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THE RISE OF AMERICAN GIRLS' LITERATURE

Ashley N. Reese

University of South Florida



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The Rise of American Girls' Literature

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ABSTRACT: This Element looks at the publishing history of the genre, girls' literature, in the United States spanning 1850–1940. The genre is set in context, beginning with an examination of the early American women's literature that preceded girls' literature. Then the Element explores several subgenres of girls' literature, the family story, orphan story, school story, as well as African American girls' literature. Underpinning each of these stories is the *bildungsroman*, which overwhelmingly ends with girls "growing down" to marry and raise children, following the ideals outlined in the cult of domesticity.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/reese

KEYWORDS: *bildungsroman*, domestic realism, women's literature, nineteenth century, twentieth century

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