

Ramandeep Randhawa

Professor Cheryl Cowdy

CCY 4998

11 April 2022

The Early History of Children's Hornbooks in the Seventeenth-Nineteenth Century

Introduction

The popularity of “hornbooks” has diminished in contemporary society due to the limited availability of original copies, as they have become outdated. Hornbooks were the first books written for children, and they were produced in England to teach children how to read, write, learn math, and provide religious instruction. Through the analysis of several hornbooks, this paper will investigate the material characteristics of printing and the manufacturing process of many hornbooks made between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It will discuss their materiality, where they came from, the hornbook's features, and whether they were made with inexpensive or expensive materials. For a deeper insight into the significance of hornbooks for children and their relationship to child readers, the paper will undertake a historical and child-oriented approach to examine how hornbooks are created with children in mind.

The Historical Context of Hornbooks: Publishing and Manufacturing History of Hornbooks

The hornbook got its name from the piece of translucent horn that protected the piece, which was usually a wooden paddle with the alphabet, numbers 1 through 9, Roman numerals, and prayers like the Lord's Prayer and “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Amen. Some nicknames for the hornbook were horn-gig, horn-bat, battledore-book, absey-book, and a-b-boordje in Dutch (Earle, 124). The earliest hornbooks consist of a single printed sheet

constructed from wood with a small thin transparent sheet protected by a horn. Also, the teaching of the alphabets and religious instructions began in the 16th century (Takahashi, 1).