

Kids' books featuring animals with human traits lead to less learning of the natural world

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A new study by University of Toronto researchers has found that kids' books featuring animals with human characteristics not only lead to less factual learning but also influence children's reasoning about animals.

Researchers also found that young readers are more likely to attribute [human behaviors](#) and emotions to [animals](#) when exposed to [books](#) with anthropomorphized animals than books depicting animals realistically.

"Books that portray animals realistically lead to more learning and more accurate biological understanding," says lead author Patricia Ganea, Assistant Professor with the University of Toronto's Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development. "We were surprised to find that even the older children in our study were sensitive to the anthropocentric portrayals of animals in the books and attributed more [human](#) characteristics to animals after being exposed to fantastical books than after being exposed to realistic books."

This study has implications for the type of books adults use to teach children about the real world. The researchers advise parents and teachers to consider using a variety of informational and nonfiction books, and to use factual language when describing the biological world to young children.

The study was recently published in the online journal *Frontiers in*

Psychology.

More information: journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00283/abstract

Provided by University of Toronto

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