

lar phase, be so closely related through continual practice and association that an absolutely stable foundation is the result.

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BESSIE J. LANIER.

Service is the rent we pay for the room we occupy.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOUR STANDARD CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

IN MAKING a comparative study of the contents of the standard children's magazines — *St. Nicholas*, *Youth's Companion*, *Child Life* and *John Martin's Book*—from the point of view of how they satisfy the present day child's demands in a magazine, an attempt has been made here to check them up against the magazines shown by surveys to be most read by children, against what surveys have shown to be the reading interests of children, against the effect of the physical make-up of a book on children, and against the established standards of the format of books.

We are all inclined to think back to our youth and to remember the joy with which we received and read *St. Nicholas* and the *Youth's Companion*, and how we could hardly wait for each number to arrive. We feel that they should delight the child of today, also. But when we pick them up now and go over them, do they still seem quite as good to us or do we feel that perhaps they have gone down a little since the old days? Has our point of view changed a little, or is it that we have grown too old to appreciate them? Since good juvenile literature is usually liked by adults also, this last should not be true. And what is the opinion of the child of today as shown by his choice of magazines to read?

There have been several surveys made to show which magazines are most read by children. On 1925 a survey was made by Huber and Chappelle in five different cities in the eastern part of the United States. A questionnaire used in two public schools situated in an industrial neighborhood in Jersey City, in which 659 children, the majority of foreign parents, answered, disclosed as the first three choices from 88 popular magazines, *True Story Magazine*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Boy's Life*. *St.*

Nicholas stood eighteenth, only 10 children out of 659 choosing it. A questionnaire used in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades of a public school in Mamaroneck which consisted of a better class of American-born children with a minority of the foreign element brought 433 responses, giving as first choices *St. Nicholas*, *Boy's Life*, and *American Boy*. *St. Nicholas* was chosen by 97, *Youth's Companion* by 35, *John Martin's Book* by 5, and *True Story Magazine* again stood out as the choice of 22. In this case, the choices were checked up with the I. Q.'s of the children, *Youth's Companion*, *John Martin's Book*, and *St. Nicholas* all being the choice of children above the average in mentality, while *True Story Magazine* was chosen by those with an average I. Q. of 83, showing inferior mentality.

The pupils in a junior high school in Trenton gave as their first three choices *Saturday Evening Post*, *National Geographic*, and *American Boy*. None of the four magazines we are here considering were mentioned at all. In P. S. 43, New York City, grades 4-8 chose *True Story Magazine*, *Popular Science*, and *Boy's Life*, with *St. Nicholas* as tenth choice.

In Milwaukee a more extensive study was made of 7065 boys and girls, 14-18 years of age, in part time schools. These gave as their first three choices:

Boys	Girls
<i>True Story Magazine</i>	<i>True Story Magazine</i>
<i>Popular Mechanics</i>	<i>Colliers</i>
<i>American Magazine</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>

No mention was made of our four magazines at all.

It is significant to notice that in three of these cities *True Story Magazine* stands as first choice, even among children as low as Grades 4-8. It is also interesting to see that only one school gives *St. Nicholas* as first choice, and that that school is composed of better class American children largely.

H. O. Severance in an article in the *School Review*, October, 1926, gives the re-

sults of a questionnaire on voluntary reading in junior and senior high schools in a town in Missouri. The first three choices in the junior high school were:

Boys	Girls
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>American Magazine</i>	<i>American Boy</i>
<i>Boy's Life</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>

The *Youth's Companion* stood eighth. In the senior high school:

Boys	Girls
<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>American Magazine</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Western Stories</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>

None of our four is mentioned.

It is interesting to note that here again none of our four magazines is mentioned, with the exception of *Youth's Companion*, which is eighth choice in the junior high school. We may also note that the *American Magazine* is forging to the front as a favorite in both the junior and senior high schools.

Two surveys of the magazine interests of children were made by Arthur Melville Jordan in 1917 and 1925. The first in the schools of Fayetteville and Stuttgart, Ark., Lawrence, Kans., and Washington, D. C., gives the first three choices as follows:

Boys (9-11)	Girls (9-11)
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Popular Science</i>	<i>Youth's Companion</i>
<i>Youth's Companion</i>	<i>Pictorial Review</i>
	<i>St. Nicholas</i> (4th)

Boys (12-13)	Girls (12-13)
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Popular Mechanics</i>	<i>St. Nicholas</i>
<i>Youth's Companion</i>	<i>Youth's Companion</i>
<i>St. Nicholas</i> (12th)	

Boys (14-16)	Girls (14-16)
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Popular Mechanics</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>
<i>Literary Digest</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>Youth's Companion</i>	<i>Youth's Companion</i>
(4th)	(4th)
	<i>St. Nicholas</i> (11th)

Boys (17-18)	Girls (17-18)
<i>Popular Mechanics</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Literary Digest</i>	<i>Literary Digest</i>
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>
<i>Youth's Companion</i>	<i>Youth's Companion</i>
(10th)	(9th)

The second study, made in 1925, in

Grades 8-11 of the schools of Greensboro and Charlotte, North Carolina, gives the following choices:

Boys (12-13)	Girls (12-13)
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>Boy's Life</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>American Magazine</i>	<i>Good Housekeeping</i>
Boys (14-16)	Girls (14-16)
<i>American Magazine</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>American Boy</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Boy's Life</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>
Boys (17-18)	Girls (17-18)
<i>American Magazine</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>Literary Digest</i>	<i>Literary Digest</i>
<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>

It is rather striking to note the changes in preferences in the two surveys. In the earlier one we see that both *St. Nicholas* and *Youth's Companion* are largely read, but in the survey of 1925 they have dropped entirely out of favor, at least from the first three choices, though we find them figuring as 14th, 15th, 18th, etc.; and we find the *American Magazine* way up in the lead in the preferences of both boys and girls, even as young as 12-13 years of age. The *True Story Magazine* is still being read in 1925, but is not the general favorite it was in the first survey.

One fact which is obvious in going through these surveys is the total absence of *Child Life* from the preferences of children, and the almost total absence of *John Martin's Book*, which appears only once as one of the magazines read by the pupils at the public school at Mamaroneck—only five pupils choosing it here. Both of these magazines are comparatively new, *Child Life* appearing in 1921, and *John Martin's Book* in 1913, but it would seem that a new child's magazine, if really successful, would have become known between then and 1925 when most of these surveys were made. Both of these magazines are for younger children and this probably explains in some degree their absence from the surveys, as in general, the surveys seem to cover children between the ages of 9 and 18, when they are

beginning to read the older magazines. But a glance into the children's rooms in some of the branches of the New York Public Library does not seem to show either of these magazines on the shelves there either.

There have been a number of surveys made of the reading interests of children. A study of Jordan's "Children's Reading Interests" and Green's "Reading For Fun," as well as some briefer magazine articles, gives us an idea of what these interests are.

Both boys and girls read more fiction than anything else and like it better. Boys like three kinds of stories in particular, (1) Stories of war and scouting, (2) stories of school and sports, (3) stories of Boy Scouts. All three of these must be filled with strenuous adventure. There must always be peril overcome and injustice put right. In such stories there must be no person, incident, or thing introduced except to serve the purposes of the plot. One of the canons of children's literature is that there must be no long descriptions of scenery nor discussions concerning society and morals. There must be quick dramatic action, concreteness, adventure, humor, interesting problems. The language must be simple and direct, with the logic of childhood. The author must never "write down," or he is lost. Boys also like "How-to-make-and-do" articles, and short biographical and historical sketches provided they are told as stories. Scientific articles and current events are of increasing interest to the older boy.

Girls' tastes call for fiction dealing with the home, the home and school, school, love, sentiment and emotion, articles on woman's arts, fairy tales, stories with a historical background, some poetry, and for the older girl current events, interesting problems, character studies, and stories of present-day life.

Divided according to grades, children's interests run as follows:

Grades 1, 2, 3—Stories of animals, personification, repetition.

Grades 3, 4, 5—Stories of fairies, supernatural, kindness, faithfulness.

Grades 5, 6—Interesting characters, home life, child life, especially stories about children like himself.

Grades 7, 8—Adventure, school, home, Boy Scouts.

High School—Plot, character study.

Reading interests change at adolescence and stories should suit the reading age.

In Green's survey, an interesting experiment in letting children set up their own standards of what they like was tried with the following results:

- (1) The story must be about what they want to know.
- (2) It must be written in words they can understand.
- (3) It must have accurate facts.
- (4) It must not be overdrawn nor ridiculous, if stating facts.
- (5) It must increase in interest.
- (6) It must be written in good English.

Undesirable qualities in children's literature are abstractness, lack of action, too great length, gloominess, monotony, poor literary style, reiterated emphasis on sex themes.

Dr. Dunn, of Teachers College, found that children are indifferent to the literary style of the stories they read. Therefore they should be supplied with stories in a good literary style. Providing the content pleases, a taste for good style may thus early be established.

In checking the four magazines considered against the reading interests of children, there are several points to be considered. But first the comparative circulation of the four is interesting. *St. Nicholas* celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 1923, and now has a circulation of 55,303. *Youth's Companion* celebrated its one hundredth birthday this year and has a circulation of 276,875. *Child*

Life, established in 1921 has a circulation of 131,539. *John Martin's Book*, established in 1913 has a circulation of 31,844. *True Story Magazine*, established in 1919, has a circulation of 2,111,574! These figures are significant in showing the tremendous reach of the *True Story Magazine*.

Examining a copy of *St. Nicholas*, we find school stories such as "Johnny's Brother," a story of a thrilling baseball game, adventure stories such as "Racing 'Fancy'," "B'ars," an article on animals in the Yellowstone, a story of a girl winning a tennis championship against great odds, an article by Dallas Lore Sharp on animals, four continued stories of adventure or school life, articles on golf, swimming, scientific articles on television, the new comet, current events, radio department, St. Nicholas League, Letterbox, riddles, puzzles. Two of these stories are by well known children's writers, Dallas Lore Sharp and by E. B. and A. A. Knipe. Ralph Barbour is another well known writer of school stories who often writes for *St. Nicholas*. There are many illustrations, some showing much life and action, though small, but no colored ones to grip the mind or eye in an outstanding way.

In the *Youth's Companion*, we find stories for the older boy and girl; a story of college life, a story of Indians and a girl's heroism, a continued story for girls, a biographical story by C. A. Stephens who has written for the *Youth's Companion* for years, a biographical sketch, an article on railroading as a profession, a page of current events, puzzle questions, the Youth's Companion Lab, how to make a tin water scooter, a page of fashions for girls, and the Children's Page with a fairy tale for the little ones. There are also a few puzzles. There are some illustrations, but nothing which stands out particularly either in the content or the illustrations.

John Martin's Book is called the "Magazine for Young People." It has also a sec-

tion called "Johnny, Jr." for the little folk. The cover design of this number is by Ruth Prettyman and is a bright blue and orange with white mice jumping across it. Some of the stories, as "Cnut the Dane," are written for the younger child, very simply told. There is an article on the first railroad engine, a short scientific article simply told, two or three poems mostly by John Martin himself, a short article about Westinghouse told as a story, a story about a dog for older boys and girls, camp stories, plant inquiries, a how-to-make article, picture puzzles, a poem and story in big print for the beginning reader, also the Letter-Box, and pages to cut out and color. It is attractively gotten up and should interest the child of about 6-10 years of age. It is small in size and easy for a child to handle.

Child Life is larger in size and limp, with front cover done in brilliant color by Hazel Frazee. It has several other delightful illustrations in color: a story for the older child about a Fourth of July celebration, another episode of a small boy who helps General Washington, an article on patriotic songs, a story for girls, an article on Nuremberg, a continued story about dolls by Margery W. Bianco, a story about Brownies and a poem for the little child, *Child Life Kitchen*, a picture puzzle, *Who's Who in the Zoo*, *Good Citizens League*, how-to-make bows and arrows, *Star Study*, *Your dress and Dolly's*, cut-outs, *Book friends*, *Joy Givers Club*. This magazine is attractively gotten up, and contains stories and pictures which should interest the child of about 6 to 10 years. Children of this age like to read about other children, a fact which is well taken care of in both *John Martin's Book* and in *Child Life*. Most young children do not like continued stories, according to the Green study, because they do not like to wait to find out what will happen next. Yet all of these periodicals for children have continued stories. There is a great deal of advertising matter in *Child*

Life which is interspersed with the stories, and one rather wonders if the breaking up of the stories in this way does not detract from their interest to the young child. Looking over several copies of this magazine, one also wonders if perhaps this magazine would not appeal more to the adult as being what he thinks a child should like, than it does to the child himself, unless it were read to him.

St. Nicholas, in an article celebrating its fiftieth birthday in 1923, set forth its own ideals. Clean, wholesome fun and youthful jollity for all ages, absorbing stories, helpful historical and artistic sketches, with nonsense rhymes and genuine poetry, entertainment fitted to the tastes and wholesome development of boys and girls these are its aims. It uses the finest types of boys and girls as its examples, builds character, cultivates the imagination in beneficent and profitable directions, shows how to use brain and hand, keeps pace with world events, and prepares for life as it is. Many of our notable writers have been proud to write for *St. Nicholas*—notably Tennyson, Longfellow, Alcott, Kipling, Wiggin, Davis; and famous artists—Rackham, Parrish, Gibson, Pyle—have contributed illustrations. In reading over the wonderful record of its contributors of the past, it is rather significant that we do not find many famous names of either artists or writers in its issues of today and no serials which look as though they might become children's classics. While its ideals may still be as high as ever, are not its stories falling off in literary value and becoming commonplace? And might not this same criticism apply equally well to the *Youth's Companion* of today?

It is probable, too, that the change in the environment of the great mass of children and the increase of the foreign element in the schools of today from that of twenty or thirty years ago accounts largely for the change in choice of magazines as shown in these surveys. While we can remember in

our youth the eagerness with which both *St. Nicholas* and the *Youth's Companion* were awaited and read from cover to cover, these surveys show that even in the grades these magazines have fallen from first place in every school but one—and it is significant that that one is a school composed of the better class of American children, with a minority of the foreign element. In schools where there is a large foreign element, and the children come from poor homes, we find the *True Story Magazine* far in the lead. The *True Story Magazine* consists of a collection of ten to twenty unsigned stories written in the first person as actual experiences, and dealing with the most rudimentary emotions in the most rudimentary English. It is illustrated by posed photographs—just to prove that it happened in real life! The paper it is printed on is cheap and the illustrations are cheap rotogravures. The stories consist of thickly plied tragedy that ends happily, consummate poverty that becomes wealth, ill-gotten luxury that finally sees its error and changes to simplicity, and misguided virtue which may drag itself through black sin but comes forth shining and triumphant in the end. The wicked are punished and the righteous win every time in the end; hence it boasts of its wholesome influence on life. It is stupid, revolting trash, putting reiterated emphasis on sex themes, but what about its lure for and influence on the curious adolescent mind, the inferior mentality, and the foreign element? The home background influences reading largely and poor habits of reading are chiefly due to poor home conditions. The child is apt to read the magazine which he finds in the home or in the hands of his companions; an attitude of derision for the old standards in literature and the chase for the sensational which he finds in his elders will be aped by him. Then, too, there is a tendency to demand the same sort of thing found in the movies—a few vivid flashes of exciting action with little to linger over. We

cannot expect to find in children from uncultivated homes the mental background to appreciate good literature and to choose it in place of the exciting trash of the *True Story Magazine*.

The Jordan surveys show us that in 1925 the *American Magazine* had become the favorite even among the younger readers in the schools of Greensboro and Charlotte, North Carolina. The *True Story Magazine* is read somewhat, but the children in the North Carolina towns surveyed are of a different class, probably of better mentality and lacking the immigrant background. The preference for the *American Magazine* indicates that the child of today prefers a more grown-up, sophisticated magazine to either *St. Nicholas* or *Youth's Companion*. There is a challenge here to the magazines written for young people. They are not fulfilling the demands of youth or they would not be relegated to fourteenth place or worse.

As to format, certain standards for books have been set up which should apply equally for magazines. The paper should be pure white, without gloss, and thick enough so that it cannot be seen through. The type should be large enough to be legible and should be well leaded and properly spaced. The size of the type depends on the age of the child. It should be large (24 point) for the primary child, and should gradually decrease in size (18 point for the 3rd and 4th grade). Highly colored pictures may cause eye-strain but this is counter-balanced by the securing of interest and attention. The small-sized book is best, as large books have to be rested on something at an angle which lessens the legibility.

Checked up against these standards, we find that *St. Nicholas* meets them all fairly well. The paper is white with no gloss, the type is clear, the size of the book is average. *Youth's Companion* does not meet them so well. The paper is white, but is cheap looking and so thin that the type shows through.

The type is too small to be really clear and easy reading. It is too large and limp to be easily held while being read. *John Martin's Book* is not printed on white paper, but on a pale buff. The type is clear and of varying sizes for the older or younger child. Some of the pictures are colored and attractive for a child. It is a small, stiff covered, compact book, and easy to hold. *Child Life* is printed on white paper in a beautifully clear type, but the size of the magazine is too large for the small child. The colored illustrations are well done.

Bamberger has concluded that children's choices are influenced by certain factors in the physical make-up of books. The little child, generally speaking, likes a small book. A bright-colored cover is an attraction—preferably blue, red, or yellow with bright gilding. Titles influence the child in his selection. Numerous illustrations, highly colored, appeal to the child—as much as 25 per cent. of pictures is best for little children. The child likes pictures in which there is humor and action, pictures which tell the story. A wide margin—at least an inch—should be used, with few lines to the page for the younger child.

Comparing *St. Nicholas* with these standards, we find a bright cover, usually in blues, reds, or yellows. The title itself with its visions of Christmas should attract the child. There are numerous illustrations in black and white, small but filled with action and story telling power. The margins are narrow. *St. Nicholas*, on the whole, checks up fairly well, but more might be done to make its illustrations attractive. *Youth's Companion* is too large; the cover and all other illustrations are in black and white, and are small and not especially interesting. The title has the virtue of long familiarity as an attraction. The magazine has narrow margins, and altogether does not check up very highly with the standards proposed by Bamberger. *John Martin's Book* is small in size, the cover is bright in blues and reds, it has numerous attractive

illustrations, some in colors and full of action and story telling power. The margin is narrow. One would not think that the name itself would appeal particularly to the child, but on the whole the magazine checks up rather well. *Child Life* is too large, but the cover is bright in reds, blues and greens, the illustrations, some of which are in color, are beautifully done, full of action and of interest for the child. The margins are wide enough. The title should appeal to the child since he likes stories about other children. This magazine, then, checks up well with Bamberger's requirements except in size.

In conclusion, then, we may say that these four standard children's magazines, *St. Nicholas*, *Youth's Companion*, *Child Life* and *John Martin's Book* have been shown by surveys to stand far from the first choice of the children of today for pleasure reading. That this is due chiefly to the change in environment, home training and ideas of the great mass of children in the public schools is probable. But the challenge to these magazines which should be the joy of our children of today stands clear. More attractive physical make-up, stories of greater literary value, greater dramatic action, and more compelling interest, and a closer approach to the ideals *St. Nicholas* has set for itself may result in a return of these magazines to the first place in our children's hearts.

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HELEN S. CARPENTER

ACCIDENT PREVENTION

A Sixth-Grade Unit in "Safety First"

A BOY was seriously injured by an automobile while on his way to school one morning. The boys and girls were all eager to talk about the accident during opening exercises. A few questions from the teacher about the causes of accidents, traffic regulations, and the work being done to prevent accidents, brought a variety of answers from the class. There were many things about which they were in doubt. By the end of the period the class had decided that they would like to know more about accident prevention and help in the effort to decrease accidents.

The following unit of work gives a record of their efforts.

I. What the Children Did

- A. They decided to help in an effort to decrease accidents.
- B. They studied statistics to find the causes of most accidents on:
 1. Highways
 2. Railroad crossings
 3. Street cars
- C. They listed preventable accidents and their causes.
- D. They studied daily papers and reported on accidents occurring each day

and decided to what extent they were preventable.

- E. They tried to find ways of preventing such accidents.
- F. They found out what organizations were making conscious efforts to decrease accidents.
- G. They made posters calling attention to things that cause accidents.
- H. They placed the posters in the school building in conspicuous places and in down-town shop-windows.
- I. They wrote articles for the school paper calling attention to safety work.
- J. They wrote original stories, in which some preventable accident occurred or was prevented.
- K. They formed a Safety Club, each member taking the Safety Pledge.
- L. The Club arranged an original program on "Safety First" for assembly.
- M. They set aside one section of the bulletin for:
 1. Cartoons pertaining to accidents, both copied and original
 2. Clippings from newspaper telling of recent accidents
- N. They wrote Safety Songs and entered the best song written in the Safety Song Contest conducted by the National Safety Council.

II. What the Children Learned

- A. They learned the following facts about accidents:
 1. Thirty per cent of all fatal automobile accidents happen to children of school age or under.
 2. Every six minutes someone is killed by accident.
 3. More than one thousand persons were killed on the streets of New York last year.
 4. The total dead and wounded in the American army overseas was only 275,984, while there were 5,700 children and 13,300 adults killed