Children's Literature & Culture

Explore the golden age of children's literature and chart the evolution from chapbooks to the 'book beautifuls' of the early twentieth century.
Founded in 1812, the American Antiquarian Society’s mission is to conserve the printed record of the United States. Home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of early North American books, its children’s literature collection is, within its scope, the best in the world. From the sober prose of children’s religious tracts to cheerful color printed images of children at play, the collection chronicles the modern emergence of literature for children and youth in the Transatlantic world.

These documents chart how society evolved and how the perception of children within it changed over time.

Alongside the focus on America, this resource includes foreign language publications and European publishers, enabling research across the globe. The diverse documents in the collection highlight how children’s literature crossed the Atlantic, taking renowned international writers and illustrators to an American audience.

MATERIAL TYPES
- Alphabet and object books
- Pamphlets
- Pop-up books
- Printed books and chapbooks
- Sheet music
- Sketches, drawings, and paintings
- Stereo photographs
- Toys and games

HIGHLIGHTS
- Key titles from the McLoughlin Brothers Collection and from competing publishers
- First and early editions of classic titles from authors such as Daniel Defoe, Lewis Carroll, Louisa May Alcott, and Hannah More
- Original correspondence, drawings, sketches, and watercolours from the McLoughlin Art Archive
- Lithographic images and proofs from the Louis Prang Chromolithography Collection
- Toys and games, including board games, card games and booklets, paper dolls, and pop-up books
- An accompanying gallery of images from the Winterthur Museum & Library’s Grossman Ephemera Collection, featuring advertisements, books, toys, and paper dolls

CONSULTANT EDITORS
Laura Wasowicz
American Antiquarian Society
Robin Bernstein
Harvard University
Victoria Ford Smith
University of Connecticut
Matthew Grenby
Newcastle University
Lauren B. Hewes
American Antiquarian Society
Zoe Jaques
University of Cambridge