Beyond the book: Historical Fiction, "Images of Life," and the Scene of Reading in the Dear America and American Girl Series

Abstract
Kit's Surprise: A Christmas Story is the third book in the American Girl series that follows the life of Kit, a nine-year-old girl growing up during the Great Depression. Throughout this chapter book, Kit negotiates the relationship between reality and fantasy. Kit’s realistic outlook, prompted by her family’s financial woes in the Great Depression, contrasts with her well-off best friend Ruthie’s penchant for princess and ogre stories (Tripp 14). Ruthie attempts to give Kit one of her old Christmas dresses and free ballet tickets so they can continue their holiday tradition of going out with their mothers. When Kit refuses to accept Ruthie’s gift out of pride and shame, an ensuing fight between them dramatizes this conflict between reality and fantasy. Kit yells: “You’re always talking about wishes and wicked ogres and make-believe. You don’t know what’s real. Your father still has his job. You can do whatever you want. You have everything, except you don’t have any idea what the world is really like” (34). Kit refuses to believe that the imaginary can have any benefit until she begins to write one afternoon:  Once upon a time, she began. And then the story seemed to sweep her away. It wasn’t the kind of story she usually wrote for her newspaper. This story was not about facts. It didn’t report what was really happening. This story was about a completely different world, the kind of world Ruthie liked, a world that was imaginary. In this world, Kit could make anything she wanted to happen happen. (47-8) She soon realizes how the imaginary can make her worries prompted by the Great Depression disappear. Moreover, she discovers a power and freedom in fantasy, which is not a mere luxury. She actually needs this other world in order to cope with the great problems that she, as a child, suffers due to the Depression. The Dear America chapter-book series, another historical fiction series for girl-readers, also thematizes the tie between the real and the imaginary, though it approaches the theme by representing fantasy as more than a creation of the individual imagination. As per the series’ trademark, Christmas After All: The Great Depression Diary of Minnie Swift presents a fictional girl’s diary “written” during the Great Depression.
A children's series chronicling major events in American history. Score. A book's total score is based on multiple factors, including the number of people who have voted for it and how highly those voters ranked the book. All Votes Add Books To This List.

1. I blame these for my addiction to historical fiction, my hopeless romanticism, and the fact that I cry way too easy.

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message 7: by sümm r-ryñ hôp sọ (new). Mar 30, 2011 10:40AM. I love them there my favorite books I have read all of them. I loooovvve Dear America and read all of them when I was younger and now I recently discovered Dear Canada and I love them as well! Getty Images. Books can be incredibly powerful. They have the ability to suck us in, take us on adventures, and influence the way we think. The writing in the series also matures as Harry does, so young (and old) readers really get the feeling of growing up." - -Caitlin Harper, operations manager. Amazon synopsis: "Harry Potter has no idea how famous he is. The sentimental children's book taught me a few important lessons about life and death, the unbreakable bond shared between a parent and their child, and, perhaps most important, a lesson about the existence of unconditional love all of which changed my life in important ways. My younger self found much comfort in knowing that the love my parents had for me as a child, and I for them, was not something anyone could ever outgrow." The Dear America chapter-book series, another historical fiction series for girl-readers, also thematizes the tie between the real and the imaginary, though it approaches the theme by representing fantasy as more than a creation of the individual imagination. As per the series' trademark, Christmas After All: The Great Depression Diary of Minnie Swift presents a fictional girl's diary “written” during the Great Depression. Description. Franklin and Marshall College Archives, Undergraduate Honors Thesis 2005. URI: http://hdl.handle.net/11016/750.