

Theoretical Perspectives

Since Children's Literature is written for the child audience, authors and illustrators need to understand **how children develop** emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Authors and illustrators must cater to children through their use of ideas, language, images, and style. They must also understand **how children learn** in order to know how to integrate ideas with language, images and style for the child mind. In this section of our course, you will learn about three **child development theories**, including **Piaget's** theory on how children develop cognitively, **Kohlberg's** theory on how children learn moral reasoning, and **Erikson's** stages on how a child develops psychologically. You will also learn about two **educational theories** in children's literature, including **Vygotsky's** Social Development Theory and **Rosenblatt's** Reader's Response/Transaction Theory. Having an understanding of how children develop and learn will help you critique the many types of children's literature you will analyze in this course.

Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

View the short film clip titled "[Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development](#)" published by Khan Academy to gain perspective on Piaget's theoretical stages. Keep in mind that Piaget believed that knowledge is constructed--children's learning builds on what is already known. Use the following outline as a guide. What examples can you use to illustrate each stage?

Stage 1: 0-2 Years of age--Sensorimotor Stage

Children **gather information** about the world through their senses and their movement.

Stage 2: 2-6 years of age--Pre-Operational Stage

Children develop language skills and begin to **use symbols** to represent language.

Stage 3: 7-11 Years of age--Concrete Operational Stage

Children learn to use **mental operations** such as math reasoning.

Stage 4: 12-Up Years of age--Formal Operational Stage

Children learn **abstract and moral reasoning**.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (An expansion on Piaget's Theory)

View the short video titled "[Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development Explained!](#)" published by Learn My Test. Examine each level and stage carefully, and then consider the 3 main criticisms of Kohlberg's theory:

Level 1: Pre-conventional Morality--at this level, children tend to obey rules to avoid punishment. They also make choices based on self-need.

Level 2: Conventional Morality--at this level, children tend to conform to societal expectations. They typically respect and abide by rules.

Level 3: Post-conventional Morality--at this level, children recognize that members of society should agree to standards that set rules; they view justice as more important than laws.

Consider:

Why is Kohlberg's theory on moral development important for authors to be aware of as they write literature for children?

What are the 3 main criticisms of Kohlberg's theory? Are these criticisms justifiable? Why or why not?

Erikson's Stages of Development

View the short video clip about [Erik Erikson's Stages of Development](#), published by Sprouts, to understand the **first 5 stages** of Erikson's stages of development--Infancy, Early Childhood, Preschool, School Age, Adolescence. As you view the video:

--list the characteristics of each of the first 5 stages;

--explain how knowing these stages and characteristics will be helpful as you analyze children's literature this semester.

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

View the short film clip titled "[Vygotsky's Developmental Theory: An Introduction](#)" to gain understanding of the 3 elements of Vygotsky's Theory on social development. Keep in mind that Vygotsky believed that learning is constructed or built on previous learning experiences. Overall, Vygotsky's theory focuses on the necessity of **social interaction** to promote development in children. The three elements of Vygotsky's Theory are:

- 1) Social Interaction--Vygotsky believed that children need **socialization before development** can occur.
- 2) More Knowledgeable Other--Vygotsky believed that children **learn from people** who are more knowledgeable than they are.
- 3) The Zone of Proximal Development--This zone is the area **between the time when children rely on others and the time when they become independent**.

Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory (RRT) (Also known as Transactional Theory)

View the short film clip titled "[Reader Response Theory](#)" to develop an understanding of Rosenblatt's RRT. Use the following notes as a guide:

- RRT is what happens when a reader **connects** with a text.
- Each reader brings their **beliefs and experiences** to the text, and this connection helps to **create meaning** for the reader.
- A text uses language, symbols, tone, characters, setting, etc., but readers **interpret meaning** from the text based on the beliefs and experiences they use to interact with the text.
- RRT allows for texts to have **multiple meanings** based on how a reader interprets the language, symbols, tone, characters, setting, etc.
- Ultimately, there is a "**transaction**" between the reader and the text to create meaning.