

Metaphors about death in American children's literature: Effects and educational values

Vi Thanh Le Trinh*, Gam Pham Hong Vo, Duong Thi Thuy Nguyen, Anh Tam Tran, Thao Phuong Bui



Use your smartphone to scan this QR code and download this article

Student, Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNUHCM, Vietnam, Student

Correspondence

Vi Thanh Le Trinh, Student, Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNUHCM, Vietnam, Student

Email: thanhlevi.203@gmail.com

History

- Received: 26-6-2024
- Revised: 19-12-2024
- Accepted: 20-3-2025
- Published Online: 31-3-2025

DOI :

<https://doi.org/10.32508/stdjssh.v9i1.1032>



Copyright

© VNUHCM Press. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.



ABSTRACT

Metaphor is often regarded as a powerful cognitive and literary tool for articulating intricate concepts in more relatable terms. Nonetheless, there is a gap in the existing literature regarding metaphors about death in children's books, despite the broader interest in death as a theme in children's literature. Therefore, this research investigates the metaphors about death embodied in 20th-century American children's literature. Our specific purpose is to examine the effects of metaphors about death on different elements of fiction and explore the educational values they impart to young readers. The study employs a thorough textual analysis of American children's literary works as its primary methodology, alongside the thematic analysis, analytic-synthetic approaches, and systematic methods. We investigated the metaphors about death in six American children's fictional works published in the 20th century, namely *The Big Wave* (1948) by Pearl S. Buck, *Beat the Turtle Drum* (1968) by Constance C. Greene, *Annie and the Old One* (1971) by Miska Miles, *A Taste of Blackberries* (1973) by Doris Buchanan Smith, *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) by Katherine Paterson, and *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages* (1982) by Leo Buscaglia. The key findings reveal that the metaphors about death contribute to clarifying and deepening characterization, as well as reflecting the stories' cultural settings within the analyzed works. The study also mentions the educational value of these metaphors, demonstrating their capacity to help young readers grapple with a challenging topic like death and construct their knowledge and worldviews. These findings underscore the power of the metaphorical language in bridging the gap between the abstract concepts and children's comprehension, offering insights into how authors can sensitively approach difficult subjects while imparting profound life lessons.

Key words: metaphor, American literature, children's literature, death

INTRODUCTION

In the study of language and literature, metaphor is recognized as a powerful device that not only enhances the clarity and expressiveness of language, but also shapes our thoughts, emotions, and actions. In short, metaphor is fundamental to our understanding of abstract concepts¹. Because of its popularity in different discourses and its unique nature, metaphor has become the subject of many studies, from its aesthetic role to its cognitive linguistics aspect²⁻⁴. Works on metaphor in literature have been "highly idiographic" and lack "generalization about metaphor use across texts, authors, periods, schools and genres" [4, p.82]. Although the effects of metaphors are generally understood, their effects on fictional elements have received limited attention in previous research. As for its educational values, metaphors are generally valued for their ability to facilitate learning and understanding.

The theme of death is prevalent across literary genres and eras, yet its portrayal in children's literature remains a complex phenomenon. With the rise of the

death awareness movement in the 1960s, American children's literature began to pay more attention to the theme of death, depicting strong emotions such as a sense of despair, extreme grief, and uncertainty surrounding the characters' experiences⁵. This sparked an interest in how authors can deliver such a complex and sensitive topic in a delicate and relatable way, particularly in the literary devices they employ, including metaphors⁶.

This research attempts to look into the metaphors about death in the 20th-century American children's literature, specifically their effects on different elements of fiction and the potential educational values for children readers. We argue that these metaphors serve a dual purpose: they enhance fictional elements while providing children with accessible concepts to understand and cope with the abstract notion of death. This study hopes to contribute to the current body of literature about how sensitive topics are addressed in children's literature and may inform future approaches to discussing death with young readers. Our primary research method is the textual anal-

Cite this article : Le Trinh V T, Vo G P H, Nguyen D T T, Tran A T, Bui T P. **Metaphors about death in American children's literature: Effects and educational values.** *Sci. Tech. Dev. J. - Soc. Sci. Hum.* 2025; 9(1):2894-2901.

ysis, along with thematic analysis and other common methods for interpreting literature such as the analytic-synthetic method and systematic method. Our subjects in this research study are limited to 6 children's books that are all fiction: *The Big Wave* (1948) by Pearl S. Buck, *Beat the Turtle Drum* (1968) by Constance C. Greene, *Annie and the Old One* (1971) by Miska Miles, *A Taste of Blackberries* (1973) by Doris Buchanan Smith, *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) by Katherine Paterson, and *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages* (1982) by Leo Buscaglia.

METAPHOR - A FIGURE OF SPEECH AND A REFLECTION OF COGNITIVE THINKING

Definition of metaphor

Various definitions have been made regarding the nature of metaphors. To Knowles and Moon⁷, metaphor is "the use of language to refer to something other than what it was originally applied to, or what it 'literally' means, to suggest some resemblance or make a connection between the two things". Holyoak and Stamenkovic⁸ defined metaphor as the use of language to "describe one thing in terms of something else that is conceptually very different". Perhaps the most prominent definition was by Lakoff and Johnson¹ who stated that metaphor is a reflection of the conceptual system in human cognitive thinking. They highlighted that "human thought processes are largely metaphorical" [1, p.6] and proposed the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT).

A conceptual metaphor comprises two conceptual domains, where one target domain is understood in terms of the other source domain. The source domain is typically a familiar, concrete concept rooted in our physical experiences, while the target domain is more abstract and less familiar. The elements of the source domain are systematically mapped onto the corresponding elements in the target domain, facilitating a more accessible and comprehensive understanding of the abstract target concept. The three fundamental types of conceptual metaphor are the orientational, ontological, and structural metaphors, distinguished by the "peculiar cognitive functions" [7, p.100] they perform. CMT challenges the previous classical approach, which viewed metaphor as merely a feature of figurative language and considered it to serve primarily decorative functions⁹. It has significantly impacted metaphor studies, garnering widespread support from various authors and disciplines^{3,10,11}.

Effects of metaphors on literary works

Metaphor is seen as "one of the most important rhetorical devices that enrich narrative discourse or literary work"¹², being a vital stylistic strategy to boost rhetorical meaning. Metaphors encourage authors to use stronger analogies and descriptions, not only making complex ideas vivid and lively⁹ but also leading to richer aesthetic experiences for readers¹³. Nevertheless, existing research on the effects of metaphor on fictional elements is limited, possibly due to the vastness and scattered focus of the topic. Some studies that do exist mostly concentrate on the characterization of characters within a particular literary work^{14,15}.

Metaphors are also powerful communication tools, effective for both explanation and connection. They clarify complex ideas¹⁶ and tap into emotions, creating a stronger bond between the speaker/writer and listener/reader^{17,18}. This emotional connection is particularly powerful in literature, where metaphors can act as a bridge between the writer's unique perspective and the reader's understanding. While some metaphors may be new expressions of familiar concepts, others can be entirely new creations, offering a fresh lens through which to view the world¹⁹. In essence, metaphors bridge the gap in understanding on two levels: one for clarity and another for emotional connection.

Educational values of metaphors about death

As a fundamental cognitive tool, metaphor helps people grasp complex ideas by linking them to familiar concepts^{20,21}. This is especially useful for young readers whose life experiences are still limited. By offering relatable visuals and representations, metaphors provide young readers with their needed "software"²² to better conceptualize profound concepts. Beyond this, metaphors can even spark creativity and critical thinking by encouraging people to see things from new angles²⁰. This can be extended into educational settings, as metaphors help students understand concepts and acquire new ways to discuss them²³. Building upon the broader educational benefits of metaphors, the death-related metaphors reveal their capacity to evoke profound philosophical reflections and discussions about mortality. Llewellyn²⁴ argued that metaphors offer a way to express complex emotions about death using imaginative rationality. Roberts²⁵ also noted that the metaphorical language suggests the philosophical and educational exploration of death, provoking profound questions about human existence, values, and knowledge.

Death in children's literature - A statement of research gap

The presentation of death in children's literature changed significantly in the latter half of the 20th century⁵. With World War II, children were exposed to the harsh realities of mortality directly and profoundly⁵. Advancements in psychology heightened the awareness of children's emotional lives, while American experts on grief counseling, such as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Rabbi Earl Grollman, asserted the importance of discussing death through influential works like Kubler-Ross's "On Death and Dying" (1969). Therefore, children's books at this time began to introduce diverse situations and characters related to death, offering young readers the opportunity to explore and learn to cope with loss and grief. Death and grief were discussed as a recurrent theme in children's realistic fiction^{26,27}, with one study in 1977 identifying 111 titles addressing these topics²⁸. The treatment of death in children's fiction showed death ceased to be depicted as a form of punishment, a warning, or a taboo subject, but rather as an inevitable part of life^{5 29,30}.

Research has underscored the necessity of discussing death with children and presents children's literature as an effective means to do so^{31,32}. Previous studies explored death in children's literature in a variety of ways, including its changes over time, connection to biological understanding, spirituality, or cultural elements expressed³³⁻³⁷. However, limited research focuses on literary devices, specifically the metaphors portraying death. Although metaphors are generally agreed to enhance the impact of language in children's novels^{22,38}, the research on the metaphors about death in children's literature remains scarce. Recent literature includes Prokopová's examination, which highlights common metaphors in three children's picture books with death as "sleep" or a "journey", and Grilli's exploration of death as a metaphoric dimension in children's literature classics^{39,40}. This is worth noticing, as the indirectness in their nature suggests metaphors about death may be an appropriate approach to introduce mortality to young minds. Our research aims to examine the metaphors about death in American children's literature, to better understand their role within fictional narratives and their educational value for the reader. Particularly, we explore their effects on different elements of fiction and assess their educational value in engaging young readers with the topic of mortality. Our study focuses on the American children's literature around the latter half of the 20th century that addresses death,

further restricted to fiction that features human mortality. These titles were chosen by consulting bibliotherapy sources^{41,42} and frequent citations in scholarly discussions on death in children's literature^{5,34,40}. While not exhaustive, this selection allows for an in-depth analysis of how authors approach this sensitive topic for young readers, balancing the need for a focused study with the constraints of time and resources. We hope this research will facilitate a deeper comprehension of metaphors in literature, while also contributing to the growing body of research in children's literature, specifically on the portrayals of challenging subjects such as death. Concurrently, the insights gained from this study may be of assistance to future practices in communicating with children about death through literature.

EFFECTS OF METAPHORS ABOUT DEATH ON THE FICTIONAL ELEMENTS

Metaphors clarify and deepen characterization

In the examined fictional works, the most prominent characteristics observed in the characters using metaphors about death are their experienced and sympathetic nature. In *The Big Wave* by Pearl S. Buck⁴³, Kino's father answers his son's question about death profoundly:

"What is death?" Kino asked.

"Death is the great gateway," Kino's father said. His face was not at all sad. Instead, it was quiet and happy. "The gateway—where?" Kino asked again.

Kino's father smiled. "Can you remember when you were born?... You wanted to stay just where you were in the warm, dark house of the unborn. But the time came to be born, and the gate of life opened."

"Did I know it was the gate of life?" Kino asked.

"You did not know anything about it and so you were afraid of it," his father replied.

"You are only afraid because you don't know anything about death..."

[⁴³, pp.32-33]

The father uses the metaphor "Death is the great gateway" to suggest that death is a transition to another realm or existence, indicating that it is not an end but a gateway to somewhere beyond. In combination with the metaphor of "the gate of life", he explained death as an inseparable part of life and encouraged his son to face it courageously. These metaphors reveal the father's profound reflection on mortality and his compassion for others.

Additionally, metaphors about death portray a character's emotional response to death. In Greene's *Beat the Turtle Drum*⁴⁴, Kate and Joss were loving sisters until Joss died tragically. When someone who did not know about Joss's unexpected death asks Kate about Joss's presence, Kate initially responds "She's not here" [⁴⁴, p.100]. The phrase metaphorically represents Joss's absence but implies it is contemporary, not eternal. Death is metaphorically imagined as a place separated from the living. Kate's profound grief leads her to conceal the harsh truth, clinging to the belief that Joss is "not here" but rather somewhere else, expecting Joss to return. The metaphorical expression highlights Kate's sisterly love and her struggles to accept Joss's passing. In this case, the employed metaphor works as a euphemism for death, comforting Kate and helping her cope with her beloved sister's tragic event more calmly.

Metaphors also capture the characters' shifting experiences toward death, indicating their transition into maturity. In *The Big Wave* by Pearl S. Buck, Jiya commented early in the story: "the sea is our enemy". This implies the DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY metaphor, and the death is embodied by Jiya as being a powerful and terrible entity. This metaphor indicates a negative perspective and avoidance of death, placing life and death in opposition. However, Jiya later eventually perceives himself and death on an equal footing without fear:

"I have opened my house to the ocean", Jiya said. "If ever the big wave comes back, I shall be ready. I face it. I am not afraid."

[⁴³, p.57]

The verbs "be ready" and "face" demonstrate Jiya's newfound courage and acceptance of death. Death is no longer avoided but accepted and regarded as inevitable. Regarding the storyline, at this point, Jiya decides to continue his family's fishing tradition and live by the ocean, despite the threat of a tsunami that once took his family. This metaphorical expression captures Jiya's transition into maturity, from fear and avoidance to bravery and resilience.

Generally, metaphors about death bring readers closer to the characters and reveal a more profound understanding of the literary works. Our observation aligns with Semino and Swindlehurst's¹⁴ who argue metaphors can reflect an individual's worldview. Different metaphors reveal unique aspects of characters' thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

Metaphors reflect on the stories' cultural settings

Metaphors can be considered the influential language devices reflecting the cultural settings of a story. In

Miska Miles' *Annie and the Old One*⁴⁵, the narrative revolves around a Navajo family living in the southwestern United States. For the Navajo people, the earth holds the immense significance in explaining the concepts of life and death, rooted in the belief in its sacredness⁴⁶. The use of the metaphor "go to Mother Earth" to suggest death is prominent and recurring throughout the story. On one hand, this metaphor refers to the physical act of the dead body being buried in the ground; on the other hand, it carries a much deeper meaning. The metaphor conceptualizes death as a return to a primordial state. This can be further clarified by how the grandmother describes Earth as the origin and end of all life:

"Earth, from which good things come for the living creatures on it. Earth, to which all creatures finally go."

[⁴⁵, p.41]

The grandmother indicates dying through the verb "go" and the adverb "finally," pointing out that the destination for this motion is Earth. In this way, the metaphor illustrates the Navajos' belief that death is a spiritual reunion and reintegration with Mother Earth's perpetual cycle of existence. Similarly, Pearl S. Buck's *The Big Wave* is set in coastal Japan, a disaster-prone area to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and especially, tsunamis. The novel portrays the sea as both a source of life and a potential source of deathly dangers, reflecting the coastal Japanese cultural view of death. In one passage, the tsunami's attack is vividly personified with human-like qualities:

"In a few seconds, before their eyes, the wave had grown and come nearer and nearer, higher and higher. The air was filled with its roar and shout. It rushed over the flat still waters of the ocean and before Jiya could scream again, it reached the village and covered its fathoms deep in swirling wild water, green laced with fierce white foam. The wave ran up the mountainside until the knoll where the castle stood was an island."

[⁴³, p.21-22]

The wave's immense power to engulf and devastate the village is associated with the ferocious and indiscriminate nature of death. Through this, death is depicted as a powerful and frightening entity - a force of nature that must be respected and feared. This captures the coastal Japanese cultural perception of death as a powerful and unpredictable presence, as Asquith and Kalland mentioned⁴⁷.

Generally, the cultural settings of the novel can also be realized through metaphorical expressions just as Lakoff and Johnson¹ mentioned, metaphors are

deeply rooted in our thoughts, actions, and daily language. They are not merely linguistic devices but deeply embedded within cultural contexts. Culture shapes how people understand abstract ideas and therefore influences the conceptual metaphors employed.

EDUCATIONAL VALUES FROM THE METAPHORS ABOUT DEATH IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children's ability to deal with harsh topics

Most of the metaphors about death in the examined works explain the meaning of death in positive viewpoints, whether as a journey, a transformation, or a natural part of life's cycle. These representations offer children a means to conceptualize and comprehend death without feeling overwhelmed. In one story, *The Big Wave* by Pearl S. Buck, the father character summarizes:

"Life is always stronger than death"

[⁴³, p.30]

The metaphor illustrates the powerful effects of life that extend beyond physical existence. While the father's dialogue directly addresses death, the metaphor emphasizes the strength of life rather than solely dwelling on the finality of death. It shifts the attention toward the positive aspects of life, such as the connections, experiences, and legacies that an individual leaves behind. This can provide children with a sense of resilience and comfort, reminding them of the positive memories and meaningful legacy their loved ones left. Likewise, another example can be found in *Beat the Turtle Drum* by Constance C. Greene:

"Dying was just a beginning"

[⁴⁴, p.14]

The metaphor suggests that death is a new beginning, implying a continuation of existence beyond death, whether in the form of an afterlife, a spiritual realm, or the memories and impact a person leaves behind. This perspective can provide children with a sense of hope and reassurance that death is not the end of a person's existence. By emphasizing the potential for growth and new experiences beyond death, the metaphor can help children approach the topic with curiosity and a sense of possibility rather than fear.

In conclusion, metaphors can aid children with an optimistic perspective regarding death. Through metaphors, the nuanced and profound meanings of death can be conveyed less directly, thus mitigating the potential emotional distress when children engage with sensitive topics. Our findings align with prior research, including Nadeau⁴⁸ and Spall et al.⁴⁹,

which suggests that metaphors offer a less intimidating means to discuss loss and propose ways of coping with it. The inclusion of metaphors, particularly in discussing challenging subjects, can be instrumental for young readers in dealing with a harsh topic like death.

Children's ability to self-construct their knowledge and worldview

Metaphors about death in children's literature can also serve as tools for children to actively construct their own understanding of this complex concept. By relating death to familiar concepts and experiences, these metaphors provide children with new insights, enabling them to build a more comprehensive worldview. One example can be found in *Leo Buscaglia's The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*⁵⁰ which features an analogy between death and the changing of seasons:

"We all fear what we don't know, Freddie. It's natural," Daniel reassured him. "Yet, you were not afraid when Spring became Summer. You were not afraid when Summer became Fall. They were natural changes. Why should you be afraid of the season of death?"

[⁵⁰, p.25]

The cyclical pattern of the seasons, from spring to summer to autumn to winter, mirrors the natural cycle of life, where individuals are born, grow, age, and eventually pass away. Through the parallels between death and the seasons in nature, young readers can gain a deeper understanding of death's inevitability. This comparison helps them construct their new perception of death by recognizing the natural order of life.

Similarly, in *A Taste of Blackberries* by Doris Buchanan Smith⁵¹, the concept of death is also depicted based on a familiar phenomenon - ripples on the water:

"Someone said that ripples go on forever and ever, even when you can't see them anymore."

[⁵¹, p.45]

The phrase "ripples go on forever and ever" (p. 45) depicts the tranquil movement of water as a metaphorical expression of the continuous flow of life. Similar to how ripples persist indefinitely, a person's legacy of impacts and essence lasts long after their physical presence fades. By using the familiar image of ripples to convey the idea of one's essence transcending death, the metaphor encourages children to contemplate the enduring influence of life even after death. In the same story, metaphors also provide a simpler and more accessible way to experience the depth of loss and grief. In the expression "The heaviness of

Jamie's death was on me" [51, p.55], death is visualized as a burden, or a heavy thing that "I" have to bear. By associating with the familiar concept of heaviness, the metaphor encapsulates the profound guilt after a loved one's death. Consequently, children can actively relate grief to their sensory-motor experiences, enabling them to construct their understanding of death and its emotional impacts on individuals and communities.

Another educational value is exposing children to different cultural perspectives. As previously discussed, metaphors often use the significant concepts and images that can reflect the cultural settings of a story. In *Annie and the Old One*, the metaphorical expression "Earth, to which all creatures finally go." [45, p.41] introduces the Native American view of death as a return. Similarly, in Pearl S. Buck's *The Big Wave*, the metaphors about death reveal the Japanese's respect and fear toward the sea. From these metaphors, children could gain the insights into distinctive cultural perspectives and rituals on death, eventually developing their sense of cultural identity while appreciating other cultures.

Finally, diverse metaphors about death in children's literature offer young readers a spectrum of perspectives on mortality. For example, Pearl S. Buck's *The Big Wave* emphasizes death inevitability and inseparability with life. Miska Miles's *Annie and the Old One* conceptualizes death as a return to one's originality, while Constance C. Greene's *Beat the Turtle Drum* describes death as a permanent departure from the physical world. Such exposure fosters children's critical thinking and supports the construction of personal philosophies regarding mortality. Moreover, varied linguistic constructs surrounding death in these narratives contribute to children's metaphorical competence, which, as Vosniadou⁵² posited, is intrinsically linked to broader cognitive development.

CONCLUSION

Through six 20th-century American fictional works with the theme of death, this research set out to explore the metaphors about death in children's literature in two aspects: their effects on the fictional elements and educational values for children.

Regarding the first aspect, this study has found that the metaphors about death generally enhance characterization and reflect cultural settings within fiction. The results consolidate prior studies that metaphors can clarify and deepen characterization, while also offering new insights into their role in depicting the cultural settings of a story.

On the educational values, we underscore metaphors about death in helping children navigate such harsh

subjects, as well as to self-construct their knowledge and worldview. By bridging the gap between abstract concepts and familiar experiences, metaphors make difficult topics like death more comprehensible and less intimidating for young readers to explore. Notably, our analysis finds that metaphors about death in children's literature mostly emphasize the meaning and positive insights of death, fostering understanding and acceptance rather than fear.

Given the theoretical focus of this study, necessitated by research constraints, future research should incorporate empirical studies with children for deeper insights into the educational value. Additionally, our findings note inadequate data for the effects on other elements of fiction rather than characterization and settings, suggesting further investigations for a comprehensive insight into metaphors about death in children's literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We say thank Dr. Pham Thi Hong An - University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City National University - for her comments and guidance in helping us complete this article.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Conceptual Metaphor Theory = CMT

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

All authors contributed to the design and implementation of the research and to the writing of the first manuscript draft. V.T.L.T. took the lead in revising and editing the manuscript after receiving reviewers' feedbacks. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

1. Lakoff G, Johnson ML. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago London: University of Chicago Press; 1980.
2. Gibbs JR. *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. 2008;
3. Kövecses Z, Benczes R. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press; 2010.
4. Dorst AG. *Metaphor in Fiction: Language, Thought and Communication*. Amsterdam; 2011.
5. Johnson J. Historical perspectives and comments on the current status of death-related literature for children. *Omega* (Westport). 2004;48:293–305.
6. Gary P. *An Approach to Death in Adult and Children's Literature*. Readings in Thanatology Routledge;p. 45–60.
7. Knowles M, Moon R, *Introducing, Metaphor*; 2005.

8. Holyoak KJ, Stamenković D. Metaphor comprehension: A critical review of theories and evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*. 2018;144:641–671.
9. Fahnestock J. Rhetorical stylistics *Language and Literature*. 2005;14:215–230.
10. Vakhovska OV. Metaphor in the light of conceptual metaphor theory: a literature review *Cognition, Communication, Discourse* Epub ahead of print. 2017;.
11. Steen GJ, Dorst AG, Herrmann JB. Metaphor in usage. *Cognitive Linguistics*. 2010;21:765–796.
12. Ogata T, Asakawa S. Content Generation Through Narrative Communication and Simulation: IGI Global Epub ahead of print. 2018;.
13. Paramalingam M. The aesthetics of language: examining literary devices in literature. *Cosmos: An International Journal of Art and Higher Education*. 2024;12:1–7.
14. Semino E, Swindlehurst K. Metaphor and mind style in Ken Kesey's 'One flew over the cuckoo's nest'. *Style*. 1996;30:143–166.
15. Grandy MA, Tuber S. Entry into imaginary space: metaphors of transition and variations in the affective quality of potential space in children's literature. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. 2009;26:274–289.
16. Thibodeau PH, Matlock T, Flusberg SJ. The role of metaphor in communication and thought. *Language and Linguist Compass*. 2019;13:12327–12327.
17. Barchard KA, Hensley S, Anderson ED. Measuring the ability to perceive the emotional connotations of written language. *Journal of Personality Assessment*. 2013;95:332–342.
18. Horton WS. Metaphor and readers' attributions of intimacy. *Memory & Cognition*. 2007;35:87–94.
19. Lakoff G, Turner M. *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1989.
20. Fan L. Literature review on the cognitive approach to metaphor. *Procedia Computer Science*. 2018;131:925–928.
21. Beknazarova U, Almatova A, Yelemessova S. The cognitive function of a conceptual metaphor and its methodological foundations. *JLLS*. 2021;17:1312–1324.
22. Tehseem T, Khan AB. Exploring the use of metaphors in children literature: a discursive perspective. *European Journal of English Language, Linguistic and Literature*. 2015;2:7–17.
23. Cortazzi M, L J. Bridges to learning: metaphors of teaching, learning and language. *Researching and Applying Metaphor*;p. 149–176.
24. Llewellyn R, Egan JC, R. Employing imaginative rationality: using metaphor when discussing death. *Medical Humanities*. 2017;43:71–72.
25. Roberts P, Philosophy, Death E. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. 2024;p. 12–12. Available from: <https://oxfordre.com/education/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-1271>.
26. Sadker MP, Sadker DM. *Now upon a time: a contemporary view of children's literature*. New York: Harper & Row; 1977.
27. Walker M. Last rites for young readers. *Child Lit Educ*. 1978;9:188–197.
28. Dreyer SS. The bookfinder: a guide to children's literature about the needs and problems of youth aged 2 and up. Circle Pines, Minn: American Guidance Service; 1977.
29. Moore TE, Mae R. Who dies and who cries: death and bereavement in children's literature. *Journal of Communication*. 1987;37:52–64.
30. Swenson EJ. The Treatment of Death In Children's Literature. *Elementary English*. 1972;49:401–404.
31. McGuire SL, McCarthy LS, Modrcin MA. An ongoing concern: helping children comprehend death. *OJN*. 2013;03:307–313.
32. Arruda-Colli M, Weaver MS, Wiener L. Communication about dying, death, and bereavement: A systematic review of children's literature. *J Palliat Med*. 2017;20:548–559.
33. Sasser M. Advent of denial of death in children's literature. 2008;Available from: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/166>.
34. Poling DA, Hupp JM. Death sentences: a content analysis of children's death literature. *J Genet Psychol*. 2008;169:165–176.
35. Corr CA. Spirituality in death-related literature for children. *Omega (Westport)*. 2004;48:365–381.
36. Lee JS, Kim EY, Choi Y. Cultural variances in composition of biological and supernatural concepts of death: a content analysis of children's literature. *Death Studies*. 2014;38:538–545.
37. Corr CA. Bereavement, grief, and mourning in death-related literature for children. *Omega (Westport)*. 2004;48:337–363.
38. Colston HL, Kuiper MS. Figurative language development research and popular children's literature: why we should know, 'where the wild things are'. *Metaphor and Symbol*. 2002;17:27–43.
39. Prokopová T. Death in Children's Literature. 2024;Available from: <https://dk.upce.cz/handle/10195/80013/2022>.
40. Grilli G. Death as a metaphoric dimension in children's literature *Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione*; 4 Epub ahead of print 16. 2017;.
41. Corr CA, Corr DM, Doka KJ. *Death & dying, life & living*. Boston, MA: Cengage; 2019.
42. Zipes J. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. 2006;.
43. Buck PS. *The Big Wave*. New York: Harper & Row; 1948.
44. Greene CC. *Beat the Turtle Drum*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Puffin Books; 1968.
45. Miles M. *Annie and the Old One*. Boston: Joy Street Books; 1971.
46. Semken SC, Morgan F. Navajo pedagogy and earth systems. *Journal of Geoscience Education*. 1997;45:109–112.
47. Asquith PJ, Kalland A. *Japanese Images of Nature: Cultural Perspectives*. 1997;.
48. Nadeau JW. Metaphorically speaking: the use of metaphors in grief therapy. *Crisis & Loss*. 2006;14:201–221.
49. Spall B, Read S, Chantry D. Metaphor: exploring its origins and therapeutic use in death, dying and bereavement. *Int J Palliat Nurs*. 2001;7:345–353.
50. Buscaglia LF. *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story Of Life For All Ages*. 1982;Available from: <https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=LENWAAAAYAAJ>.
51. Smith DB. *A Taste of Blackberries*. ed New York: HarperTrophy RHT, editor; 1973.
52. Vosniadou S. Children and metaphors. *Child Development*. 1987;58:870–870.

Ảnh dụ về cái chết trong văn học thiếu nhi Mỹ: hiệu quả và giá trị giáo dục

Trịnh Thanh Lê Vi*, Võ Phạm Hồng Gấm, Nguyễn Thị Thuỳ Dương, Trần Tâm Anh, Bùi Phương Thảo



Use your smartphone to scan this QR code and download this article

Sinh viên khoa Ngữ Văn Anh, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, ĐHQG-HCM, Việt Nam

Liên hệ

Trịnh Thanh Lê Vi, Sinh viên khoa Ngữ Văn Anh, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, ĐHQG-HCM, Việt Nam

Email: thanhlevi.203@gmail.com

Lịch sử

- Ngày nhận: 26-6-2024
- Ngày sửa đổi: 19-12-2024
- Ngày chấp nhận: 20-3-2025
- Ngày đăng: 31-3-2025

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.32508/stdjssh.v9i1.1032>



Bản quyền

© ĐHQG Tp.HCM. Đây là bài báo công bố mở được phát hành theo các điều khoản của the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.



TÓM TẮT

Phép ẩn dụ thường được xem là phương tiện nhận thức và tu từ mạnh mẽ để diễn đạt các khái niệm phức tạp bằng cách dễ hiểu hơn. Tuy nhiên, vẫn còn khoảng trống trong các nghiên cứu hiện có về ẩn dụ về cái chết trong văn học thiếu nhi, mặc dù chủ đề cái chết nói chung đã được quan tâm rộng rãi trong bộ phận văn học này. Nghiên cứu này nhằm khảo sát các ẩn dụ về cái chết trong văn học thiếu nhi Mỹ thế kỷ 20, cụ thể là xem xét tác động của các ẩn dụ về cái chết đối với các yếu tố của tiểu thuyết và tìm hiểu giá trị giáo dục mà chúng mang lại cho độc giả trẻ. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp chính là phân tích văn bản, cùng với các phương pháp khác trong phân tích văn học như phương pháp phân tích chủ đề, phương pháp phân tích-tổng hợp và phương pháp hệ thống. Chúng tôi khảo sát các ẩn dụ về cái chết trong sáu tác phẩm văn học thiếu nhi Mỹ xuất bản trong thế kỷ 20, bao gồm: *The Big Wave* (1948) của Pearl S. Buck, *Beat the Turtle Drum* (1968) của Constance C. Greene, *Annie and the Old One* (1971) của Miska Miles, *A Taste of Blackberries* (1973) của Doris Buchanan Smith, *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) của Katherine Paterson và *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages* (1982) của Leo Buscaglia. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy các ẩn dụ về cái chết làm rõ và sâu sắc hóa đặc điểm nhân vật, đồng thời phản ánh bối cảnh văn hóa của câu chuyện trong các tác phẩm được phân tích. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra giá trị giáo dục của những ẩn dụ này, như giúp độc giả trẻ hiểu biết một chủ đề nặng nề như cái chết, hay hỗ trợ trẻ em trong việc tự kiến tạo nhận thức và thế giới quan của mình. Những phát hiện này nhấn mạnh sức mạnh của ngôn ngữ ẩn dụ trong việc thu hẹp khoảng cách giữa các khái niệm trừu tượng và khả năng lĩnh hội của trẻ em, cũng như cách nhà văn tiếp cận những chủ đề nặng nề một cách tinh tế mà vẫn truyền tải được những bài học sâu sắc về cuộc sống cho trẻ.

Từ khóa: ẩn dụ, văn học Mỹ, văn học thiếu nhi, cái chết

Trích dẫn bài báo này: Vi T T L, Gấm V P H, Dương N T T, Anh T T, Thảo B P. **Ảnh dụ về cái chết trong văn học thiếu nhi Mỹ: hiệu quả và giá trị giáo dục.** *Sci. Tech. Dev. J. - Soc. Sci. Hum.* 2025; 9(1):2894-2901.