However, as Ken (2012:5) explains, "in the latter half of the 18th century John Newbery, an English publisher known as the father of children's literature, published books for children to enjoy". *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes* (1765) according to Ken is considered the first novel written especially for children, and one which introduced reading for entertainment and enjoyment whilst remaining didactic in nature. Until the 19th century stories published for children came through the re-working of existing adult stories alongside the publication of more sophisticated texts. By the 20th century, Mathew (2015:1) stresses that "animals had firmly established themselves as central to the pantheon of tales for children". Nelson and Vihman (2018:208), maintain that by the 21st century, the authors of children's literature anthropomorphised virtually anything, using cartoon 'googly eye' movement and the contours of shapes and others, such as animated fruit, furniture, trains and back-packs that were included in contemporary children's literature. According to Kumberg (2012:1), while some topics, such as suicide, are rarely tackled now others, such as the issue of friendship, have increased in children's literature over the recent years. Likewise, writers are giving more attention than they did in the earlier periods to animal stories based on adventure. Some 20th century authors such as Eric Carle, Kevin Henkes, Arnold Lobel, Beatrix Potter and Elwyn B. White among others, wrote books with children as their target audience. Many of these authors are known for their colourful illustrations as well as the use of animals as central characters.

Elwyn B. White, the author of the selected texts for this study, was born in July 1899, a time when nature study and engagement with environmental themes was, according to Scheese (2002:28), wide spread. Elledge (1986:20) maintained that White had a biophilic childhood in the suburban village of Mount Vernon, New York, where he was born. He lived with his parents and siblings in a large Victorian house that included stables housing different kind of animals; typical of middle-class homes at that time. This provided him with his first experience of the beauty of animals. White's writing reflects his experiences and encounters with natural world society and this love for animals and nature is apparent throughout the entire range of his works and reflects that the world is comprised of both humans and animals. *Charlotte's Web*, White, through his use of anthropomorphism, shows his love for nature by giving the animal world the ability to speak for

itself whilst being fully present and participating in their native habitat. White's work seems perfect for this study because it presents animals from a human perspective reflecting his concern for both human and non-humans as cohabitants of the earth. In other words, his writing expresses his love for nature and reveals that the world is a place that we as humans live in with daily interaction with other inhabitants around us.

According to Wake (2007:11), E.B White was a major environmental writer whose novels for children, along with the rest of his works, illustrate the range and depth of his environmental imagination and that widened the scope of literary ecology. Most of his works, especially those written for children, have anthropomorphic animal characters taking the lead role, which is the focus of this study. *Charlotte's Web* (1952), features animal characters that are partially anthropomorphised and *Stuart Little* (1945) has an anthropomorphised mouse as its main character. His works for children deal with issues adults may classify as uncomfortable or unsuitable for child readership, such as disability and isolation (*The Trumpet of the Swan,* 1970), death (*Charlotte's Web,* 1952) and struggle for acceptance in society (*Stuart Little,* 1945). His books are both experimental and realistic, aiming to capture the attention and imagination of young readers by fostering identification with the characters and situations that them, thereby captivating the young audience and encouraging in them a desire to read to the end.

Although these texts were written some time ago, they are still considered relevant today because they discuss issues that children still encounter in society as they journey to adulthood. The author has used issues in the text to introduce young readers to those they may encounter in society along with how to overcome them; all of which contributes to the development of their social skills. Analysing E.B. White's work adds to the discussion surrounding his contributions to the growth of children's literature.

2.1.3 The function of children's literature

Yeganeh (2020:2), describes children's literature as having many functions when it comes to contributing to learning, some of which are explained below. Firstly, it gives children the opportunity to develop empathy, morals, creativity and also an understanding of both their own cultural heritage and that of others. Moreover, it fosters children's personality growth and social

skills. Children's literature aids the development of empathy towards other people in society; it encourages them to accept those from other cultures and promotes the establishment of a positive attitude towards both their own and other people's cultures. These functions present children's literature as a useful tool that influences children's behaviour in order for them to become responsible personalities in society.

Secondly, children's moral development and emotional intelligence are assisted through stories that address controversial or philosophical issues. The issues discussed in different texts expose children to situations they may encounter as they grow to adulthood and it prepares them to face and hopefully, solve those issues when encountered. In addition, it gives children access to the thoughts of a character and enables them to experience a situation through the eyes of a fictional character. Children are able to easily identify with characters presented in stories and may be influenced by a particular character that captivates their mind.

Moreover, children's literature provides children with the opportunity to read and respond to literature in order to develop their own ideas and views further aiding their cognitive developmental. Animals play important roles in contemporary anthropomorphised children's literature which help in this cognitive development.

2.1.4 The role of animals in the contemporary children's literature

The representation of animals in literature has a long history, featuring in one of the oldest and most popular narrative genres, fables, and one that continues to feature prominently in contemporary literature to the point whereby that children literature is virtually considered incomplete without featuring some form of animal characters. According to Orhero, Okon and Gunnarsdóttir (2021:5), realistic fiction relies on the animal characters achieving a wide range of rhetorical effects ranging from pathos (evoking the emotion the author wants them to feel in a character), and bathos (a sudden change from important subject to an ordinary or unimportant subject).

Animals play crucial roles in writing by revealing hidden messages to readers of the texts. Some of these roles are: firstly, they bring meaning to books that human characters cannot do alone because there is no limit to which animals can be portrayed in a text.

Secondly, the significance of animals in literature, according to Bolongaro (2009:105) allows the writer to reinforce common themes that are fundamental to written works. Certain animals are regularly used to express various themes and specific symbols based on their biological behaviour. These animals in relation to their real or natural way of life are used to symbolise different characters and virtues that human beings display. For instance, animals such as sheep are used to represent gentle characters because they are seen to be calm and quiet animals.

Thirdly, animals are mobilized to showcase the human character to demonstrate what is essential about humans. The study is focused on children's literature and how anthropomorphism is used in developing children's social skills.

2.2 SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Social skills are demonstrations of socially acceptable learned behaviours intended to promote positive relationships with other members of society and enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses. Some of these skills include showing empathy, helpfulness, communicating with others and problem solving. According to Aličković, (2019:48), they are strong predictors to positive relationships with others and determine the quality of relationships that an individual realizes with people in their environment.

Social skills involve learned behaviour and interaction with others, enabling individuals to carry out social tasks. While there are several definitions of social skills, all emphasize acceptable behaviour and interaction with others in society. Marchant and Frith (2009), explained that "in everyday life, we constantly interact with the people around us, whether it is to cooperate, compete, or simply to go about our day-to-day business and for such interactions to be successful, we must be able to understand and predict the actions of these other people". These actions are typically understood in terms of the conviction, desires, and intentions of other people to have successful relationships. In an interpersonal relationship, many needs are realized and the learning of the skills that enrich interpersonal relationships must start from the earliest days of a child's life so that they may interact positively with others.

Although, according to Aličković, (2019:49), the learning of social skills in the first year of a

child's life is mostly learnt from the family and is characterized by emotional warmth, respect for the child's needs etc. with explicit instruction on how a child should behave through role modelling and voice instruction. Moreover, social skills development is very effective in the child's formative early years and they can learn these skills through children's literature using anthropomorphic animal characters portraying those social skills and attributes.

Shepard (1996:3) states that animals play a critical role in the shaping of personal identity and social consciousness of the young reader. This implies that the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature is to impact social consciousness to the young readers and shaping their behaviour in line with what is acceptable in society.

Alongside the information children receive about the natural world from their parents, teachers, media, other books or indeed through direct engagement with animals their everyday experiences in society have important consequences on children's development (Geerdts *et al.,* 2016:6) especially their social skills development. Anthropomorphic texts may be used to teach children acceptable behaviour in society, by introducing them to moral and societal elements thereby helping them to be better adults.

The point explored in this study is how anthropomorphized animal character stories encourage the development of positive social skills in children. It has been confirmed by some researchers of children's literature such as Geerdts *et al*. (2016:9) that anthropomorphized stories are designed to teach children about human-specific social issues. This suggests that anthropomorphized animal stories are believed to aid social skills development in children. Thus, Airenti (2018:2) points out that adults, at least in our society, often anthropomorphize animals and use them to teach children different aspects of mental, social life, and moral rules

Children often enjoy stories where animals portray a character, eliminating any uncertainty about whether or not children will identify with that character due to age, gender or race. Moreover, reading stories which address issues that children may experience, such as bullying and feelings of anger helps them to learn healthy ways to face common difficulties and to express themselves as they grow (Lynch & Simpson, 2010:9). For children to master the psychological problems of growing up (such as disappointment, sibling rivalry, gaining a feeling of selfhood and self-worth as well as a sense of moral obligation), Sanyal and Dasgupta (2017:39), posit that a child needs to

understand what is happening within their conscious self so that they can also cope with what happens in the unconscious. This can be achieved through familiarity with suitable story elements in response to unconscious pressure. By doing so, the child fits unconscious into conscious fantasies which enable them to deal with that content. In other words, children's contact with stories that address issues they may experience in their day-to-day activities, gives them confidence to face it as they grow to adulthood.

Ogunyemi (2013:346) affirms that writers of children's literature have in mind the notion of developing and preparing children for a challenging and competitive society. Even from the time when stories were only told and preserved orally and passed down the generations this was achieved through the use of animals. Children's attraction and feelings for animals fuel their interest in animal stories and therefore they pay greater attention to the story and the morals embedded within. Larsen, Lee and Ganea (2016:1) posit the argument that children are naturally attracted to animals and by using anthropomorphized animal characters, a story becomes more captivating and its lessons are more accessible to the young mind.

Children's social skills development involves exposure to their environment through contact with both human and non-human and one of the ways in which they can be exposed to non-humans is by reading novels that include anthropomorphized animals. Certainly, novels have the literary and practical virtue of engaging the attention of young readers serving as a means for teaching about social relationships. Furthermore, the use of anthropomorphism aids social connection, in the sense that the attribution of mental states to a different entity (such as non-human agents) is the key to success in human social interaction (Tahiroglu, 2012:30). Although, individual differences predicted social behaviour towards non-human agents (Waytz *et al*., 20102:20), this implies that individuals who anthropomorphize are more likely to be able to deal with the mental states of others and have better social skills to interact with them. As explained by Urquiza-Haas *et al*. (2015:168), anthropomorphism resulted from the 'talk' between a putative social intelligence module, specialized in dealing with the complexity of social interactions. Therefore, anthropomorphizing an entity, leads to prosocial behaviour because endowing an entity with humanistic capabilities such as secondary emotions, leads to empathic care and concern (Waytz *et al*., 2010:225).

Learning social skills during early childhood is essential as this is the foundation for relationships with others and the environment (Lynch & Simpson 2010:10). Most authors of children's literature represent their animal characters effectively in order to teach children morals that will enhance their social skills development. Therefore, the way animals are represented matters because it has consequences for children's socialization into society (Nicole *et al.*, 2016:1). The study explores the way in which animal characters are used to correct the ills and preserve acceptable behaviour and promote virtues in society. The aim of representation of animal characters in children's novels is to portray some of the society's virtues and this study points out some of those virtues and how it can influence children's behaviour and their relationship with others.

2.3   FAIRY TALES

Anthropomorphism falls into the fairy tale genre in children's literature. Fairy tales operate in accordance to the preamble set forward by the fantasy world of children, which makes young readers imagine themselves in the enchanting world of magic, animation and anthropomorphism. Many fairy tales portray animal characters that mimic human behaviour and characteristics by talking, walking erectly, dressing in clothing, and inhabiting houses. According to Sanyal and Dasgupta, (2017:39), this trend has followed human beings through the ages from oral storytelling to print, in times and places of limited sources of entertainment and in large metropolitan areas of the electronic age and continues to play a significant part in children's lives. The fairy tale has existed from long ago and continues to vigorously transform itself to the demands of the present day. However, fairy tales are typically full of magic spells, princesses, talking animals, evil queens and witches with the real world being revealed through the use of animals as characters. Zipes, (2012:2), maintains that the fairy tale was often a story about miraculous encounters, changes, and initiations that illustrated a particular didactic point that the writer wished to express in an entertaining manner. It is a tale through which one can study the most basic structures of human behaviour (Franz 1995, in Sanyal & Dasgupta, 2017:39). According to Sanyal and Dasgupta (2017:40), Bettelheim (1978) interprets the symbolic meaning of fairy tales on three levels.

Firstly, a character is described as playing a family role in the child's life (such as parents or siblings). This implies that the characters used in fairy tales are those that have close relationships

with children and this allows the child to see a picture of themselves and how better to relate with them. Secondly, the animal characters represent an attitude of a personality, either good or bad, to teach children about acceptable and non-acceptable characters in society. Thirdly, as representations of internal processes, such as ego and super ego, children's mind-sets about their identity are corrected. Zipes (2015:6), reveals that fairy tales contain symbolic images which reflect inner psychic processes which are common to all children, this enables children to externalize and work through their psychological problems. This implies that symbolic imagery in fairy tales help children's mental development to solve their problems thus aiding social skill development.

2.3.1 A brief history of the fairy tale

According to Zipes (2012:858), the term 'fairy tale' was first used by Madame d'Aulnoy in the late 17th century. The genre was first used by Renaissance writers such as Giovanni Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile and was stabilized through the works of later writers such as Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. Fairy, as a noun more or less equivalent to elf, is a relatively recent word, barely used until the Tudor period (Tolkien,1966:3).

Adults were the original audience for fairy tales and they appeared in works intended for adults. Towards the end of the 18th century, as explained by Zipes (2012:859), numerous publishers in France, England, and Germany began serious production of books for children, and the genre of the fairy tale assumed a new dimension which covered concerns about how to socialize children and indoctrinate them through literary products that were appropriate for their age, mentality, and morals. The early authors of fairy tales, drew upon both literary and oral materials when they created their stories which although are full of morals they are unpredictable and the endings are not always happy, some are tragic while some are hilarious (Zipes, 2015:6). Nevertheless, by the advent of the 19th and 20th centuries, some fairy tale writers, became associated with children's literature (Zipes, 2007:19). In the modern era, authors of fairy tales such as Jeanne-Marie le Prince de Beaumont, who published the best known version of Beauty and the Beast in 1756 and the Brothers Grimm, were re-worked after their death to suit young readers. Fairy tales were changed to remove some of the more frightening elements and to make them more appropriate for younger

readers. Leprince de Beaumont was one of the first French writers to write fairy tales explicitly for children, and the frame for her first major work was based on Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749), which contained two didactic fairy tales for young girls between 6 and 10 years, engaging them in discussion about morals, manners, ethics and gender roles (Zipes, 2012:859). Fairy tales socialize children to meet with acceptable societal conduct or behaviour both at home and in the public sphere, signifying that good deeds are to be rewarded and bad deeds are to be punished because from the beginning, fairy tales were symbolic commentaries showcasing the morals and customs of a society, the classes and groups within the societies and how their actions and behaviour could lead to societal success and happiness.

The first fairy tales and fables emerged more than a thousand years ago and as long as fairy tales have existed, animals have been major characters; in most fairy tales if not all at least one talking animal appears (Teupe, 2013:1). The use of symbols and imagery such as an animal acting like a human makes the fairy tale come alive and establishes recognition for the reader (Warner, 2014:1) while the use of magical power from a different culture or era adds spice and variety (Warner, 2014:31). Fairy tales reflect the real-world using animals as the characters.

The fairy tale is different from other literary genres in that it appropriates many motifs, songs and drawings from folklore embellishing them and combining them with elements from other literary genres (Zipes, 2015:6). Moreover, the legend, the fable, the anecdote and the myth, has a sense of wondrous change that distinguishes fairy tales from other genres such as novellas, moral stories and other modern short stories of literary genres (Zipes, 2015:6). The use of the fairy tale in children's literature is very important as it contributes to their social skills development.

2.3.2 The importance of fairy tales in children's literature

The importance of fairy tales to children cannot be over-emphasized as they aid mental growth. Albert Einstein emphasised how fairy tales assist in the development of children's intelligence when he said, "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales" (Saccardi, 2014:87). This implies that reading fairy tales to children or by having them read them themselves, helps their intelligence growth. Fairy tales also contribute to children's literature, as they teach them more about life and the

situations around them. The following are noted as the importance of fairy tale and benefits they bring to children's literature;

Firstly, fairy tales and folk tales are part of that cultural reserve that can be used to address children's fears. Fairy tales teach children to cope with life situations and help them to discover their place in the society in which they find themselves (Walter, 2017:54). Secondly, it allows children to understand relationships they may encounter in life as they mature. Warner (2014:37) asserts that fairy tales can be used to reveal underlying relationships between human beings. Thirdly, fairy tales teach children about life and provides key imaginary experiences that shape them throughout their lives. In addition, it offers new dimensions to a child's creativity which would be impossible for them to discover on their own. Furthermore, it suggests to children illustrations they can use to structure their daydreams and give better direction to their life. Lastly, because fairy tales help make children feel comfortable they are then perfect for transmitting important life lessons, such as good societal behaviour and basic morality.

Fairy tales are an exceptional way of teaching children how to manage basic human conflicts, desire and relationships in appropriate ways which influences their value and future beliefs (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016:77). Fairy tale is an important genre in children literature which features mostly anthropomorphised animal characters that pass important messages to children. The use of animal characters in fairy tales fascinate children; they want to read the story and even act out the story by identifying with the characters based on the problems they are facing in their real life and also bring out defensive strategies on how to solve the problems. This study looks at the way children's literary texts are used to foster social development in children and find solutions to the problems they encounter in their everyday relationships as well as in their future life and how these stories shape their behaviour to have a good interpersonal relationship with their environment.

CHAPTER 3: ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB*

3.1 A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF *CHARLOTTE'S WEB*

A brief synopsis of E.B White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) a well-known story within the genre of children's literature follows. According to Ratelle (2012:89), White re-creates daily farm routine and the structure of rural life in *Charlotte's Web* with such detailed attention to the real world it becomes impossible to see the novel as mere fantasy. The story revolves around a little runt pig called Wilbur, who is saved by Fern Arable after discovering that her father (Mr Arable) plans to kill him. Mr Arable tries to separate Fern from Wilbur by taking him to Mr Zuckerman's (Fern's uncle) farm; this is where Wilbur meets and becomes friends with Charlotte (The Spider). However, when Wilbur learns of his fate to be slaughtered at Christmastime by Mr Zuckerman, Charlotte becomes Wilbur's friend in the barn and promises to help by spinning words in her web that describe Wilbur as a good personality which will make him popular and spare him from slaughter. In the end Charlotte dies of old age leaving behind her egg sac in the custody of her friend Wilbur until they are hatched.

The book is written in the third person narrative with an omniscient point of view revolving around Wilbur's thoughts and actions as well as the inner thoughts of other characters in the text. *Charlotte's Web* has two different plots within one story, one that reflects everyday life on a farm while the second is a fantasy borne from White's imagination and focuses on anthropomorphic animals. According to Anggraini (2015:15), children's literature texts can be divided into two different plot styles which are progressive and episodic. *Charlotte's Web* follows the progressive plot style in which the climax of the story is quickly followed by the denouement. *Charlotte's Web* is set on two separate farms; the Arable and Zuckerman's farms, while the last event of the story takes place at the County Fair. The two different settings within the plot of *Charlotte's Web* are something that can also be found in many other African children's literary texts.

In addition, the text is made up of both major and minor characters who have been anthropomorphised. The major anthropomorphised characters are Wilbur and Charlotte who are

the eponymous characters of the text and one on which the actions performed by these two characters are focused. The minor anthropomorphised characters include the Goose, Gander, the old sheep, Uncle and Templeton. Some of the actions of the anthropomorphised characters, are presented in the text as reality while some of the actions are presented as fantasy.

Some of the themes that run through the text are love, friendship, determination and death. *Charlotte's Web* centres around the theme of love that exists between the animal characters in the text especially Wilbur and Charlotte, who was responsible for saving Wilbur's life. Secondly, the theme of friendship is well developed between Wilbur and Charlotte and they remain loyal to each other; Charlotte saves Wilbur's life and Wilbur takes care of Charlotte's egg sac and offspring after her death. The theme of determination is demonstrated through Charlotte who is determined to save Wilbur from being killed even if it takes all her strength. Lastly, the theme of death runs through the text from the very beginning to the end; from the beginning when Wilbur was to be killed by Mr Arable to the end of the text and Charlotte's ultimate death through old age.

Several tones are used in the story to reflect the mood of each character in the story. These include affection, sympathy, and happiness among others. For instance, when Charlotte is about to die at the end of the text, a tone of deep sorrow, pain and loneliness is used to describe the period of her death.

3.2 LITERARY TECHNIQUES USED IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB.*

This section contains a discussion on the literary techniques used by White to tell the story and portrays society to his readers. The first technique in *Charlotte's Web* is diction which is used to describe each character's position in the text. For instance, Charlotte is described as an articulate speaker who makes important announcements to other animals in the barnyard. This is shown when she calls a meeting to discuss which new words she can use in the cobweb to describe Wilbur.

> "Thank you very much," said Charlotte. "Now I called this meeting in order to get suggestions. I need new ideas for the web. People are already getting sick of reading the words 'Some Pig!' If anybody can think of another message, or remark, I'll be glad to weave it into the web. Any suggestions for a new slogan?" "How about 'Pig Supreme'?" asked one of the lambs" (CW, p.87).

Another example is when she makes an announcement to other animals about the arrival of the new goslings.

> When the first gosling poked its grey-green head through the goose's feathers and looked around, Charlotte spied it and made the announcement. "I am sure," she said, "that every one of us here will be gratified to learn that after four weeks of unremitting effort and patience on the part of our friend the goose, she now has something to show for it. The goslings have arrived. May I offer my sincere congratulations! (CW, p. 44).

Her command of language positions Charlotte as the leader in the barnyard, one capable of drawing together all the animals in the barn and they obey her words. The author used this diction to reflect Charlotte as the leader, the one who is always aware of what is happening in her environment and obeyed by all. However, the author creates a specialized spelling for the fast talking Goose who suggests the way to spell the word "Terrific" as

> "tee dou-ble ee double rr double rr double eye double ff double eye double see see see see see" "What kind of an acrobat do you think I am?" said Charlotte in disgust. "I would have to have St. Vitus's Dance to weave a word like that into my web." "Sorry, sorry, sorry," said the gander (CW, p. 89).

The suggested spelling and the subsequent response from Charlotte as well as their choice of words reflects the type of individuals they are. The author uses the specialised spellings in the text to illustrate the fact that children can be different in their use of diction because they do not all speak in the same way and their use of words is based on individual personality.

Wilbur's words are used to show him as a weakling who cannot help himself and make decisions on his own. For instance, his conversation with the Goose when Wilbur plans to escape from the farm yard shows his inability to make his own decisions.

> "Where do you think I'd better go? "Anywhere you like, anywhere you like," said the goose. "Go down through the orchard, root up the sod! Go down through the garden, Dig up the radishes! Root up everything! Eat grass! Look for corn! Look for oats! Run all over! Skip and dance, jump and prance! Go down through the orchard and stroll in the woods! The world is a wonderful place when you're young." "I can see that," replied Wilbur. He gave a jump in the air ……… (CW, p.15).

The words used by the author to describe Templeton the rat, reflect that he is a bad character.

The rat had no morals, no conscience, no scruples, no consideration, no decency, no milk of rodent kindness, no compunctions, no higher feeling, no friendliness, no anything. He would kill a gosling if he could get away with it – the goose knew that. Everybody knew it. (CW, P.39).

Secondly, foreshadowing is used by the author to predict what will happen to a particular character or an object later in the text. For instance, Wilbur's death is predicted from the beginning of the text where bacon (pig meat) is seen as part of the Arable family's breakfast which tells us that eventually Wilbur will be slaughtered and become breakfast bacon despite Fern Arable initially preventing her father from killing him as the runt. The goose's egg is another foreshadowing object; Templeton the rat is given a 'dud', a goose egg that has failed to hatch.

Charlotte warns the animals, 'A rotten egg is a regular stink bomb.' Templeton replies, 'I won't break it…I know what I'm doing. I handle stuff like this all the time.' (CW, p.45).

The clues are there in the story and this places the idea in the mind of the reader that the egg is going to break and the barn will end up smelling dreadful. Inevitably the egg breaks and the bad smell permeates the barn.

Symbolism is another technique used successfully by White; several of the characters and objects in the texts are used to represent feelings, ideas and thoughts. For example, the web is more than just representative of connections, it symbolises both life and death because the same web is used by Charlotte the Spider to trap her insect victims in order to kill them for food, whilst at the same time is used to save Wilbur's life. When Charlotte is dying, she tells Wilbur,

"I will not be going back to the barn," she said. Wilbur leapt to his feet. "Not going back?" he cried. "Charlotte, what are you talking about?" "I'm done for," she replied. "In a day or two I'll be dead. I haven't even strength enough to climb down into the crate. I doubt if I have enough silk in my spinnerets to lower me to the ground." (CW, p.165).

This statement by Charlotte further reinforces the web as being a literal symbol of life and death; Charlotte's lack of web silk will result in her death although it had been used to save Wilbur. White makes it clear that spiders use their silk to make their egg sacs in order to provide for the next generation, and then they die. Therefore, the web has both positive and negative meanings; for

Charlotte's victims it is a trap and where they are eaten and it is also used to save Wilbur from being killed. Likewise, it is a means through which new generations are brought to life.

Another symbolic object in the text are eggs. The author used eggs at different points in the story to symbolize birth, rebirth, and death. Eggs are first mentioned in the text when the Goose explains to Wilbur why she can't play with him and that she has eggs to hatch.

> "Sorry, sonny, sorry," said the goose. "I'm sitting on my eggs. Eight of them. Got to keep them toasty-oasty-oasty warm. I have to stay right here, I'm no flibberty-ibberty-gibbet. I do not play when there are eggs to hatch. I'm expecting goslings." (CW, p.28).

The egg in this extract represents another generation and stresses birth of new life over death. When the Goose thinks about Wilbur's death, the author said

> And the goose raised herself a bit and poked her eggs a little further under her so that they would receive the full heat from her warm body and soft feathers (CW, p.40-41).

This indicates that the Goose is protecting the new life that she has brought forth from harm.

Eggs are use in the text to symbolise different things such as birth, fulfilled life and unfulfilled life. Charlotte's hatched eggs bring about the birth of new spiders after the death of their mother and symbolise hope for the future. The Goose hatches her eggs as a symbol of a fulfilled life whilst the rotten egg symbolises an unfulfilled life. The rotten egg is also symbolic of saving life as it was the rotten egg that saved Charlotte from being killed when Avery tries to knock her off her web into the box he is holding. He trips and falls, crushing the rotten egg Templeton has hidden underneath it releasing a terrible smell into the barnyard that drives everyone far away including Avery. Charlotte, however, symbolises friendship, care and loyalty through her selfless love for Wilbur.

Irony is the fourth technique used in *Charlotte's Web*. Fern Arable convinces her father to let her raise Wilbur, the runt pig, in order to save him from being killed; she succeeds. When he is a little older Wilbur is sold to Mr. Zuckerman who intends to slaughter him for bacon and ham. This situation is ironic because although Fern initially saves Wilbur ultimately, he will be killed later on during Christmastime. The second example of irony has to do with Charlotte herself. When Wilbur and Charlotte first meet, Charlotte explains to him that she eats insects:

"You mean you eat flies?" gasped Wilbur. 'Certainly. Flies, bugs, grasshoppers, choice beetles, moths, butterflies, tasty cockroaches, gnats, midges…anything that is careless enough to get caught in my web. I have to live, don't I?" (CW, p.39).

Their conversation is an example of irony because Charlotte, a spider who kills and feeds on insects, is trying to save Wilbur from being killed by Mr. Zuckerman.

Another main example of irony is the death of Charlotte herself. Although Charlotte saves Wilbur's life, she could not save herself. The irony used in the text teaches children that life itself can be ironical; that life might go in the opposite direction to that planned for a particular situation or an individual. That the situation or individual might appear evil but means good while it can also appear good but means evil as we see in the first discussion between Charlotte and Wilbur. Wilbur thought Charlotte is evil because she kills and eats flies but Charlotte becomes a good friend to Wilbur's and eventually a life saver.

Lastly, anthropomorphism is the major technique employed by White in *Charlotte' Web;* he provides the animal characters with the ability to act like humans through talking, writing etc. As the major technique that is being examined in this study it will be the focus of the analysis in the third section of this chapter.

3.3   THE ROLES AND MEANING OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB*

This section explains the roles and meaning of anthropomorphism as used in *Charlotte's Web*. Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human behaviour or character and feelings to animal and nonhuman such as nature, object etc., is the major literary device that runs through the text. In this text most of the characters are animals and White uses anthropomorphism throughout. The use of anthropomorphic animal characters indicate that the story is a fantasy although some things about the animals remain real. The animals are made to live in a barn and appear in their real forms without any human costume attachment. They eat their real food and display their normal way of life such as a pig eating slops, a spider laying eggs and spinning webs, a rat collecting junk etc. But their ability to talk and read, have memories and feelings reveals the unreal aspect of the story. This results in both real and unreal situations coexisting in the text in order to make it more

appealing to young readers whilst encouraging them to identify with the animal characters. This positions the text as a fairy tale in fantasy fiction. The animals look and act just like normal farm animals, but the characters are relatable because of their anthropomorphic abilities. They speak and interact like humans with each other throughout the story.

White builds up his characters on existing animal stereotypes such as the sneaking and self-serving rat (Templeton), the stuttering Goose etc. These characters are based on characteristics they possess in reality with White's perception and representation of these characteristics through his writing, presenting the nonhuman becoming human. Charlotte, who is an anthropomorphic spider, is described as intelligent and caring. It is her ability to spin words like 'Terrific' and 'Radiant' on her web to create a special image of Wilbur that ultimately saves his life; even the gesture of saving her friend's life is an anthropomorphic trait. In the story Charlotte displays the characteristics of a literate individual who can obviously read and spell, something which a normal spider cannot do. Even Charlotte's intentions to save her friend are anthropomorphized because a spider, normally considered a harmful creature, would not have the ability to think and devise such a clever plan.

Wilbur is not happy at Zukerman's farm; he wants his freedom and misses his life with Fern. The author has anthropomorphised Wilbur's feelings, and as a result, he possesses a large range of human emotions whereby he cries, sobs, is bored and longs for friendship and most of all, he fears death. The feeling of loneliness is not applicable to animals because they are not considered to have ability to think and lack feelings, but the author uses the animal emotions to show that human beings love their freedom and dislike loneliness, that humans love to have people around them who they can relate to and turn to for emotional support. When Wilbur realises that he will be slaughtered during Christmastime he is afraid and broken and voices his love for life. Likewise, some of the animal's actions are anthropomorphised; they reflect human rather than animal behaviour. For instance, Templeton looks in a mirror to admire himself. This is not a behaviour common to a rodent but rather a human behaviour, one that we can all relate to. Also, how Templeton is described by the author in the text is pure anthropomorphism as seen in the following extract

> The rat had no morals, no conscience, no scruples, no consideration, no decency, no milk of rodent kindness, no compunctions, no higher feeling, no friendliness, no anything" (C. W,65).

These characteristics are human attributes and not that of real rat. He serves as a reflection of the darker side of human nature and it is highly unlikely that rats have such differentiation. Because rat attitudes and feelings cannot be judged by humans it is safe to say that these attributes are anthropomorphised and as one the antagonist in the story serves to illustrate the fact that people are not the same.

The ability of all the animals to communicate with each other by talking like humans is major proof of the use of anthropomorphism in the text. For instance, in chapter 12 of the text the animals were called together in order to have a meeting and deliberate on how they can save Wilbur's life. Roll call was made to indicate the presence of each animal and they responded by signifying their presence as well as going on to make suggestions on how they thought Wilbur's life could be saved.

> ONE EVENING, a few days after the writing had appeared in Charlotte's Web, the spider called a meeting of all the animals in the barn cellar. "I shall begin by calling the roll. Wilbur? "Here!" said the pig. "Gander?" "Here, here, here!" said the gander. "You sound like three ganders," muttered Charlotte. "Why can't you just say 'here'? Why do you have to repeat everything? "It's my idio-idio-idiosyncrasy," replied the gander. "Goose?" said Charlotte. "Here, here, here! "said the goose. Charlotte glared at her. "Goslings, one through seven? ""Bee-bee-bee!" "Bee-bee-bee!" "Bee-bee-bee! "Bee-bee-bee!" "Bee-bee-bee!" "Bee-bee-bee!" "Bee-bee-bee! "said the goslings. "This is getting to be quite a meeting," said Charlotte (CW, P.86).

This type of behaviour is typically human and further indicates the use of anthropomorphism. It is the attitude of people to come together and have meetings to deliberate on issues, take attendance as well as to make suggestions and contributions to the meeting.

In addition to giving them ability to speak, White also gives the animals human behaviours such as laughing, making promises, feeling lonely, planning their days, giving order and commands etc.

> Wilbur had planned to go out, this day, and dig a new hole in his yard. He had other plans, too. His plans for the day went something like this (CW, p. 25).

Here human attributes such as having plans on how to spend his day have been given to Wilbur. This attribute belongs to humans because only people have plans and carry them out not animals. In the text this is being carried out by an animal in order to make the character more real.

> "Are you out there, Templeton?" called Wilbur. There was no answer. Suddenly

Wilbur felt lonely and friendless. (CW, p.27).

In the above extract, human feelings of loneliness and friendliness are attributed to an animal. A normal animal does not feel lonely and seek friendship. This attitude can only be traced to humans, but the author has attributed these feelings to animals in order to teach his readers about society in a more realistic way without using human examples. The use of anthropomorphism in the text, makes it interesting for younger children to read and understand because they easily identify with animals and mostly prefer text with anthropomorphised animal characters than with human characters. Due to their interest in the animal characters, they pay attention to the text and are able to absorb the moral lessons as well as societal messages that the author is trying to communicate. The author uses the animals' attitudes as discussed above to demonstrate the anthropomorphism present in the text.

However, authors of children's literature such as E.B. White use anthropomorphism for different reasons; to allow children to understand the text and apply it to their personal experience in life which then aids the development of their social skills. One of the reasons, is to introduce complex issues in society to children in a less frightening manner. Anthropomorphism reveals animal-human relationship in a way that allow the reader to see the animal characters not just as representations of humans but also as representing real animal issues. The story is narrated by representing the events from a human perspective of the animal in which the use of the anthropomorphised characters helps children to understand the portrayed societal issues. The author employs fairy-tale elements in order to present the difficult topic of death to the young reader without exposing them to fear of death. The protagonist of the text, Wilbur, is used to raise the problematic topic of death and dying. He is able to escape death in various ways, firstly he is rescued by Fern, the farmer's daughter, when her father wants to kill him as the runt of the litter, this is followed by his rescue by his friend Charlotte (the spider) and her mysterious ability to write different motivational words that promote Wilbur.

However, Wilbur cannot escape death completely as Charlotte, his friend and mother figure, eventually dies of old age. His emotional responses allow the young reader to empathise and through that reduce their fear of death. By conveying such a sense of relief to the readers about death, the novel creates the impression that death is only meant for old rather than young people,

as Charlotte dies naturally of old age. This supports the view that the use of anthropomorphism helps the authors of children's literature expose their young readers to complex issues in society in a dispassionate manner. Even though, the story aims at raising the young readers' awareness of death, the heavy topic is lightened through the use of anthropomorphised animal instead of human characters. This is evidenced from the beginning of the text where the protagonist, Wilbur was about to be killed by his owner, the farmer Mr Arable because he was a runt. This scene has the potential to have been a scary one for children if Wilbur was a human character rather than an animal but because people believe that animals are normally killed for food this distances the fear. White uses Charlotte's continual trapping, killing and eating of flies and other insects for sustenance to explain the concept of death as a normal phenomenon to the readers, that it is all part of life and the natural order.

Moreover, the use of fairy tale elements such as the anthropomorphised animals, reduce the traumatic issues of death in the novel which means that fairy tale genre is useful for children's authors to deal with the difficulty of portraying complex issues using metaphorical language that is less traumatizing for young readers without distorting the message. The author exposes this issue to children to teach them that death is inevitable in life no matter how long one lives in life. This gives children information about death and how to view it when it happens in their society.

Also, children's literary authors use anthropomorphised animal characters to give children the opportunity to interact with the animal represented which the children can relate to early in their development and continue through adulthood. The text highlights children's relationships with animals from their early stage, from the perspective of the protagonist character, Fern. She is presented at the beginning of the text as the person who persuades her father not to kill Wilbur and therefore saves his life. She names the piglet, devotes her time and gives love to him, taking good care of him until he is taken to her uncle Homer Zuckerman's farm. Fern continues to visit Wilbur at the farm despite her mother's warning her against this; she hears and understands the animals' language until the point when she grows up. Fern's character, her relationship and love for Wilbur, represent many children and their love for animals from the early stages in life as they grow to adulthood. Fern initially treats Wilbur as her pet in the same way as many children love to have a personal pet they can take care of such as a dog etc. Towards the close of the story, many children

and adults including Fern and her siblings, attend the county fair for the competition between the two famous pigs (Wilbur and Uncle). The presence of both children and adults at the county fair to celebrate the two animals, reflects children's love and relationship with animals from their early stage even as they grow to become an adult. This leads to the use of anthropomorphised animals in *Charlotte's Web* to teach children societal values in developing their social skills.

Various essential elements are used in the text to create a mental picture of what is happening in a particular scene of the text for the reader, through unspoken norms and assumptions. It is through this that the reader can judge the fictional world of a text as realistic or fantastic (Hedgerfeldt 2005:200). For instance:

> the fair grounds were soon deserted. The sheds and buildings were empty and forlorn. The field was littered with bottles and rash. Nobody of the hundreds of people that had visited the fair, know that a grey spider had played the most important part of all. No one was with her when she died (C.W, p. 52).

This extract paints a mental picture of what was happening prior to the moment when Charlotte dies. The description evokes the reader's sympathy and young readers are able to realize what was actually happening during the sad last moments of Charlotte's death. Further dramatic images of the characters are created in the text, to show what others are going through at specific points in time in the text thereby influencing the readers' feelings and state of mind towards other characters. These elements encourage the young readers to interpret the elements and then to apply its relevance to their own life i.e. what they face personally in their relationships with others in society. Having answered the research question on the meaning and roles of anthropomorphism in children's literature, the next section will respond to the research question on how White used anthropomorphized animal characters in the selected texts to impact children's behaviour.

3.4 HOW ANTHROPOMORPHIZED ANIMAL CHARACTERS IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* SHAPES CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

In order to answer the research question on how anthropomorphized characters are used to shape children's behaviour, the relationship between the characters and their characterization is analysed. Faustino (2014:145) asserts that "anthropomorphism is a desirable technique for teaching children

the correct way to be human". The relationship between the characters in the novel are used to teach acceptable ways of interacting with people in society and this impacts their behaviour positively. For instance, the friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur was created to teach children about demonstrating unconditional love and making sacrifices for each other in society which is part of relationship management. Despite the personality differences between Wilbur and Charlotte, they love each other unconditionally and sacrifice for each other in different ways, they protect each other without considering their differences.

The societal issues discussed in *Charlotte's Web* cover several themes of life and death, love and sacrifice, friendship and loyalty, self-confidence and determination, each of which teaches children on how to positively impact their society. These themes are discussed below.

The issue of life and death is one of the major issues discussed in the text. White reveals this from the very first page of the text when Fern stops her father from killing Wilbur. Wilbur retains his fear of death throughout the novel until such point when he meets Charlotte who does everything in her power to keep him alive. By displaying positive words about Wilbur in her web he is able to prove his worth at a fair; thus ensuring that his life is saved. Although Charlotte manages to save Wilbur's life he cannot completely escape death any more than Charlotte who took care of Wilbur, was able to escape her own natural death through old age. The theme of life and death in *Charlotte's Web*, teaches children that although death can be sad and frightening it is a natural part of life, that life does not last forever and has its benefits too because without death and loss there can be no rebirth or new growth. The circle of life goes on, as the wider world remains a place of continual renewal and rebirth. White reveals the frightening fact that death comes for all living things but softens this heavy topic by pointing out that the other side of death is rebirth and that while death can be delayed it cannot be avoided for any living entity.

Another theme discussed in the text is friendship and loyalty; friendship is a strong theme that runs through the text as well as being the foundation of the novel. The first act of friendship occurs at the beginning of the text and is the relationship that forms between Wilbur and Fern, the little girl who saves Wilbur from being killed. It is Wilbur's friendship with Charlotte that saves him from being killed the second time. The author uses this to highlight to children the importance of friendships in the lives of all individuals in society and that friends ought to always defend each

other. The animals in the book are all very loyal to each other for example, Charlotte helps Wilbur out and in return, Wilbur saves Charlotte's egg sac which later produces Charlotte's babies long after her death. This is a wonderful way to show that loyalty can last for a long time. The friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur illustrates a positive, loving and true friendship and this can help children make connections between the story and their real-life relationships with others, leading to stronger friendship bonds.

Love and sacrifice are another of the issues discussed in the text which develop the social skill of relating to others for children. E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* centres around friendship that involves self-sacrifice. The tender love that exists between Wilbur and Charlotte specifically, defines true friendship and self-sacrifice. White uses their relationship to educate children about unconditional love between two friends who are happy to put their hopes, dreams, and even their lives at risk to protect their each other. The love shown by Charlotte in her efforts to save Wilbur is to the extent that Charlotte sacrifices her time, web and sleep in order to fulfil her promise to save Wilbur's life. White is able to demonstrate that love, friendship and self-sacrifice often go together. Wilbur's first friend, Fern, sacrificed her time to take care of him, by feeding him three or four times a day and staying with him rather than playing with her brother Avery and their other friends. Fern sacrifices her leisure time to make sure that Wilbur stays alive. Likewise, Wilbur also makes sacrifices to save Charlotte's egg sac by promising Templeton that he would share his food with him if he helped. White uses this theme to illustrate to children that at times love demands sacrifice from both parties in the friendship. In other words, children are taught to always be prepared to help their friends out of any trouble they might find themselves in. That this can involve sacrificing their time and belongings to save their friends just as Charlotte's sacrificed her time and web, even her last moments of strength to save Wilbur.

White also reveals the theme of determination in this text, this theme runs consistently through the text as most of the characters are determined to do one thing or the other. Fern, in the first chapter of the text, is determined to save Wilbur's life through sacrificing her time to show love and care to Wilbur. Likewise, Charlotte decides to save Wilbur from being killed during Christmastime by writing good words in her web to describe Wilbur. He is determined to be a good and loyal friend to Charlotte, and even after her death he repays Charlotte for her help by taking care of her babies.

Through this text, E.B White teaches his young readers that they can achieve almost all they desire only if they can be focused and determined.

The representation of animals is particularly important in this study and is essential for the investigation of human and animal relationship as depicted in the text *Charlotte's Web*. The text discussed societal issues through a non-human perspective of anthropomorphised animals. The animal characters are depicted not only as human but also as interconnected and independent. *Charlotte's Web* features anthropomorphised animals with their normal appearances yet possessing human characters. The readers are exposed to the societal issues discussed in the text from a non-human perspective and all the issues discussed in the text are meant to teach children one lesson or another that can help in building and impacting their behaviour towards developing social skills and in their relationships with others as they become adults.

3.5 HOW WHITE USES ANTHROPOMORPHISED CHARACTERS IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* TO DEVELOP CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS AND MORALS

In general, *Charlotte's Web* focuses on society through the use of anthropomorphised animal characters. The study reveals that the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature helps in developing children's social skills and morals. Children are presented with societal issues from a non-human fictional animal point of view, whereas human interactions and relationships in society are represented through the use of anthropomorphised animals. As argued by Airenti (2018:8) "animals fully or partially anthropomorphised are used in teaching children different aspects of mental, social life and moral rules.

In *Charlotte's Web,* the attitudes portrayed by the animal characters in the story represent particular individual behaviour that can be encountered daily in society, the attitudes the characters possess, which good or bad are there to encourage children and to develop their social skills and morals. For instance, Charlotte represents an individual with a good heart, who is caring, lovely, loyal and helpful without thinking of receiving any reciprocal reward. The author uses her behaviour to teach morals and demonstrate acceptable behaviour that is worth emulating in society by young readers. Wilbur is used to represent the worried and lonely child in society, who was rejected from birth

and struggles to make friends as he grows. He was a runt pig considered to be not useful for anything. E.B. White used Wilbur's characterization to teach children that everyone in life, irrespective of their condition, should not be maltreated by society but accepted. This contributes to the child's social skills development and helps them to become good members of society by demonstrating acceptable behaviour in society. Children are encouraged to take care of animals as Fern did when she heard about her father's plan to kill Wilbur in the beginning of the text.

Also, the story highlights for children the destructive actions that humans can have towards animals. In the text, all the animals gather together to have a meeting to discuss how they can prevent Wilbur from being killed by Mr Zuckerman. This shows that animals' lives should be valued. In the text, White used settings and objects to symbolized difference situations in society to teach children about those things or situations they may still encounter in society. For instance, Mr Zuckerman's barn is one of the settings in the text in which all the anthropomorphised animals are confined which symbolises bondage. Wilbur because he is bored thinks of escaping from the barn to obtain freedom. This shows that individuals in society should be allowed to enjoy freedom.

White's symbolic use of Charlotte's web and her eggs as mentioned earlier on in this chapter also serves to develop children's social skills and morals. For instance, Charlotte's use of her web makes children understand that what others see as evil, can equally be a symbol of good, it is all based on personal perspective. The web is seen as evil because it is used to catch and kill the insects that Charlotte, the spider, feeds on, but it is also seen as a life saver for Wilbur when Charlotte uses it positively to save his life. At the end of the book, Wilbur protects Charlotte's egg sac which represent new life. He was able to take a decision for himself for the first time without Charlotte's intervention. He persuades Templeton to get him the egg sac so that he can bring it back to the barnyard. Wilbur tucks the eggs into a safe place in the barn and waits for them to hatch the following spring. Wilbur's determination to save Charlotte's eggs, teaches children that as they mature there is need for them to take responsibility on their own by understanding their role in society and contributing to the growth of that society. Wilbur was able to decide something on his own for the first time after the death of his friend and took upon himself the responsibility of saving his friend's children.

In addition, children are taught that life is about sacrificing things to get or protect a greater thing.

This can be gleaned/inferred from the Goose's one unhatched egg which represents unfulfilled life. Templeton eagerly asks for the unhatched egg, and the Goose and Gander let him roll it away because they know that Templeton can easily kill the surviving goslings if he so wanted. The rotten egg becomes a sacrifice to Templeton to ensure that he will not tamper with the newly hatched babies. E.B White use the entire text to depict life and society to teach children to understand life and situations they are likely to encounter in society as they journey to adulthood.

CHAPTER 4: ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN *STUART LITTLE*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Children's literature containing anthropomorphised animal characters can be considered impactful for younger generations and capable of preparing them for the future. It gives children new information and raises issues that are common globally. When children's literature discusses those situations that are similar to those that children experience it allows them to feel more comfortable with handling situations in which they might find themselves. Authors of children's literature compensate for what young people may lack by presenting them with positive patterns of behaviour and constructive models through the use of anthropomorphised animal characters that they can identify with easily. This chapter analyses the use of animal characters to create societal consciousness and socialization in children, in order to develop their social skills and so become responsible members of society.

This chapter is structured into three sections. The first section is a brief synopsis of *Stuart Little*. The second covers the literary techniques used by White in *Stuart Little* while the third is the analysis of anthropomorphism as the major technique; in order to fulfil the aim and objectives of the study and to answer the research questions. This section leads to a brief synopsis of *Stuart Little*.

4.2 A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF *STUART LITTLE*

A brief synopsis of E.B White's *Stuart Little* follows. According to Becky (2014:20)

> The idea of writing Stuart Little came to White in a dream he had while travelling from Virginia to New York. When he awoke, he made extensive notes on the charming fellow who had appeared to him nicely dressed in features of a mouse, courageous and questing. White set the story in the New York city area where he grew up.

The story features a boy named Stuart who is born to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Little in New York City. He is normal in every way but looks exactly like a mouse and he is just over two inches high. Stuart is challenged by his size and struggles to complete simple tasks; but by the age of seven, he speaks, thinks, and behaves on the level of a human and he is able to adapt as well as perform helpful family tasks. His parents and brother, George, accept and take care of him with love. The family's cat, Snowbell, dislikes Stuart and is jealous of the attention and love the family give to him. As Stuart grows up, he loves going for adventures by travelling around New York on the City buses, and sailing toy sailboats in the pond in Central Park. Mrs. Little finds a bird called Margallo on a windowsill and brings her into the house. The two animals become the dearest of friends and they manage to save each other's lives. Stuart protects Margallo from Snowbell and the bird repays his kindness by saving Stuart when he is stuck in a garbage can. However, Margallo and Stuart's friendship is tragically cut short, when Snowbell's friend, the Angora cat, decides to kill Margallo. After receiving a warning note from a kind pigeon who overhears the cat's plan. Margallo decides to flee the Little's house in fear of her life without telling anyone. Stuart is completely distraught to find his friend missing and decides to go on an adventure to find her. In this story, White specifically places Stuart as part of a human family, amplifying the human-ness of the character.

Stuart Little follows an episodic plot style in which each chapter has its own story which links to the previous chapter through the characters. The story takes place in various settings which are real places. These include Stuart's home in New York and a little town called Ames' Crossing, the school room and Dr Carey's office. The text includes both major and minor anthropomorphized animal characters. The major anthropomorphic characters around whose actions the story revolves around are Stuart, Margallo and Snowbell while the minor anthropomorphized animal characters are the Grey Pigeon and Angora. The text contains both a realistic and a fantastical story in which some characteristics of the text show reality while some depict fantasy. The realistic aspect of the story is the appearance of the animals in their real animal form and the enmity of the relationship between Snowbell and Stuart which reflects a natural attitude between a cat and a mouse. Aspects that are not real include Stuart himself who looks like a mouse but was born to human parents. Also, the ability of the animal characters in the text to talk like human and Stuart dressing like a boy, taking a bath and sleeping in a bed like human also make the story a fairy tale in fantasy

fiction.

The novel discusses themes that reflect societal issues such as love, friendship, determination, acceptance and adventure which are crucial for young people on their way to adulthood. The theme of acceptance is shown through the Little family and even the entire environment in which Stuart finds himself. Despite how he looks, Stuart is accepted by his parents and the other people around him. The family avoids anything that could hurt and depress him such as avoiding poems and conversations that refer to mice. Likewise, the area in which he lives accepts him as he is, there is no discrimination shown between him and any of the other characters he encounters daily, rather they accept him as a unique being. Moreover, the theme of love runs in the text, as shown by some of the characters in the text. From the beginning of the text, it is love that allows Stuart to be accepted by the Little family even though he was born as a mouse into that family. Moreover, the love between Stuart and Margallo brings about the care and sacrifices they make for each other. For instance, when Stuart is sick, he is mindful of his friend not contacting bronchitis; Margallo's love for Stuart causes her to follow the garbage truck to save his life from the East River. She shows up at the East River when all hope is lost for Stuart reflecting the adage that says, "A friend in need is a friend indeed", Margallo appears at the moment Stuart needs her most and she sacrifices her strength to fly him back home to reunite with his family.

According to Becky (2014:20), *Stuart Little* has all the elements needed for a great children's book, there is an array of cute and fuzzy animals, mice, cats, birds, daring adventures with an element of danger, such as trips down the drain and a ride in the garbage truck, all with positive morals woven throughout and a heartfelt friendship shown between the two main characters.

4.3 LITERARY TECHNIQUES USED IN *STUART LITTLE*

In this section, the literary techniques used by White to tell his story are discussed. The first technique to be discussed is diction. Diction is used by the author to differentiate between the characters in the text; each character is portrayed as being different through their words and actions. Stuart's use of language reflects his extraordinary versatility and his ability to adapt to any situation. Suitable diction is used for every conversation he has with every character in the text. For instance, his conversation with the children in Number Seven school shows authority and

command.

> "Everyone will now take his or her seat!" commanded Stuart. The pupils filed obediently down the aisles and dropped into their seats, and in a moment there was silence in the classroom (SL, p. 89).

His conversation, as shown below, with the owner of the *Wasp* at the Central Park pond shows respect, boldness and confidence.

> "Excuse me, sir," said Stuart to the man who was turning her, "but are you the owner of the schooner Wasp?" "I am," replied the man, surprised to be addressed by a mouse in a sailor suit. "I'm looking for a berth in a good ship," continued Stuart, "and I thought perhaps you might sign me on. I'm strong and I'm quick."(SL, P.32).

Conversely, Snowbell's conversation with Stuart when he wakes up early for his daily exercise, shows that Snowbell is a bully.

> "I should think you'd get all the exercise you want up there in the bathroom, banging around, waking all the rest of us up trying to get that water started so you can brush your teeth. Your teeth aren't really big enough to brush anyway. Want to see a good set? Look at mine!"(SL, p. 17-18).

Likewise, the language of the fat sulky twelve-year-old boy that Stuart encounters at the sailboat pond in Central Park, shows that the boy is rude and spoilt.

> The most excited person of all was a boy who owned the Lilian B. Wormrath. He was a fat sulky boy of twelve named LeRoy. He wore a blue serge suit and a white necktie stained with orange juice. "come back here!" He called to Stuart "come back here and get on my boat. I want you to steer my boat. I will pay you five dollars a week and you can have every Thursday afternoon off and a radio in your room" (SL, p.37).

Diction, as it is used by the author shows that all individuals have unique personalities as is reflected through their use of words due to age, maturity and the environment in which they find themselves. This teaches children that each and every individual in society is unique in their own way and they be interacted with based on their personality in order to have cordial relationships with people.

Another technique used by White is symbolism. Mrs. Little's ring symbolizes the positive effects of Stuart's appearance. Although Stuart is seemingly disadvantaged because of his mouse

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appearance, this enables him to help his family, specifically by retrieving Mrs. Little's ring from down the drain of the kitchen sink. Likewise, Snowbell symbolizes enmity due to his hatred towards other pets in the house, including Stuart. Unlike Stuart, Snowbell does not cultivate meaningful friendships. As a result, Snowbell actively seeks to undermine Stuart, when Stuart becomes trapped in the window shade he does not call anyone to help to rescue him. Also, his plan with his friend, Angora, to kill Margallo leads to her disappearing from the house with the help of Pigeon who has revealed the evil plan to her.

In addition, Stuart, the main character in the text is symbolic, he symbolizes those people who have different looks and appearances in society but who can still be a blessing to society. Due to Stuart's stature and look, he was able to enter places where none of his family members could as well as doing things that they could not do and making him to be a blessing in disguise to his family. This shows that individuals in society have something to contribute no matter their appearance. Moreover, Margallo symbolizes loved and treasured friends in our life who suddenly disappear.

Anthropomorphism is the major technique employed by White and it is the technique that is being examined and analysed in the third section of this chapter that answers the research question and objective on the roles and meaning of anthropomorphism in children's literature.

4.4 THE MEANING AND ROLE OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM AS USED IN *STUART LITTLE*

This section explains the roles and meaning of anthropomorphism as used in *Stuart Little*. White uses anthropomorphism by giving human qualities to animals, in order to develop the storyline and present themes. This reveals the fantasy element of the story and also gives the author artistic freedom to develop the characters as the story emerges. Some of these characters are portrayed based on the attitudes they possess in their real life. For instance, the relationship between Snowbell, the cat and Stuart, the mouse is that of a real cat and a mouse whereby the mouse is seen as prey for the cat and they would never have had a friendly relationship. The author employs the use of anthropomorphism in the text particularly in the representation of Stuart, who is the major character in the text, so that he has the attributes and characteristics of a human which makes him a much more entertaining character. A real mouse cannot talk, drive boats and cars or teach but

Stuart the mouse in this text possesses human attributes, character and ability. We are made to understand from the text that he brushes his teeth every morning as well as dressing like a human which a real mouse certainly does not do. He goes shopping like a person and even knows what is right for him.

> Stuart went shopping. He decided that, since he was about to take a long motor trip, he should have the proper clothes. He went to a doll's shop, where they had things which were the right size for him, and outfitted himself completely, with new luggage, suits, shirts, and accessories. He charged everything and was well pleased with his purchases (SL, p.83).

He engages in exercise every morning to keep himself fit and to be in good condition which is another human attribute; the reasoning to engage in exercise and keep fit is not applicable to a real animal. Animals cannot and do not think like humans or know whether to be fit or not. Stuart's thoughts of having a girlfriend is an anthropomorphized thought, though animals do have reproductive partners they do not have dates or write romantic letters as happened between Stuart and Harriet, including a love date.

Moreover, Gray Pigeon's ability to write is an anthropomorphic action as a real bird cannot read nor write but in the text the bird named Grey Pigeon writes to inform Margallo about Angora and Snowbell's plan to kill her; Margallo's ability to read and understand the message is also anthropomorphic in nature. This bird's anthropomorphized ability to write in the text, reveals the power of literacy in the sense that if Grey Pigeon cannot write and Margallo cannot read, it is very possible that Snowbell and his friend will successfully carry out their plan of killing her. Gray Pigeon's ability to read and write, encourages children to develop their ability to read and write which is also a means of societal communication.

Likewise, the feelings of the animal characters in the text are anthropomorphized, for instance, Snowbell describes himself as having self-control which is a human quality; an animal cannot control itself like human. The jealous attitude displayed by Snowbell towards other animals in the Littles' house is another anthropomorphized attitude and it reveals that children often feel jealous when attention is shifted from them to another child or is jealous of their new-born sibling because they perceive that attention will be shifted to the new born.

Moreover, instead of 'it', personal pronouns such as his, he, she and her, normally used for humans,

are assigned to the animal characters, to reveal that they are given human personality to make the story real. The use of this device is to emphasise the reality of the storyline despite the use of anthropomorphised animal characters and to identify the meaning of anthropomorphism in the text.

However, children's literary authors can and do use anthropomorphised characters for other reasons. One of these is to introduce children to complex societal issues in a lighter manner. Complex societal issues are introduced to children in children's literature through the use of anthropomorphised characters to reduce the fear associated with such issues. The use of anthropomorphised characters instead of human characters can present the issue in a comic way rather than emphasising any fear of the issue. The story is narrated by using anthropomorphised characters to help children to understand the issues portrayed. The author employs fairy-tale elements to present difficult issues encountered in society to his young readers without exposing them to fear of death. In *Stuart Little,* the author discusses the issue of death as was highlighted in the first text of the study and reveals human attitudes to death. Here this issue is revealed through the text's protagonist, Stuart, who finds himself in different situations that could have resulted in his death, he is afraid to die. The first situation is when he is wrapped up in a window shade and is unable to get out. His fear makes him to shout for help but no one hears his voice.

> "Help! Let me out!" cried Stuart, who was frightened and bruised inside the rolled-up shade, and who could hardly breathe. But his voice was so weak that nobody heard (S.L P.20).

His family members are also afraid and are certain that he must have died as they have searched everywhere for him to no avail. They call his name; he answers from the rolled–up shade but his voice is too weak for them to hear him. This shows the extent to which people fear the death of their loved ones

> When lunch was over Mrs. Little broke out crying again, and said she thought Stuart must be dead (S.L, P.25).

Another instance where Stuart escapes death is when he slips into his mother's refrigerator to get some cheese but he is mistakenly locked inside the fridge until his mother opens the refrigerator later on to get something else and finds him inside.

"Help!" he called. "It's dark in here. It's cold in this refrigerator. Help! Let me out! I'm getting colder by the minute"(S.L, P.48).

He manages to escape death when he is trying to hide from an Irish dog but gets trapped in the refuse truck. There is no way for him to get out until the truck reaches its destination, the place where refuse is dumped in the city and Margallo, the bird, his friend shows up later to rescue him. The first thought that comes to him during this time is that of his death which makes him sad that he will never have the opportunity to see his family again.

> The thought of death made Stuart sad, and he began to think of his home and of his father and mother and brother and of Margallo and Snowbell and of how he loved them. The tears came into his eyes when he realized that he would never see them again (S.L, P.61).

All these instances are used by the author to introduce children to the complex issue of death but in a mild manner. The text is comprised of both human and animal characters but none of the human characters are used to specifically highlight this issue which reduces the complexity attached to it. The author uses the anthropomorphised mouse and the refuse dump environment to discuss this issue because people believe that mice can be found in refuse dumps where they eat the rotten food and this is used to create a fearless image of death instead of a scary image in the mind of young readers.

Moreover, the authors of children's literature also introduce the use of anthropomorphised animal characters in order to create interaction between children and animals, something which persists through their adulthood. The text reveals this from the perspective of the child characters in the text. The first character to portray this is George, Stuart's brother. George loves his brother so much despite the fact that he is born looking like a mouse and he is very sad when Stuart is missing in the house during to the incident with the window shade. Despite his father's instruction to stop searching for him, he still uses every opportunity he finds to continue looking for him.

> "Oh, all right," said George. "I see that nobody in this house cares anything about Stuart but me" (S.L, P.21).

George's relationship and love for Stuart, represents children and their love for animals.

The students of school Number Seven are also used to reveal children's interaction with animals from their early stage. The children are happy to have Stuart as their substitute teacher in the

absence of Miss Gunderson who is away sick. Stuart, on his journey to search for Margallo, agrees to stand in for the teacher when he meets the owner of the school lamenting on how to get a substitute that can take Miss Gunderson's class.

> The boys and girls crowded around the desk to look at the substitute. Everyone talked at once, and they seemed to be very much pleased (S.L, P.81).

The children prefer him to Mrs. Gunderson and would love to always have him as their teacher. This shows that his mouse look attracts the children to him and they are happy to have him as their teacher. The attitude demonstrated by the pupils towards Stuart, reveals that children love to interact with animals from their early stages as they journey to adulthood. This section leads us to answering the research question of how anthropomorphized animal characters are used to impact children's behaviour

4.5 HOW ANTHROPOMORPHIZED ANIMAL CHARACTERS IN *STUART LITTLE* SHAPES CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

In order to answer the research question on how anthropomorphized characters are used to impact children's behaviour, the relationship between the characters and their characterization are analysed. The anthropomorphized animal characters in the text through the issues discussed in the text, are used to teach children good behaviour that could aid the development of their social skills. For instance, the relationship between Stuart and every other character in the text guides children to accept individuals they meet in society no matter their differences or appearances without discriminating against anyone but to treat them with love. Even though Stuart is born looking like a mouse he is accepted with love by the Little family and his entire community.

His family ensure that he lacks for nothing and things they use in the house are re-designed to suit his stature. The bathroom light switch is redesigned so that he can switch it on and off by himself without any help. Also, his father makes him tiny coins that are not too big for him to carry like the normal coins spent in the country at that time. The family avoids everything that can hurt and depress him. Moreover, wherever he finds himself in society, he is accepted as he is. There was no discrimination between Stuart and others he meets on daily basis; rather they accept him as a unique being. For instance, the text narrator makes us understand that

Stuart never paid any fare on buses, because he wasn't big enough to carry an ordinary dime (SL, P.4).

The only time he is asked by a bus conductor to pay, he offers him the tiny coins which his father made for him out of tin foil which are then accepted by the conductor. Although the conductor initially humiliates Stuart he then apologizes to Stuart and calls him a small sailor rather than calling him a mouse after Stuart tells the conductor not to insult him. Likewise, at the sailboat park, he is accepted by the owner of the schooner *Wasp*, who gives him the opportunity to show his skills in the boat race that gives him accolades at the sailboat park. Everyone at the park appreciates how he defeats all the other boats without considering the fact that he is a mouse. Everybody shakes hands with Stuart and the owner of the *Wasp,* Dr Paul Cary, later becomes Stuart's good friend and adviser.

Moreover, the relationship between Margallo and Stuart is meant to influence children's behaviour in order to show affection and unconditional love to each other in society which is one way of building relationships. Despite being sick, Stuart saves the life of his friend Margallo from Snowbell.

He kept thinking about the bird downstairs asleep in the fern. He kept thinking about Snowbell and about the way Snowbell's eyes gleamed. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, he switched on the light. "There's just something in me that doesn't trust a cat," he muttered. "I can't sleep, knowing that Margallo is in danger."(SL, P.8).

It is Margallo's love for Stuart that makes her follow the truck and save his life from the East River and in return for all that Margallo has done for Stuart, he leaves his lovely family sacrificing his comfort in search of Margallo. Despite their differences, they still love each other unconditionally.

From the very beginning of the text, it is love that allows Stuart to be accepted by the Little family even though he is born as a mouse into the family. Even when they are supposed to send him away from the house, they keep him and take care of him as their second child not as a pet. Mrs. Little loves her son so much despite his mouse look and character because of the motherly love she holds for her son, she cries bitterly when she is looking for him. Likewise, when Margallo rescues Stuart from the East River, Mrs. Little shows her motherly care and love to Stuart by carrying and kissing him, despite all the dirt in his body. The family love Stuart so much that they fear losing him.

Stuart's life is used to impart self-confidence into children's life. From the beginning of the text,

Stuart believes in himself, that he can achieve anything even with his stature and mouse look. He never looks down on himself nor does he allow anyone to look down on him. For instance, he believes he can retrieve his mother's ring from the drain, moreover he proves successful when all ideas by everyone else failed. Likewise, during the sailboat race, he proves to the owner of the schooner *Wasp,* Dr Paul Cary, that he can beat all other boats in the race if he can offer him his boat. Stuart never takes 'NO' for an answer and never believes in impossibility by always doing his best to solve every problem brought to him. This is used to teach children that no matter what they are going through in life, they should believe in themselves and bring out the best in themselves to adapt into society as well as impacting society.

4.6 HOW WHITE USES ANTHROPOMORPHISED CHARACTERS IN *STUART LITTLE* TO DEVELOP CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS AND MORALS

Anthropomorphised characterization is used in teaching children different aspects of life such as social life and morals. Stuart is used to describe people with different looks and appearances who our society often treat differently. White's use of Stuart in the storyline is to train and teach children against rejection and discrimination in society, that those who are different due to physical abnormality are not abnormal and should still be accepted by all. His birth into the Little family represents so many things human beings do not want in their lives but that later prove to be a blessing in disguise and contribute positively to their lives despite their ugly appearance. This teaches that society should see people with special needs as a blessing to the community and allow them to contribute to society. Margallo is also used in the text to depict things we cherish and love in our lives. She is Stuart's treasured friend who runs for her life to escape death. Her character is used to teach children to love and cherish their relationship with any individual in society the same way Margallo loves Stuart so much and is always there to help him even when he is in danger despite their physical differences. When Margallo disappears, Stuart sets off in search of her without knowing which particular place to start. He does not know what species she is; he does not know where she comes from nor is he even sure he can find her. So Margallo represents one thing we value in our lives and search for but can never quite work out where to find it. In other

words, in the journey of human life we search for one perfect thing we cherish so much but we do not know where and how to get it; continuously searching for that one perfect thing that probably may not even exist.

According to Shih (2016:217), White describes Margallo as Stuart's "ideal of beauty and goodness". As you grow older you will realize that many of us in this world go through life looking for something that seems beautiful and good, often, something we can't quite name." Stuart describes Margallo as a fortune he needs to seek for. The extract below shows how Stuart has seriously been searching for Margallo:

> "I ran away from home this morning", explained Stuart "I am going out into the world to seek my fortune and to look for a lost Bird. Which direction do you think I should start out in?" (SL, p.76).

Snowbell is another character in the text whose behaviour is used to teach children morals. This character is used by the author to represent unaccommodating people which children should not emulate because their behaviour does not establish love and unity but rather creates problems. The characters portrayed by each anthropomorphised character in the text are used to teach children which behaviour to emulate and the ones that are not worthy of emulation and all these contribute to children's social skills development.

In summary, the anthropomorphised characters in *Stuart Little* have been discussed and how their characters' traits can have impact on children's behaviour and develop children's skills and morals. The use of animal characters helps children to relate to life situations and events in such a way that is understandable while abstracting any fearful and tragic events involved.

CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON OF THE TEXTS ANALYSED IN THE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter compares the analysed primary texts, *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*, in which both similarities and differences can be found.

5.1 CHOICE AND USE OF CHARACTERS

The first aspect in which text comparison can be discussed is in the choice of characters. Both texts use anthropomorphic animal characters alongside human characters in the development of the plot with the anthropomorphic characters as the main characters. For the purpose of this study, it is the anthropomorphic animal characters that are the main focus. The text, *Charlotte's Web* makes greater use of anthropomorphic animal characters than *Stuart Little*. These animal characters are given significant roles to play in the texts in order to communicate the author's societal messages to the readers. The main characters in the texts are used to describe people's fear of death but in a light manner which reduces the weight of the emotion it could bring to the readers if human characters were used to discuss such an issue. This is particularly pertinent for children's literature where the issue of death is rarely discussed.

The main characters in both texts are described as having strong bonds of friendship with their chosen friends from amongst the other animal characters, Wilbur with his friend Charlotte, and Stuart with Margallo. Both are heartbroken at the end due to the sudden disappearance of their specific friend; as a result of Charlotte's death through old age in *Charlotte's Web* and Margallo's disappearance to avoid being killed in *Stuart Little*.

The primary characters in the texts are described as being loyal and self-sacrificing in their relationships with their friends. They both help each other out of difficult situations in which they find themselves. For instance, Charlotte saves Wilbur from being killed by sacrificing her own web in order to write beautiful words to praise Wilbur which later causes him to become a celebrity in the Zuckerman's community. Likewise, on the first night she enters the house, Stuart saves

Margallo's life from Snowbell and Margallo repays him by rescuing him from the ocean after the refuse truck has dumped him on the harbour dump ship.

In *Charlotte's Web* the animal characters are presented in their real forms with appropriate behaviour, this includes staying in the barn, eating their normal food, eating as real animals, laying eggs etc. with the difference being that the animals can talk. For instance, when Charlotte tells Wilbur how she traps insects in her web, ties them with silk, and drinks their blood; this is accurate and appropriate for a real spider. In *Stuart Little*, the animal characters are presented in their real forms and given the ability to talk except for Stuart who possesses more human behaviours such as wearing clothes, sleeping in a bed, driving, shopping, etc. The characters in the texts are anthropomorphised to demonstrate the human-ness of the characters.

5.2 GENRE COMPARISON IN THE TEXTS

In terms of genre, the two texts are both fantastical and realistic in nature in which some aspects of the texts are real and some are fantasy. It is considered as fantasy due to having talking animals and considered to be reality because it has realistic setting. According to Tolkien (1966:139), fantasy is made out of the primary world but must give an inner consistency of reality. Fantasy is important to reality and vice versa because it is fantasy that reveals reality and it then feels real to the reader. According to Tolkien (1966:145) escapism is not an attempt to avoid reality but rather a way to cope with it by seeking comfort in something less real, like fantasy, and there are more profound 'Escapisms' that always appear in fairy tale and legend.

Despite the elements of fantasy in White's books, the stories are fundamentally true to life. Romance can also be found in the texts making these books hybrid in genre, in the sense that there is a potential love affair in *Stuart Little* between Stuart and the girl, Harriet, who he met while he was searching for Margallo. There is also the love affair between the Goose and the Gander in *Charlotte's Web*. The texts are presented in the third person narrative with an omniscient point of view having the main protagonist as the vocalizer.

5.3 PLOT COMPARISONS BETWEEN *STUART LITTLE* AND *CHARLOTTE'S WEB*

The plot of the texts differs in style because *Charlotte's Web* follows a progressive plot style in which the central climax is quickly followed by denouement, or the tying up of loose ends. Conversely, *Stuart Little* follows an episodic plot style in which each chapter has its own story that links to the previous chapter through the characters in the story. The setting of the texts happens in both imaginary and real places. *Charlotte's Web* takes place on two farms and at a county fair which are from the author's imagination while the settings in *Stuart Little* are in different well-known locations in New York city that still exist even now. The settings of the two texts are anthropomorphised in the sense that the animals in *Charlotte's Web* are presented as human due to the fact that they can talk, write, think like human etc. but they still demonstrate all these from a nonhuman environment which is animal farm while Stuart (the mouse) in *Stuart Little* is presented as human who operates from a human environment (Little's house). White's intention is to present him as a full member of Little's family. The effect of the setting is to show the relationship between nature and human environment.

5.4 STYLE COMPARISON

One of the styles common to the two texts is the multimodality of the books where the author uses both pictures and words in telling the story. Accurate information is transmitted through simple and detailed language to plainly explain the characters, scenes, and what is happening in the texts. White's descriptive style, with its use of simple and detailed language, reveals accurate reflections of life and diversity. Moreover, the use of diction to differentiate between the characters in such a way that none of them speaks the same way discloses the characters' uniqueness i.e., who and what that character is. This is accomplished through assigning speech to each character that reveals their characteristics and condition in life to the readers. White uses new vocabulary to widen his readers' knowledge. Symbolism, tone as well as paramount styles are used in the development of the plot in the two texts. Occasionally White uses contrast to focus attention on an individual part he is describing with statements that contain simple nouns and verbs, for instance, White contrasts Charlotte's death and the end of the fair which occurs simultaneously.

She never moved again next day, as the Ferris wheel was being taken apart and the race horses were being loaded into vans and the entertainers were packing up their belongings and driving away in their trailers, Charlotte died (CW, p. 171).

5.5   THEME COMPARISON

The two books have other themes in common, such as love and sacrifice. The protagonists in the texts are described as being in love with one another; they sacrifice for each other in difficult situations. Another theme that is common to the texts is friendship. The main characters in the texts are described as friends. Likewise fear of death is another theme applicable to both texts in the sense that the protagonists who are also the main characters in the texts are afraid of death at some particular point in the texts. Determination is yet another theme common to both texts where the protagonists are determined to achieve a particular plan. In *Charlotte's Web*, Charlotte is determined to save Wilbur's life and in *Stuart Little*, Stuart is determined to find Margallo at all costs. Other than themes common to both texts as indicated, other individual themes can be found in these texts. The themes of the texts are achieved through the use of anthropomorphism in which the anthropomorphised animal characters in the texts are used by the author to communicate the themes to the readers. The use of anthropomorphism in the text helps in presenting the themes to young readers in a fearless way especially the theme of Death as discussed in the text.

5.6   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the two anthropomorphic texts analysed above, E.B White has shown that the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature is very important in building children's social skills. While humorous and interesting, the author uses the two texts to explain different social issues that can arise and to teach important lesson to the young reader. For example, in *Charlotte's Web*, Fern's care for Wilbur teaches children that if they stand up for what they believe in they can make a difference in the world. Fern is able to change her father's mind because she believes that Wilbur can survive if he is cared for. Charlotte and Wilbur's friendship despite their differences in nature, teaches tolerance and acceptance in the sense that children should learn how to cope and accept individuals in spite of their differences because society is filled with people of different

backgrounds and we relate with them every day; this will help them to relate with everyone peacefully.

Likewise, Stuart's life in *Stuart Little* reflects tolerance and acceptance of people for who they are, and this helps children to build good relationships with others in society. Tolerance and acceptance are good social skills to develop in children so they can behave in an acceptable way in society. These text impart valuable skills to young readers as they read.

Moreover, the texts teach young readers how to adapt to situations they find themselves as they grow. For instance, Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web* adapts with his new home and the new condition he finds himself in at Zuckerman's farm though initially it was not easy. Also, Stuart in *Stuart Little* adapts to a human way of life by having his bath, brushing his teeth and even doing exercise to make sure that he is fit, despite being born a mouse into a human family. He is able to adapt to any situation he finds himself in society. Adaptation is a very important social skill that children need to develop as they journey to adulthood; they are then able to tackle and overcome situations they might find themselves.

Literature itself is designed to leave an impression on its readers and White leaves a lasting impression on his young readers as they develop an understanding of their environment. White's perspective on the cycle of life allows young readers to stretch their imaginations, learn to adapt in unfamiliar situations, and broadens their understanding of death and the world around them.

As Wilbur grows up, like any child, he learns to cope with fear, loss, mortality, and loneliness especially after the death of his only friend, Charlotte. This teaches children that their loved ones cannot be there for them all the time. They need to learn how to be independent and face the world and tackle those challenges they may likely face in life as they mature. Wilbur's first encounter with Charlotte and his impression about her as a blood sucking creature that kills insects for food changes when Charlotte later saves Wilbur. This shows that the first encounters we have with people or the behaviour we know people for on our first encounter with them should not be used to judge their long-term attitude towards us because knowing someone as a wicked person today, does not mean they cannot be a life saver tomorrow.

Wilbur's life from being the runt pig at birth to becoming a celebrated pig teaches young readers that people should not automatically condemn others, thinking that nothing good can come out of

them due to their background, stature or nature because a nobody today can become an important person tomorrow. Someone rejected today can be a celebrity in the future. As it is seen in the story, Wilbur is treated as someone that nothing good would ever come from but later he becomes a person that people gather to celebrate. In conclusion, people's background or stature does not determine their success or how far they will go in life.

Death is another serious societal issue that is discussed in a light mood in the two texts. The author treats the issue lightly, to make the young reader understand that death is not only inevitable in human life, but that death is the natural end of everything in life. In *Charlotte's Web*, we can see that Wilbur is afraid to die and he is saved by his beloved friend but that does not mean that he is not going to die eventually, though he may not die destined as Christmas pork but through a natural death; even his life saver eventually dies. Likewise, Stuart in *Stuart Little* is afraid to die when he is trapped in the garbage truck and later says even if he is going to die, it must not be with all that dirt on his body. The two texts reveal to children that death is inevitable in life.

The two texts also reveal that with determination in life, dreams can be achieved. The texts teach children that with self-determination, they can achieve their goals. Charlotte is determined to save Wilbur's life in *Charlotte's Web*, and she achieves her goal with commitment and persistence. Likewise, Stuart is determined to get his friend Margallo back even when he does not know where to find her.

Self-esteem is also one of the important skills revealed in these texts. The author makes young readers understand that building their self-esteem does not allow people to look down on them. As was seen in the life of Wilbur when Charlotte writes the word 'TERRIFIC' to describe him, he tells Charlotte that he is not terrific, but Charlotte tells him to start behaving as someone who is, which means he must not look down on himself. Also, in *Stuart Little*, Stuart does not allow anyone to look down on him, he always boosts his self-esteem through his ability to do so many things that people think he cannot do due to his petite stature and mouse look. Children reading these texts will learn that by building their skills of self-esteem people will not be allowed to look down on them.

Friendship and love are also revealed in the two texts. The author shows that without love there is no friendship and that both friendship and love come with sacrifice. The sacrifices made by the

characters to save each other's lives teach children to build empathy for others which enables them to feel and share in each other's pain and emotion.

According to Dennis (2003:1), as children encounter new experiences, existing memory structures in the brain or schema are reshaped, impacting the linguistic, cognitive, social, and emotional development of children over time. Moreover, exposing children to books that help them to feel things from another person's perspective can teach them to react with kindness towards other people as stated by Kerry (2016:40).

Stuart Little's emotions and adventure experiences in the book are very similar to what children face every day; for example, going to the dentist, first love, being homesick, and bullying. One underlying theme found in the texts is accepting children with differences and not sheltering them from life's experiences. The texts are wonderful novels that appeal to children because of their curious blend of fantasy and reality. Stuart rejects society and accepts himself and he understands that perfection may not be achieved in this world. Yet, he continues the journey for the happiness that comes with self-awareness which becomes his ultimate goal. Children can relate to some of the obstacles Stuart encounters because of his size. These two texts help children to learn to use determination in order to overcome obstacles they might face in life.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as can be seen from the study, anthropomorphism is the human process of attributing both external, physical, human traits and unique human features to non-human and inanimate objects. This study has been concerned with the question of how the use of anthropomorphic characters in children's literature can aid development of their social skills. This study's initial claim was that children can learn more easily from these anthropomorphic characters than when human characters are used because they identify with the animal characters due to their love for animals as pets; seeing them in human form makes the story more interesting to them. They will be ready to read and learn both social and moral skills from the story which then reflects on their behaviour.

Additionally, E.B White's work discusses meaningful conversations pertaining to life itself and it

has relevancy to today's society, particularly concerning children's literature. It is a powerful educational tool to assist children as they navigate the more difficult parts of life as they progress to adulthood. In the selected texts, E.B White helps in the development of children's social lives by discussing some of those societal values which can positively affect the life of the children in order to behave in acceptable ways in society. Some of the values discussed in the texts are loyalty, love, acceptance, determination, empathy and friendship among others that encourage children in their relationships with others as well as preparing them for adulthood and promoting their prosocial behaviour in real world. Wilbur learns that Charlotte is a good soul, even though she kills insects, she spends her time and creativity finding ways to save her friend's life. Through this story, children learn that even if other people think, feel, or act in ways that are different from us, they can still be good. The characters in the texts are used to portray different individuals in society which the children may encounter in their environment and through these characters, they learn about individual differences i.e., all people are not the same. From the study, it can be established that children can easily learn and develop their social skills from anthropomorphic characters in children's literature because they see humanity in that anthropomorphic object or animal and are able to transfer that behaviour to their own behaviour in real life. Introducing to young minds those more difficult topics, such as death, can prove to be quite challenging for parents and teachers but White through his work, subtly introduces heavier topics in a brief, yet compelling manner that aids children in understanding about life circumstances.

The aim of this study was to examine how children's literature aids the development of children's social skills. Additionally, the objectives were to describe the role and meaning of anthropomorphism in children's literature using the selected texts and to integrate the impact of anthropomorphised characters on children's behaviour whilst examining how the author uses the anthropomorphised characters to develop children's social skills. The study has demonstrated the benefit of anthropomorphism in children's literature and how discussing societal issues from a non-human perspective enables children to learn and develop their social skills in an acceptable way. The two texts expose children to societal issues which help in shaping their morals giving them opportunities to independently analyse diverse concepts of right and wrong relationships with others in society. Thus, in the analysis of the selected texts, the use of anthropomorphism as a technique to reflect human attitudes does aid the development of children's social skills. In the

present study, effort has been made to examine the differing roles played by the anthropomorphised animals in the selected texts and how it helps in the development of children's social skills. In conclusion from the text analysis, children get to know more about societal issues especially the complex ones through their exposure to anthropomorphized children's literature in which the societal values they acquire from the texts will determine their social behaviour.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

It is hoped that the present study will be useful for further research on children's literature, will contribute to the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature and will also add to the limited body of research on the impact of anthropomorphic texts on children's social skills development. Future research is possible on how the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature contributes to a child's view on animals and the natural world. Also, future studies could focus on how the use of anthropomorphism aids children's reading skills as well as focusing more on impact of early exposure of anthropomorphic texts in either formal or informal settings. The study is restricted by assessing two children's literary texts by the same author and the interpretation of the text was based on my literary analysis only since I was the only reader of the texts which limited any broad interpretation that could have been given by multiple readers. Thus, the limitation of this study is that the texts were read by only one reader.

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