

This study is a critical appraisal of the growth and development of children's literature in Tanzania. It arises from a recognition of the dearth of critical works on this literature and is based on the premise that children's literature requires an evaluative framework for guiding the literary and creative needs of children in Tanzania. The thesis collates the various categories of this literature and establishes a framework for assessing their literary qualities, wholesomeness, suitability for and impact on the child reader. It traces the growth of this literature from its oral beginnings through the colonial written literature to the contemporary works written in English or Kiswahili.

The first sections of the thesis present an analysis of the context, stylistic features and visual presentation of colonial, East African and Tanzanian literature available to the child in Tanzania. The study collaborates this discussion with further analysis and interpretation of children's responses to the subject matter, moral, style and illustrations of the most widely read children's books in Tanzania. From these analyses it isolates and evaluates both the existing literature and its emerging trends. It points out that the best literature for children is always skilfully and carefully written and communicates meaningfully to the child about childhood and experiences relevant to his/her world; that this literature is enjoyed by the child reader and has tremendous significance and influence on him or her. The study concludes that Tanzanian children's literature has gradually emerged as a noticeable branch of literature in its own right, but that writers will in future need to be more conscious of children's interests so that the growth in the future can point more towards a wholesome meaningful and diverse literature.