

ORPHAN CARE VERSUS FAMILY CARE AN IDEOLOGICAL STUDY ON CHILDREN IN ORPHANAGES AND FOSTER CARE VS CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

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Abstract

This research analyses the representation of orphanhood in literature, contrasting traditional family care, foster care, and orphanages. Based on historical, sociological, and literary analysis, the paper investigates the changing constructs of orphans and their depiction in classical, Victorian, and contemporary literature. It analyses the social and psychological consequences of orphanhood, with special attention to prominent literary characters like Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre, Huckleberry Finn, and Harry Potter. The research compares emotional security within home environments to institutional care challenges and resilience built through alternative caregiving systems. By critically interrogating literary and academic writing, the research emphasizes a call for rehabilitated perceptions of foster care and orphanages, both in literature and social policy. The results confirm that literature determines public opinion concerning child welfare by reinforcing either sympathy.

Keywords: Orphanhood, Children, Foster Care, Family Care, Literary Analysis.

1 INTRODUCTION

The very concept of the "Orphan" poses a challenge, and attempting to fully define what is meant by the term "Orphan" can be difficult because the meaning varies from society to society. A Western definition of "Orphan" will be used. Even in this narrower sense, what distinguishes an orphan from a non-orphan is not totally clear since the idea of an orphan has evolved throughout time, and common colloquial conceptions of orphans pervade the broad understanding of what makes an orphan in our culture. During early modern Western history (roughly the 15th to 18th centuries), the term "orphan" referred to both children whose parents had died and children whose parents were unable or unwilling to support them. Children may become orphans as a result of their parents' actions. Economic hardship, prolonged military or naval duty, incapacitating disease, or widowhood" (McCants, 2004, p. 333). More recent definitions of orphans change the conditions that qualify a kid for orphaned status, yet they may be just as convoluted as historical definitions of orphaned children. For instance, The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, section 201(b) (1) (F), defines an orphan as: A child under the age of 16... who is an orphan due to the death or disappearance of, abandonment or desertion of, or separation or loss of both parents, or for whom the lone or surviving parent is unable to provide adequate care (Immigration and Nationality Act, 2025).

Childhood and adolescence are two phases of life during which individuals are very impressionable and need substantial direction. During these crucial phases of a child's development, personality, character, and conduct are significantly shaped by experiences and the people in the child's surroundings, namely family and peers. Typically, parents function as the authoritative figures and counsellors that children critically need in their endeavours to develop their identities. In the case of around fifteen million children in the modern world, both parents are missing ("Orphans"). While several sources categorize an individual who has lost one parent as a single orphan. The Oxford Dictionary specifies that an orphan is a kid who has lost both parents, referred to as a double orphan ("Orphan"; "Orphans"). The term "Orphan" originates from the Greek word "Orphanos", signifying bereaved (Seabrook 8).

Throughout history, the bereaved, especially orphans, have served as a source of inspiration for authors, to the point that they have evolved into their own distinct character archetype, simply known as the Orphan. The Orphan is one of twelve Jungian archetypes adapted to literary analysis, alongside the Warrior and the Innocent. It seeks to regain the comfort of the womb and neonatal safety in the arms of loving parents, but only through experiencing trials and tribulations that shape the character, perhaps in the same way that having a parent would have (Jonas). The Orphan's lack of parents makes him a sympathetic character. Without a solid family life, the Orphan is free to go on whatever journey the author has planned, which generates an infinite number of novels.

Before the twentieth century, orphans were prevalent owing to elevated maternal mortality rates and the cultural acceptance of child abandonment, which accounts for the abundance of orphan narratives, since art often reflects reality. Melanie A. Kimball asserts that, despite the Orphan's presence in mythology, such as the third-century BC Roman story of the orphaned twins Romulus and Remus, the majority of narratives involving the Orphan originate from folktales

(Kimball, 1999) (558). Folktales often adhere to a consistent structure, like that seen in narratives with orphaned protagonists. The narrative structure commences with the Orphan's maltreatment, progresses through the Orphan's arduous quest fraught with challenges posed by antagonistic figures, such as a malevolent stepmother or a wicked sorcerer, and culminates in the Orphan's triumph over these adversities, aided by supernatural forces and supporting characters at crucial moments (Kimball 561–565). The Orphan is then rewarded, while those who opposed the character are punished (Kimball, 565-566). Folktales, passed down through generations, primarily orally but occasionally written, contain lessons that are inextricably linked to the conditions under which they are recounted, as well as the storyteller's cultural background (Kimball 560-561). As a consequence, many different versions of a folktale exist. Fairy tales, a kind of folktale, are replete with orphans.

The famous fairy tale "Cinderella" is a good example of an orphan in folktales, with over 500 variations going back to China in the ninth century AD (Northup). The folktale "Cinderella," written by Charles Perrault in 1697 and the Brothers Grimm in 1812, focuses on a single orphan and is a common plot framework. The nice, departed mother is replaced with an evil stepmother who causes sorrow to the Orphan, and the character's father is rendered ineffectual. Eventually, a startling change of circumstances, generally magical, leads to the Orphan living happily ever after. A further instance of the Orphan archetype in fairy tales is "Snow White," first published by the Brothers Grimm in their 1812 anthology of fairy tales. "Snow White" and "Cinderella" both exemplify the archetype of the malevolent stepmother (Ívarsdóttir, 2019).

Moreover, folktales contribute to the emergence of foundlings as a significant subcategory of orphan narratives, continuing into later literature. Foundlings are abandoned in early childhood and see themselves as orphans. Frequently, foundlings reconnect with their biological families, who are often of royal or affluent lineage. The familial reunion distinguishes the foundling from the orphan. While the Orphan motif begins in folktales, its popularity continues to escalate throughout time as the character reaches a broader audience, particularly with the emergence of children's literature as a norm in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Grenby, 2009).

The beginning of the Orphan's swift ascendance in popularity is signified by the character's emergence in children's literature. John Newbery, recognized as the "father of children's literature," is credited with the emergence of juvenile fiction. Newbery's translation of "Cinderella," titled *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, published in 1765, is not only among the first children's books, achieving financial success, but also presents a female orphan as the protagonist (Grenby, 2009). Kimball articulates the Orphan's emergence in children's literature with the following lines:

The reality of orphans in society and their function as a hero type explains their presence in folktales, but the continuing use of orphan characters in literature for children indicates that they still hold great fascination for authors and have great meaning for readers. (567)

By the nineteenth century, the archetype of the orphan heroine was well established in English and American literature (Kimball 567). Orphaned heroines often endure neglect from relatives; however, they have the capacity to alter the lives of individuals in their vicinity via the strength of their spirited yet kind dispositions (Kimball 567). Although female orphans are originally more prevalent in orphan stories, the significant rise of male orphans, shown by Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Pip Pirrip*, corresponds with the Victorian Era, spanning from 1837 to 1901 ("Victorian Era"; Kimball 567).

1.1 Orphanage

An orphanage is a residential institution, a whole institution, or group home dedicated to the care of orphans and children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot be cared for by their natural relatives. The parents might be dead, absent, or abusive. The biological parent may be addicted to drugs or suffer from mental illness, or the parent may just refuse to care for the children. The legal obligation for the assistance of abandoned children varies across nations and within countries. Government-run orphanages were phased out in most affluent nations throughout the later part of the twentieth century, although they continue to function in many other places across the world. It is now widely understood that orphanages are damaging to children's emotional well-being, and government funding is directed instead toward helping the family unit.

1.2 Foster Care:

Foster care is a system that provides temporary care for children who are unable to remain with their original parents. The history of foster care stretches back thousands of years. Records from ancient Rome, for example, discuss the care of abandoned or orphaned children (Jade Yeban, 2023).

The advantages of foster care compared to orphanages are controversial. A notable research conducted by Duke University determined that institutional care in America throughout the 20th century yielded equivalent health, emotional, intellectual, mental, and physical results compared to care by relatives, and superior outcomes compared to care in the homes of non-relatives. A possible reason for this phenomenon is the widespread existence of permanent temporary foster care. This term refers to a prolonged sequence of brief placements with several foster care homes. (McKenzie, 2010) Permanent temporary foster care significantly disrupts the kid and hinders the development of a feeling of security or belonging. Placement in a relative's household sustains and often enhances the child's familial connections. (Head to Head: Madonna Adoption, n.d.) Experts and child advocates assert that orphanages are costly and often detrimental to children's development due to the separation from their families, suggesting that it would be more effective and economical to support relatives willing to care for the orphans (Dugger, 2009).

2 FAMOUS ORPHANS IN LITERATURE

Let's look at some remarkable orphans who've created literary history (Salao, 2024):

- Tom Riddle and Harry Potter (Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling): Both are orphans who grew up without love, yet their paths diverge dramatically. While Harry's choices reflect hope and compassion, Tom's story is one of bitterness and

cruelty. Their contrasting responses to similar beginnings emphasize the role of choice in shaping destiny.

- Anne Shirley (Anne of Green Gables by L.M. Montgomery): An imaginative, fiery orphan is mistakenly sent to a farm. Though out of place, she immediately transforms the lives of those around her. It's a reminder that family can be found, not just be born into.
- Oliver Twist (Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens): Oliver, orphaned shortly after birth, is left at the mercy of a harsh workhouse. Despite his circumstances, he maintains a kind and moral nature, making him a sympathetic and inspiring protagonist. His experiences highlight the social injustices of Victorian England.
- The Baudelaire's (A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket): After their parents' death in a fire, Violet, Klaus, and Sunny find themselves at the mercy of Count Olaf. Despite their dire circumstances, the trio uses their natural talents to survive a world that seems out to get them. Their loyalty to each other conveys that sometimes, family is all you can rely on.
- Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain): Tom lives with his Aunt Polly, who gives him care and a sense of family, despite losing his parents. Huck, though he has a father, is neglected and must survive on his own. Their different journeys form the basis of their friendship, with each learning from the other's strengths.
- Quasimodo (The Hunchback of Notre-Dame by Victor Hugo): Abandoned by his parents, Quasimodo's life centres on Notre-Dame. While Frollo shelters him, their relationship is controlling, not caring. His isolation reveals societal prejudice and redefines true beauty.
- Batman (Batman by Bob Kane and Billy Finger): As a child, Bruce Wayne witnesses the murder of his parents. This loss becomes the force behind his life's mission. Batman represents more than justice; he embodies the lasting effects of trauma and the resilience to overcome it.

This article explores the depiction of orphanhood in literature through various historical contexts, comparing family care, orphanages, and foster care. Through a comparative analysis of classical, Victorian, and modern literary texts, this research explores the psychological and social aspects of orphan stories. The inquiry also branches out to real-world applications, asking how literature shapes public perception of child well-being and non-biological care.

3 Related Literature on Orphanhood

Orphan narratives are defined as "works of children's literature that either center on orphaned children as protagonists or explore the themes of orphanhood and child abandonment from the viewpoint of a young child" (Burns, 2008). Orphan narratives are prevalent in literature and have permeated children's literature from its inception. The incorporation of orphans in literature dates back to its inception, with instances of forsaken children appearing in the mythic and literary traditions of various cultures (Burns, p. 90), ranging from mythological figures (e.g., Romulus and Remus) to characters in fairy tales and folklore (e.g., Cinderella).

During the Victorian era, the narrative of orphans gained a firm foundation in children's literature, as writers like Charles Dickens set a definitive literary benchmark with iconic orphan characters such as Oliver in *Oliver Twist* and Pip in *Great Expectations*. (Pearson, 1991) posits that the orphan serves as a distinct paradigm in both life and literature, hence presenting a reoccurring/recurring pattern throughout literary works. Orphan tales have a familiar, formulaic storyline with heroes that evoke sympathy from readers and ultimately prevail over challenges, receiving rewards for their dedication, effort, drive, and perseverance (Burns, 2008).

Literature evolves and transforms within its historical context, and children's literature is no exception. Children's literature has experienced transformations that reflect societal movements; evolving times have modified the philosophical orientations of society, consequently affecting the framework of children's literature (Egoff, 1980), (Metcalf, 1997), (MacLeod, 1995), (Mills, 1987), (Gilman, 2005), (Burns, 2008). Notwithstanding these changes, orphan narratives have persisted as a staple.

In (Troy et al., n.d.-a) (Troy et al., 2014), *Orphans and American Literature* ~~was~~ explored the function of the American orphan figure in literary and social history, with an emphasis on literature as cultural memory. It emphasizes orphans' key position in nineteenth-century American literary history, as well as their contribution to subverting the dominant white male tradition. Previous critical examinations of orphans have mostly focused on children's or nineteenth-century literature, but this chapter delves into the historically evolving roles and cultural work of orphan characters in relation to social and political events in the United States. It also discusses the notions of orphan, childhood, and family, as well as how they are used in social and intellectual debates.

(Peters, 2018) explored the Victorian culture's perception of the orphan as a scapegoat, a promise and threat, a poison and a cure. It examines the orphan figure in *Wuthering Heights*, contrasting it with the foundling, the orphan as foreigner, and the orphan as criminal. The book also examines the role of orphan adventure narratives in policing and extending empire, focusing on Charles Dickens's *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*, and *Their Treasure in Women, Children, Silver and Jewels* within the context of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and Dickens's imperial sympathies. It also provides historical context for the schemes adopted for emigrating orphans, focusing on Bermuda, New South Wales, and Canada. The book positions Rose Macaulay's *Orphan Island* (1924) within this historical context, which poses problems for the rationale of the schemes and current debates within post-colonial studies. It also explores the exiling of difference in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and the return of the exiled orphan to London in Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

(Sheikh et al., 2023) examined the representation of Historicism in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, published in 1838 during the Victorian era in England, a period marked by significant social and economic transformation. The story

illustrates the author's profound preoccupation with the social challenges of his day and the historical events that influenced them. The article presents instances from the book to substantiate the theory, including the depiction of the workhouse, the criminal underbelly, child exploitation, and poverty alongside societal injustice. This study employs historical research, literary analysis, and careful reading of the work as its techniques.

Orphans and abandoned children have been a recurring theme in literature for millennia. In current times, one of the most well-known orphan tales is J.K. Rowling's book series about Harry Potter, an orphaned wizard. (Friis, 2013) The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how Rowling's novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* portrays three orphan characters: Harry Potter, Voldemort, and Neville Longbottom. The primary focus of this essay is on how these three diverse personalities' personal development differs as a result of their varied infancy situations.

(A. Mattix, 2016) explored the use of orphans as protagonists in children's award-winning literature, focusing on the Newbery Award winning books (1922 – 2011) and the Newbery Honor books of the last decade (2002 – 2011). The research examines how orphans are portrayed in Newbery texts, the messages they convey, and compares literary orphans against real-life counterparts. The study finds that the orphan narrative is a popular form of children's literature in the Newbery collection, serving as a platform for writers to develop resilient protagonists. However, the study suggests discrepancies between the portrayal of orphans in Newbery texts and real-life orphans, particularly in the literary orphan's ability to overcome obstacles. The study also suggests that current paradigms do not fully capture this corpus of texts.

The most popular works of children's literature are about orphans, including *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Little White Horse*, *The Secret Garden*, *Harry Potter*, and the ever-popular *Peter Pan*. Wendy quickly gets interested in *Peter Pan*'s mother after meeting him for the first time. Barrie said that he did not have a mother and had no desire to get one. Wendy, on the other hand, saw right away that she was witnessing a catastrophe. With these remarks, Barrie describes the irony of orphanhood: it is a strange blend of bereavement and independence.

Wendy is thus attracted with/to Peter. In *The Secret Garden*, Mary does not weep when the police announce she is an orphan. She stamps her foot and curses at them (Burnett 7). Burnett therefore presents us with a kid of strength and character rather than one whom the reader should sympathize with (Jenkins, 2011). In *Anne of Green Gables*, Mathew Cuthbert is scared when he first sees Anne because he must "walk up to a girl—a strange girl—an orphan girl..." Montgomery (13). In *The Little White Horse*, Goudge says that Maria "was a showy little thing, even when dressed in the greys and purples of the bereaved..." (8) (Crain & Crain, 2016).

The author of the orphan literature characterizes the individual as embodying both pleasure and misery concurrently. For *Harry Potter*, the scar on his forehead symbolizes the tragic incident that left him an orphan, while simultaneously designating him as "the chosen one." The writers construct formidable individuals poised to confront the world, but their strength comes from the profound othering and dread associated with the orphan archetype in reality. Ironically, despite the orphan character's immense popularity, there has been little literary critique on the topic. Laura Peters asserts that, despite significant critical focus on family and kid concerns within Victorian society, there exists a scarcity of analysis about orphans. The reason for this, given the ubiquity of this figure, remains rather mysterious (Crain & Crain, 2016).

4 Representations of Orphans in Literature

4.1 Victorian Literature and Orphan Narratives

Oliver Twist (1837-1839) by Charles Dickens is a scathing condemnation of Victorian England's institutional shortcomings, notably its depiction of orphanhood. The story depicts the horrors of workhouses, where children like Oliver experience systematic neglect due to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. These organizations, which are intended to help poverty, instead dehumanize the poor via punishing circumstances, as seen by Oliver's malnutrition and exploitation by people such as Mr. Bumble (Albertsson, 2017), (Kumuja & Srivastava, 2022). Dickens criticizes society's hypocrisy in treating orphans as burdens rather than persons with dignity. The workhouse system's focus on hard discipline over compassion reflects greater social apathy to/toward the working class, as is shown by Oliver's forced apprenticeship to an undertaker and ultimate recruitment into Fagin's criminal gang. These examples demonstrate how institutional neglect traps underprivileged children in cycles of exploitation.

The novel also satirizes the inefficiency and corruption of the legal system, paralleling themes found in Dickens' *Bleak House*. Although *Oliver Twist* does not explicitly critique courts, it emphasizes systemic injustice in the form of Oliver's unprotected status as an orphan. His susceptibility to exploitation by characters such as Monks—who attempts to rob him of his inheritance—demonstrates how Victorian institutions value money and class more than justice. Dickens contrasts Oliver's natural goodness with the moral corruption of institutions, implying that human beings can only flourish beyond oppressive systems (Anjitha S Kurup, 2019). The eventual outcome, in which Oliver is saved by a kind middle-class family, is Dickens' guarded optimism regarding individual kindness overcoming systemic failure.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is a journey of orphanhood as the impetus for self-awareness and resistance to societal oppression. Jane's journey starts at Gateshead, where her aunt's cruelty and cousins' contempt shape her initial perception of injustice. The notorious "red-room" scene represents her confinement within patriarchal and class structures, but her defiant protest—"I am not deceitful!"—defines her rejection of victimhood. This resilience characterizes her identity as she negotiates institutions such as Lowood School, where austerity and religious duplicity further isolate her. Jane's relationship with Helen Burns and education empower her to develop moral independence, a counterpoint to *Oliver Twist*'s passive suffering (Self Identity In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, n.d.).

At Thornfield, Jane's relationship with Rochester challenges her determination to be independent. Her statement, "I am no bird," reinforces her refusal to accept societal norms that restrict women to submissive roles. In contrast to Oliver, whose self is defined by external forces, Jane actively creates herself through self-reflection and resistance. Her status as an

orphan—without family or money—freely releases her from conventional responsibilities, enabling her to value self-respect over conformity. The ending of the novel, wherein Jane returns to Rochester as a peer, upholds her victory over institutionalized oppression through her own agency (Jane Eyre, n.d.).

4.2 American Literature and the Orphan Protagonist

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) is a foundational novel of American literature that deals with the issue of orphanhood and its conjunction with independence. It is not an orphan in the technical sense, but is practically parent-less with his violent father and missing mother. This absence of parental supervision leaves Huck in the charge of Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, who try to "civilize" Huck through established religious and social conventions. Huck resists these attempts, though, seeing their supervision as inhibitive rather than supportive. This conflict between society's demands and individual liberty is the basis of Huck's journey, as he struggles to establish his identity beyond the shackles of foster care.

Huck's refusal of traditional foster care is seen in his escape from Widow Douglas and Miss Watson's home. His flight along the Mississippi River with Jim, a fugitive slave, represents his search for independence and moral freedom. On the river, Huck feels free, which is in contrast to the strictures placed upon him by his guardians. Yet this liberty is fraught with moral complexities, especially since Huck is struggling with his devotion to Jim and societal norms accepting slavery. Huck's final choice to assist Jim in his escape—despite the belief that it will send him to hell—represents a defining moment of moral development. It reinforces Twain's condemnation of societal hypocrisy and institutionalized racism and demonstrates Huck's ability to exercise ethical thought separate from societal pressure (Troy et al., n.d.-b). Twain utilizes Huck's tale to raise questions about whether classic foster care is able to support individuality or if it just reinforces conformity. Widow Douglas and Miss Watson instill stability but do not see Huck's requirement for autonomy. Jim, however, gives emotional support and companionship, aiding Huck's development of moral sensibilities in a manner classic guardians cannot. By presenting Huck's journey as a process of self-discovery and moral freedom, Twain criticizes the shortcomings of foster care systems while revering the strength and adaptability of orphaned or abandoned children.

L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) is a moving exercise in adoption as a redemptive process for the orphaned heroine Anne Shirley and her adoptive parents, Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert. In contrast to most orphan stories, which dwell on adversity and endurance, Montgomery's novel prioritizes reinvention and belonging to a family. Anne comes to Green Gables by error—the Cuthberts had planned to adopt a boy to assist with farm labor— but her sparkling imagination and nonconformist ways soon charm them. That initial misfit creates the foundation for a novel concerning adaptation and emotional change. Anne's transition from insecure orphan to self-assured young woman emphasizes the value of love and acceptance in transcending past experiences. Her rich imagination, which early on isolates her from peers, proves a strength as she learns to apply it to positive endeavours such as storytelling and scholastics. Through her experience with Marilla and Matthew, Anne changes not only herself but also her foster family. Marilla relaxes her strict demeanour, coming to enjoy Anne's emotional richness, and Matthew becomes more forceful in fighting for Anne's happiness. This reciprocal change underscores Montgomery's faith in the redemptive potential of family ties created through choice, not blood. The novel is also critical of how society perceives orphans through the ways that Anne's ingenuity and creativeness are originally downplayed as a result of her orphaned status, but afterwards rewarded after finding support within the family. The adoption process within *Anne of Green Gables* is also seen to be mutualistic: Anne achieves stability and love from the Cuthberts, while in turn, they also undergo immense changes due to her presence. Finally, Montgomery red-cribes family in terms of an institution founded upon love, mutual respect, and shared experience as opposed to solely biological ties.

4.3 Contemporary Depictions of Orphanhood in Literature

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007) employs Harry's status as an orphan to examine themes of resilience and adopted families against biological abandonment. Orphaned at a baby age when Voldemort kills his parents, Harry is left with his cruel aunt and uncle, the Dursleys. This early life experience reinforces his loneliness; he is treated more like an unwelcome imposition than family. The Dursleys' neglect is a critique of family responsibilities without love or compassion, illustrating how biological connections alone cannot form caring relationships (Lele, 2024).

As Harry arrives at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, he starts building relationships that redefine family for him. His relationships with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger give him the emotional support that he lacks in his biological family. The Weasley family again illustrates chosen family dynamics by inviting Harry to their home without question or anticipation—a sharp contrast to the way Harry is treated by the Dursleys (A. A. Mattix, 2012). Dumbledore's guidance also significantly contributes to the growth of Harry as he handles loss, identity, and accountability. Although not a conventional guardian, Dumbledore's leadership builds the strength of Harry by urging him to face ugly realities about his life and background. The series finally presents chosen families as places where people can flourish in spite of negative starts. Harry's friendships at Hogwarts balance out his abusive childhood with the Dursleys with unconditional support based on common values and not blood relations (A. Mattix, n.d.).

Lemony Snicket's *'A Series of Unfortunate Events'* (1999–2006) presents a darkly satirical portrayal of orphanhood by critiquing child welfare systems through the misadventures of the Baudelaire orphans—Violet, Klaus, and Sunny—following their parents' premature death in a fire. The series reveals systemic failures in safeguarding vulnerable children as the Baudelaire children are repeatedly put in perilous situations under incompetent guardianship. Each of the guardians placed over the Baudelaire children embodies various institutional flaws: Count Olaf takes advantage of loopholes; Uncle Monty cares but has no institutional backing; Aunt Josephine has her fears ahead of her wards' safety. These situations point out how procedure frequently takes precedence over children's interests in bureaucracy. In contrast to conventional orphan tales of resolution or salvation through familial ties (*Anne of Green Gables*, say), Snicket's series shatters expectations by

highlighting ambiguity rather than closure. The Baudelaires survive through their cleverness and not external salvation—a reflection on self-reliance in the face of institutional breakdown (A. Mattix, 2016).

5 Analysis of Foster Care Vs Children in Family

Literature has been used historically as a vehicle to examine the intricate dynamics of family, orphanhood, and alternative forms of care such as foster care. While family is typically idealized as stable and caregiving, literary portrayals of foster care commonly underscore themes of resilience, struggles with identity, and neglect by society. The tension between family and foster care in literature is representative of more extensive ideological views concerning child welfare, belonging, and emotional growth.

5.1 Family Care in Literature

Family, and the nuclear family specifically, is typically described in literature as a source of emotional security and moral support. Children in stable families, according to traditional and contemporary literature, have a stronger sense of identity and belonging. For example, in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Anne Shirley, who was adopted by the Cuthberts by mistake, finally finds comfort and self-realization in the warmth of a loving family. The novel juxtaposes Anne's initial hardships as an unwanted orphan with her development within a nurturing family, highlighting the beneficial effects of family ties on individual growth. Conversely, children who grow up outside of conventional family units tend to have difficulty with identity and emotional security. Without biological family members, there is a tendency towards internal conflict, as in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Jane, an orphan who is cruelly treated both in her relatives' home and at Lowood School, does not find her final sense of belonging until she establishes her own family through marriage. These stories highlight the inherent human desire for family ties, either biological or chosen/chosen.

5.2 Foster Care in Literature

In contrast to the conventional depiction of orphanages as places of misery and brutality (e.g., Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, 1838), foster care is not described in such stark terms. Depending on the foster parents and the state of society, foster homes may be locations of success or struggle. Perhaps the most vivid portrayal of foster care can be found in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1885. Huck, put in the care of Widow Douglas, is smothered by the strictures of foster care. While Widow Douglas tries to "civilize" him, Huck comes to resist society's expectations and demand freedom, and thus imply/implies that foster care in limiting environments stifles rather than fosters individuality. In Modern fiction, including J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter Series* (1997-2007), also delves into foster care through the life of Harry Potter, who was raised by his abusive relatives, the Dursleys. Although not an official foster care environment, the Dursleys' abuse and abandonment of Harry are reflective of neglect and abuse the child may face in a foster home. By comparison, Hogwarts is a surrogate family, demonstrating the concept that non-biological protectors can offer a sense of home and emotional support.

The distinction between foster and family care through literature presents common themes, including love vs. neglect, stability vs. impermanence, and personal identity vs. societal imposition. Most literary pieces affirm that even though foster care may provide windows for growth, it is most commonly portrayed as poor compared to the warmth and unconditional acceptance of a conventional family. This ideological point of view makes one question society's perceptions about other forms of caregiving and the power of literature in establishing public opinion concerning foster care.

6 CONCLUSION

Literature mirrors and influences cultural perceptions of orphanhood, presenting diverse views of family, identity, and resilience. Classical and fairy tale narratives are focused on predetermined redemption, but Victorian literature dissects institutional shortfalls and class disparities. American and modern writing continues to explore autonomy, intentional families, and systemic failures in child welfare. The comparison of family care, orphanages, and foster systems in literature captures ongoing conflicts between biological and alternative caregiving. Although family configurations are idealized, foster and institutionalization stories often reveal system problems. Nonetheless, literature does offer non-traditional caregiving as an arena for emotional development and self-discovery. By looking at orphan narratives from a historical, literary, and sociological perspective, this research makes clear the imperative to ongoing conversation around child welfare and caregiving reform. Writing acts as a reflection of social failures and also a call for reform, invoking compassion and reassessment of care system institutions. This study acts as a reflection of real-world family and foster care experiences, laying bare both difficulties and redeeming qualities of out-of-home alternative caregiving. Traditional families may be glamorized, yet foster care literature highlights flaw within the system as well as the resilience of children raised outside the normal family framework. Such tales facilitate a general perception of child welfare, which insists on sympathy as well as a need for improvement in the system of foster care. The representation of family and foster care in literature reflects broader ideological concerns regarding child welfare, belonging, and emotional development. While traditional families are often depicted as sources of love and stability, foster care in literature is frequently associated with hardship, lack of identity, and struggles for acceptance. However, literature also acknowledges that foster care can provide growth opportunities, especially when compassionate guardianship replaces institutional neglect. Through these narratives, literary works contribute to the ongoing discourse on the importance of emotional security and the role of society in ensuring the well-being of vulnerable children.

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