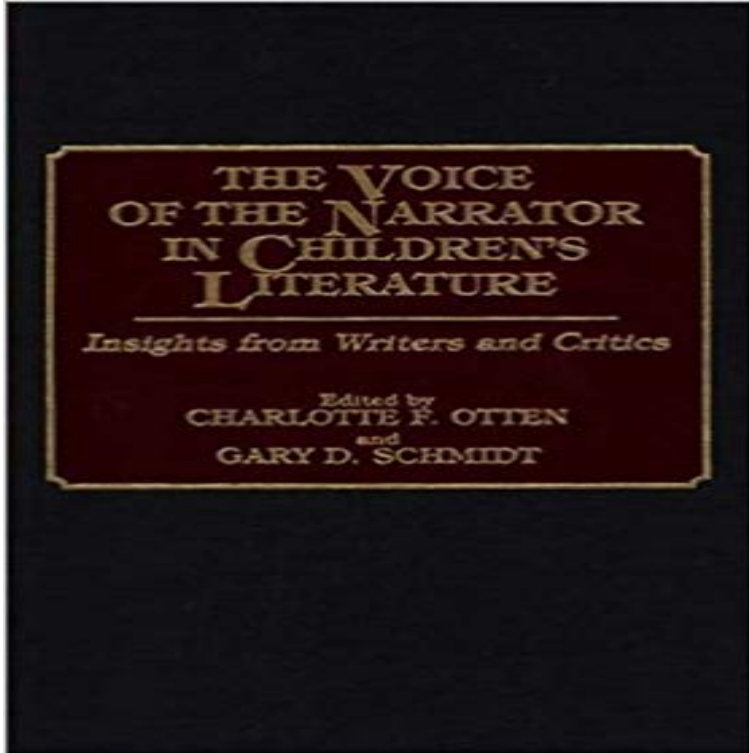


The Voice of the Narrator in Childrens Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics (Contributions to the Study of World Literature)



As Otten and Schmidt note in their preface, voice is a broad metaphor. Thus the 41 essays in this collection provide varied approaches, examining point of view, focus, selection of details, tone, and even illustrations as part of the narrative identity. Eight genres, including picture books, fantasy, realism, and biography, receive separate study in generally brief articles by writers and more substantial analyses by critics. . . . In her contribution, Jill Paton Walsh describes contemporary criticism as an `impenetrable thicket of technical terms. In most cases, the critics here avoid jargon. They speak clearly, offering practical criticism accessible to anyone seriously concerned about narrative technique in childrens literature.

ChoiceAlthough childrens literature is now a recognized branch of English and American literature, much of the criticism of it has focused on teaching methodology, history, and basic exposition. Since childrens books are no less a part of the literary tradition than adult books, there is room for new approaches to childrens literature. While the importance of the voice of the narrator is emerging in criticism of adult fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, little has been written about this subject in childrens literature. Examining the voice of the narrator can identify hitherto unexplored and unrecognized aspects of childrens literature. The essays in this collection were contributed by noted authors and critics. Their inquiry is divided into eight genres--the illustrated book, folk literature and myth, fantasy, realism, poetry, historical fiction, biography, and informational books--and each genre is discussed in terms of the authorial voice and the critical voice. Each of the essays works toward an understanding of how the voice of the narrator functions in a given work or in the larger corpus of an authors work. The result is not only a greater

understanding of how specific authors shape their material and how authors use voice for particular effects, but also how the narrator differs functionally from one genre to the next. This unique essay collection is particularly suited for use in childrens literature courses. Because the contributors are some of the most significant authors and critics in childrens literature in English, it should also be part of any academic librarys holdings in the criticism of childrens literature in particular and literary criticism in general.

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