

CHILDREN'S FANTASY LITERATURE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Annotation: This article explores children's fantasy literature in English and Uzbek traditions, examining its origins, cultural role, linguistic characteristics, and pedagogical significance. It considers the development of English fantasy through the Grimms, Lewis Carroll, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and J.K. Rowling, alongside the Uzbek tradition of oral folklore, epic narratives such as Alpomish, and modern literary contributions by Xudoyberdi To'xtaboyev. Through comparative analysis, the article highlights both universal motifs and culturally specific elements of fantasy, emphasizing the importance of translation, educational use, and intercultural appreciation.

Key words: Children's literature; fantasy; English; Uzbek; folklore; Grimm; Carroll; Tolkien; Rowling; To'xtaboyev; epics; oral tradition.

Children's fantasy literature occupies a central position in the cultural and imaginative lives of young readers, serving as both a mirror of inherited traditions and a creative space where new worlds can be imagined. The study of English and Uzbek children's fantasy reveals both convergences and divergences that stem from history, culture, and language, yet they ultimately serve a shared purpose of fostering imagination, moral development, and cultural continuity. The English tradition emerged strongly in the nineteenth century, though its foundations lie in earlier folklore and fairy tales, while Uzbek children's fantasy has always been deeply rooted in oral traditions, epics, and folk narratives, later shaped by literary modernization and authors such as Xudoyberdi To'xtaboyev. Both traditions reveal the universal power of fantasy to guide children through symbolic journeys of discovery, but they differ in the ways they imagine authority, morality, and community.

The Brothers Grimm are central to understanding the early impact of fairy tales on English-speaking readers, even though they were German compilers rather than English authors. Their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* shaped the European imagination, including England's, and familiarized children with archetypal plots: lost children in dangerous forests, magical helpers and gifts, wicked stepmothers, and the ultimate triumph of goodness and justice. These tales created a reservoir of motifs later absorbed into English fantasy. For instance, the perilous forest in *Hansel and Gretel* echoes in later English narratives such as C.S. Lewis's snow-covered Narnia or Tolkien's Mirkwood, showing the long-lasting influence of folklore structures. At the same time, the Grimms' emphasis on moral lessons, with virtue rewarded and wickedness punished, resonated with the didactic traditions of Victorian England, which saw children's literature as a tool for instruction as well as amusement.

However, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* disrupted this purely moralistic tendency by presenting a world that thrived on absurdity, wordplay, and satire rather than straightforward morality. Alice's shifting identity, constant changes in size, and encounters with nonsensical rules highlight not virtue or wickedness but rather the instability of logic and language. Carroll's humor, rooted in riddles and linguistic puzzles, posed immense challenges for translation, including into Uzbek, where linguistic play often requires radical reimagining. Alice introduced a new model of fantasy in which children were not simply passive learners of moral lessons but active explorers of language and meaning. This element of playfulness

resonates with Uzbek oral tales too, though in a different manner: Uzbek *ertaklar* often include formulaic rhymes, repeated challenges, and riddling contests that test wit and verbal dexterity, such as those found in *Boy-Bola va Dev*, where a clever child defeats a terrifying giant through intelligence and trickery. Both Carroll and Uzbek folklore show how children's fantasy can destabilize adult authority, yet the means differ: in English through linguistic absurdity, in Uzbek through wit and traditional proverbs.

Moving into the mid-twentieth century, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien further shaped English fantasy into a global model. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* brought together Christian allegory, fairy-tale motifs, and modern child psychology. When Lucy Pevensie steps through the wardrobe and discovers Narnia, the act echoes both fairy-tale thresholds and religious initiation, blending myth with moral pedagogy. The presence of Aslan as a Christ-like redeemer shows how English fantasy could embed theological symbolism within an accessible children's adventure. At the same time, Lewis preserved fairy-tale simplicity: children are central, their choices determine the fate of worlds, and moral clarity is emphasized through clear contrasts between good and evil. Tolkien, by contrast, developed a far more linguistically and historically complex secondary world in *The Hobbit* and later *The Lord of the Rings*. Bilbo Baggins's journey is in many ways a fairy tale writ large: the small, reluctant hero leaves his comfort zone, overcomes monstrous foes, and finds hidden courage. Yet Tolkien's philological interests meant that language itself became world-building, with Elvish tongues, Dwarvish runes, and invented histories deepening the fantasy experience. For English children, this represented not just an entertaining story but also an entry into mythopoeia, the creation of entirely new mythologies that still bore the mark of Northern European folklore.

The late twentieth century saw English fantasy take on a more global and commercial form with J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. By blending the English boarding-school tradition with magical adventure, Rowling crafted a hybrid narrative where fantasy served as a metaphor for adolescence, prejudice, and power struggles. Harry's journey from neglected orphan to hero parallels Bilbo's reluctant transformation but situates it within a community of peers, friendships, and rivalries that modern children could easily relate to. The linguistic creativity of Rowling's magical vocabulary (e.g., spells like *Expelliarmus* or creatures like *Hippogriffs*) reflects the English tradition of neologism while also drawing on Latin and medieval heritage. Importantly, Rowling's work was quickly translated into Uzbek, though translators faced challenges in balancing foreignness with accessibility: how to render names like *Hogwarts* or terms like *Muggle* in a way that Uzbek children could understand while preserving the magical strangeness. Meanwhile, the Uzbek tradition of children's fantasy remained firmly tied to oral literature and folklore well into the twentieth century. The epic *Alpomish*, central to Turkic oral heritage, exemplifies a heroic narrative where the protagonist's strength and loyalty defend not just individual honor but communal identity. Unlike the solitary or reluctant heroes of English fantasy, *Alpomish* embodies collective values: he fights not for personal gain but for family, people, and ancestral heritage. The moral focus is on fidelity, bravery, and respect for elders, values deeply embedded in Uzbek culture. Folktales such as *Zumrad va Qimmat* similarly emphasize moral oppositions, rewarding kindness and humility while punishing greed and envy. Magical beings—*jinn*s, *peris*, and *devs*—appear frequently, not as mere curiosities but as forces of moral testing. The oral performance of these tales, with repetitive formulas, rhythmic phrasing, and embedded proverbs, creates a communal storytelling atmosphere that differs from the individualized reading culture of English fantasy.

Xudayberdi To'xtaboyev's novel *Shirin qovunlar mamlakati* ("The Land of Sweet Melons") is a striking example of modern Uzbek children's fantasy that combines satire, absurdity, and magical exaggeration. While rooted in everyday Uzbek life, To'xtaboyev's narrative expands

reality into surreal dimensions, where greed and selfishness are mocked through fantastical scenarios. His humor, which often exposes social flaws, can be compared to Roald Dahl in English literature, though To‘xtaboyev’s tone is less grotesque and more absurdist. His contribution shows how Uzbek fantasy adapted to modernity by absorbing elements of satire while retaining cultural symbols such as melons, markets, and communal interactions.

When we compare English and Uzbek traditions directly, several key contrasts emerge. English fantasy frequently highlights individual identity formation, whether in Alice’s assertion of self against nonsense, Bilbo’s growth into courage, or Harry’s maturation into a leader. Uzbek fantasy, by contrast, stresses communal values and the continuity of tradition: Zumrad’s kindness is rewarded not simply for her own sake but as a model of behavior for the community; Alpomish fights for his people; To‘xtaboyev’s absurd critiques are aimed at improving society as a whole. Linguistically, English fantasy revels in neologisms, invented languages, and puns, while Uzbek fantasy relies on oral formulae, rhythmic refrains, and proverbial wisdom. Morally, English texts often depict rebellion against unjust authority—the Queen of Hearts, the White Witch, Voldemort—while Uzbek texts emphasize humility, generosity, and respect as pathways to triumph.

Translation is a crucial issue in comparative study. Carroll’s wordplay often resists Uzbek equivalents, while Uzbek oral rhythms lose some of their impact when translated into English prose. The problem is not simply linguistic but cultural: how to translate melons, proverbs, or oral storytelling cadences into English without erasing their local flavor. Likewise, English fantasy’s invented words like Quidditch or Hobbit must be rendered into Uzbek in ways that maintain magical novelty without confusing young readers. Illustrations add another layer: English fantasy has a long tradition of illustration, from Tenniel’s engravings for Alice to cinematic adaptations of Harry Potter.

The pedagogical functions of both traditions are also significant. In English classrooms, fantasy texts like Harry Potter are used to encourage ethical debate about prejudice, loyalty, and courage. In Uzbekistan, folktales like Zumrad va Qimmat are used to reinforce cultural identity, teach proverbs, and pass down communal wisdom. To‘xtaboyev’s satirical fantasies help children learn to laugh at greed and corruption, suggesting the power of humor as moral education. Comparative pedagogy that introduces Uzbek children to English fantasy and English-speaking children to Uzbek folktales would not only enrich education but also promote intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, children’s fantasy literature in English and Uzbek reveals the universal human need for imaginative journeys while reflecting the unique cultural and historical contexts of each tradition. From the Grimms’ forests and Carroll’s nonsense to Tolkien’s epic worlds and Rowling’s magical schools, English fantasy has emphasized individual growth, linguistic creativity, and often resistance to oppressive authority. From Alpomish and Zumrad va Qimmat to To‘xtaboyev’s absurdly humorous narratives, Uzbek fantasy has emphasized communal loyalty, oral rhythm, and moral lessons rooted in cultural continuity. Both traditions remind us that fantasy, while entertaining, carries the deeper function of guiding children through symbolic explorations of self, society, and morality. By studying them together, we see how fantasy serves not only as literature but as a bridge between cultures, an archive of heritage, and a promise for future imagination.

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