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The Integration and Construction of 18th-Century Novelty Books in Literary Culture: The
Child-Reader Relationship between Movement and Engagement

Introduction

Novelty books became distinguished in the children's literary world during the 18th century. Through the works of *Mother Shipton* by Robert Sayer, *Little Folk's Peep Show* by Ernest Nister and *Comic Actors: a new moveable toybook* by Lothar Meggendorfer, this essay will examine and analyze how 18th-century novelty books were constructed over time and how novelty literature integrated into children's literary culture. These works will display the dramatic shift in children's literary culture through innovations regarding book physicality and the children's literary market. Through the relationship between movement and engagement, it is evident that playful reading is crucial to building child-reader relationships.

What are Novelty Books?

Novelty books were introduced in children's literature in the 18th century; these small books consisted of a single sheet folded into four, and flaps were created by hinging the sheets at the top or bottom (Montanaro). Novelty books have limited text; the primary focus in novelty literature is the illustrations presented in the story through tactile and touch senses. Novelty books can be elaborate and detailed; however, the shape and the way it shapes throughout the story consider how novelty literature takes on a new approach to book physicality.