

Painters change people's stereotype of gender through picture books

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Abstract: Many people ask, who stipulates that women must teach their husband and children? Why must men's task be to earn money to support their families? Why can't women be independent? Men can also take care of their families. In today's society, everyone can freely choose their own career and can choose the life they want according to their own wishes. Can we gradually change this situation from childhood through picture books? At present, more and more people begin to pay attention to gender equality and join the ranks of breaking gender stereotypes. The education of gender equality should be started from an early age. Literature and painting are also important media. The colors, pictures, story content and their cooperation in picture books play a key role in breaking gender stereotypes. This paper starts from what is gender stereotype, the reasons for the formation of stereotype, and the influence of stereotype on children, leads to the influence and role of picture books on children, and then analyzes how picture books breaking gender stereotype guide children in terms of color, picture and story.

Key words: stereotype; Picture books; Gender equality

1 Literature review

The abilities acquired by human beings through education and learning in the process of socialization are related to gender norms of behavior, and gender stereotypes are derived from gender role differentiation (Hentschel, Heilman and peus, 2019). People of different genders acquire different work experience in the process of their labor, and people have different requirements for the division of labor, which leads to the norms of gender and role. Gender stereotypes are mainly reflected in life and work. At the age of 3-5, children have gender stereotypes, such as what toys to play and what activities to do (Martin et al., 2012). Gender development is a key part of children's earliest and most important learning experience (Peterson, Sharyl & Lach, Mary 1990). At school, teachers also have stereotypes in the classroom. Katja Schwartz collected 54 teachers and 1358 students in 2015 to study whether teachers have gender stereotypes in reading. The final results show that gender differences in self experience may be due to teachers' fixed stereotype of others.

From the beginning of children's literacy and school, the influence of books on children is increasing, and illustrations play an important role in children's reading comprehension (Feathers, 2012). David A. Anderson and Mykol Hamilton conducted a survey in 200 famous children's picture books, focusing on the representation of father and mother in the family, and studied whether the role of father was stereotyped as relatively lacking or incompetent (Sex Roles, 2005). These contents can clearly feel that there is a stereotype in the understanding of gender in many children's picture books. And through words, children's literature will play a very important role in children's growth (Nikolajeva, 2016).

It is not difficult to see from the winning children's picture books that the description of gender has changed steadily and gradually (Clark, Guilmain, Saucier and Tavarez, 2003). Both authors and artists will convey the correct description of gender awareness through stories and pictures. These promote the society to move towards gender freedom and equality.

2 Picture book analysis

"Clives and his babies" is one of Jessica Spanvol's works. It is a gender enlightenment picture book for younger children. Jessica Spanyol is a children's picture book artist who draws inspiration from childhood memories and the people and things around her. Her works are living and childlike. This is also the reason why the author creates works that break the gender stereotype, so that the children can keep love and authenticity. In this story, a little boy takes care of his doll and shares his love story with his friends. From the perspective of screen color, the story is drawn in bright and rich colors, which are very suitable for young children to read, and rich pictures can attract children's attention. In terms of the skin color of dolls and the skin color of the protagonist's friends, the author also breaks the traditional impression that dolls are all white. The boy played with his dolls, fed them, and shared with his boy friends. So, no matter boys or girls, they need to cultivate how to love, take care of and respect others. Playing with dolls is one of the best ways, so gender cannot limit the choice of toys.

"Fred gets dressed" was created by Peter Brown, an American children's book illustrator, with his own inspiration. He loves his mother, so he was curious about the "paint" her mother painted on her face. When his mother saw it, she smiled and taught him how to make up. The author thought this story was his best childhood memory. He wanted to describe that everyone should receive unconditional love through this sweet story. He hoped that his story could help readers love and support their lives (Brown, 2021). In terms of color, there are only pink, green, black and white. These colors create a very warm atmosphere through the combination of overlap and different transparency. Pink is the color of girls in the traditional stereotype. In the story, pink is combined with the little boy to convey the gender equality of color. In the scene of the boy's home, the author fills it with various green plants, dogs, wood floors, curtains... To create a family with life and warmth, which is suitable for children to liberate their nature and explore freely. The happy little boy gently broke the gender stereotype and

immersed the readers in the story.

“Happy birthday to you, blue kangaroo!” It is one of the most famous “blue kangaroo” series picture books first published by Chichester Clark and Emma in 2006 (Clark, 2020). Chichester Clark, Emma is a famous illustrator and writer of children’s books in Britain. Her stories are very close to children’s lives, and the colors are very bright and bright, which is one of the reasons why her works are loved by children.

What attracts me most about the colors in picture books is that the cover of picture books is composed of pink and blue. In the stereotyped gender perception, these two colors represent boys and girls respectively. At the beginning of the story, the girl wears a pink coat, dress and hair accessories, and the toy kangaroo in her hand is blue. In the first half of the picture book, except for the blue kangaroo, almost all the colors are pink. In the later story, the little girl took off her pink and put on a blue suit. At the end of the story, the picture book ended in blue. I think the change of color proportion in picture books is the key to this story.

In the text of the picture book, the story takes the description of the blue kangaroo’s heart as a clue to promote the development of the plot. The story first emphasizes the close relationship between the blue kangaroo and the little girl. They can become each other. In the story, the blue kangaroo may represent another girl in the little girl’s heart. She is not confident in breaking through the shackles of color. At the beginning of the story, the little girl decided to decorate everything at her birthday party in pink. But blue kangaroo he was not sure he liked the color. When the birthday party started, all the children wore pink clothes, with pink toys and pink gifts. In this environment, the blue kangaroo realized that he was the only blue, and he began to become sad and unsure. When performing magic, the little girl loved the pink rabbit very much, and the blue kangaroo was even more hit. She thought that maybe because he was blue, he should not be liked. When the birthday cake was a pink kangaroo, the blue kangaroo finally decided to turn himself pink. He thought that conformity with the environment might be a way to protect himself and be loved, but he failed. At this time, the little girl saw the blue kangaroo. Her behavior was also giving great support and confidence to another blue kangaroo. She put on blue clothes and said to the Kangaroo: I love blue and I love you. And said to her friend: I really love pink and blue.



Figure1:Clives and his Babies



Figure2:Fred gets dressed



Figure3:Happy birthday to you, blue kangaroo!

This story combines pictures with words. I think words are very powerful here. From the self doubt of the blue kangaroo at the beginning to the firmness given to him by the little girl and the attitude of her friends towards him, we can feel that what the article wants to convey is the equality in color. Girls can like pink or blue, and do not blindly follow the crowd, but find their own shining point.

Although we are in today’s high-tech mass media culture, we are still surrounded by the remains of fairy tales, fairy tales from the marketing of Disney products to the continuation of love ideology, the dual positioning of women and men, and women’s and girls’ obsession with showing the beauty defined by society (Linda, 2004). These are undoubtedly disadvantageous to children. In the process of growing up, children are likely to be trapped in their minds and unable to really express themselves due to the influence of rigid environment. Picture books are one of the ways to break stereotypes, influence children’s understanding of gender traditions, spread positive gender concepts, and let people with similar experiences find resonance and give strength. Picture books can break the stereotype of gender with shapes, colors and stories, but what ultimately breaks the stereotype is people’s real understanding and positive social environment.

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