

# Representations of the Child and Childhood in Francis Hodgson Burnett's Children's Novels

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes Francis Hodgson Burnett's (1849-1924) representations of the child and childhood in her best-known children's novels: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886/1986), *A Little Princess* (1905/2019), and *The Secret Garden* (1911/1999). Specifically, I argue that Burnett's novels illustrate the Romantic concept of the child and childhood. I also contend that the influences of Romanticism can be seen in her use of the narrative device of fortune reversal and, most importantly, in her portrayals of the child characters. Based on Bixler's (1980) definition of the georgic ideal of Romanticism, I examine the three novels and discuss how they fit into this category. In general, all the child characters redeem others with their intrinsic nobility and innocence by giving rebirth and happiness to those around them and thus embody the georgic ideal of the child. While *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *A Little Princess* may better represent the georgic ideal of the child, *The Secret Garden* is more concerned about what the ideal childhood entails.

**Keywords:** childhood, Romanticism, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, *The Secret Garden*

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## 伯內特兒童小說中的兒童與童年

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### 摘 要

本文旨在分析法蘭西絲·霍森·伯內特(Francis Hodgson Burnett)在最廣為人知的三部兒童小說中，是如何呈現兒童及童年。這三本經典兒童小說分別是《馮特洛小爵爺》、《小公主》、《祕密花園》。具體而言，本文的論點主張：伯內特的兒童小說應驗了，浪漫主義的兒童及童年的概念，而且浪漫主義的美學，在伯內特運用命運反轉的敘述手法中斧鑿斑斑。浪漫主義的美學尤其在兒童的角色刻畫，更是處處可見。本文依據碧瑟樂(Bixler, 1980)對浪漫主義田園理想的定義，逐一檢視每本小說是否符合浪漫主義的傳統。整體而言，這三部小說的兒童主角都有與生俱來的高貴純真特質，能帶給周遭的人重生與快樂，使他們得到救贖，所以體現了浪漫主義的田園理想。《馮特洛小爵爺》和《小公主》比較能呈現兒童本身的完美，而《祕密花園》則較關心完美童年所需要的條件。

**關鍵字：**童年、浪漫主義、《馮特洛小爵爺》、《小公主》、《祕密花園》

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