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Goody Two-Shoes as a Self-Made Child: Children's Literature in the Age of Enlightenment

Kendini Yaratan İyilik Timsali Margery: Aydınlanma Döneminde Çocuk Edebiyatı

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Abstract

Considered one of the earliest novels of modern children's literature, John Newbery's *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* harmonises moral instruction with entertainment, and it presents an exemplary female character for its child readers. Even though Newbery's novel can be read as a modern Cinderella story with its eponymous Goody Two-Shoes transforming from an orphan into a lady of profession and good fortune, the novel also stands out with its celebration of the tenets of enlightenment. Goody Two-Shoes not only represents John Newbery and John Locke's ideas concerning the education of children, but she is also a child of the Age of Enlightenment with her unique pedagogy, individualistic

Öz

Modern çocuk edebiyatının ilk roman örneklerinden biri sayılan John Newbery'nin *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* isimli eseri ahlaki eğitim ile eğlendirici olma unsurunu harmanlar ve çocuk okuyucularına örnek bir kız çocuk karakter sunar. Newbery'nin eseri, esere ismini veren Goody Two-Shoes'ın yetim bir çocuktan meslek sahibi ve varlıklı bir hanımefendiye dönüşümü bağlamında modern bir Cinderella hikayesi olarak okunabilse de roman aynı zamanda aydınlanma prensiplerini benimsemesiyle öne çıkar. Goody Two-Shoes, diğer ismiyle Margery, John Newbery ve John Locke'un çocuk eğitimine ilişkin fikirlerini temsil etmekle kalmaz, ayrıca kendine has pedagojisi,

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attitude, emphasis on rationalism, and rejection of the occult. In her character, Goody Two-Shoes, namely Margery, brings together patience, virtue, industriousness, and self-confidence, thereby becoming a female child counterpart of the individualistic literary characters of the eighteenth-century literature. Her social and economic mobility ensured by her own endeavours renders her a self-made child who contests normative gender roles drawn by the patriarchy. This paper analyses Newbery's *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* as an example of children's literature in the Age of Enlightenment with a specific focus on Margery's development and the values she represents.

Keywords: Children's Literature, John Newbery, Goody Two-Shoes, Enlightenment, Eighteenth Century.

bireyci tutumu, akılcılığa verdiği önem ve akıldışı fikirleri reddetmesi ile bir Aydınlanma Dönemi çocuğudur. Goody Two-Shoes; sabır, erdem, çalışkanlık ve özgüven gibi özelikleri kendi karakterinde bir araya getirir ve böylelikle on sekizinci yüzyıl edebiyatındaki bireyci yetişkin karakterlerin kadın ve çocuk mevkidaşı olarak ortaya çıkar. Kendi emekleri sonucunda gerçekleşen toplumsal ve ekonomik yükselişi, Margery'i ataerki tarafından belirlenmiş normatif cinsiyet rollerine itiraz eden ve böylelikle kendini yaratan bir çocuk kılar. Bu çalışma, Newbery'nin *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* isimli eserini özellikle Margery'nin gelişimine ve onun temsil ettiği değerlere odaklanarak, Aydınlanma Dönemi çocuk edebiyatı örneği olarak analiz eder.

Anahtar kelimeler: Çocuk Edebiyatı, John Newbery, Goody Two-Shoes, Aydınlanma, On Sekizinci Yüzyıl.

"I observed before,
that a woman must be very poor, very old,
and live in a neighbourhood where the people are very stupid,
before she can possibly pass for a witch." (Newbery, p. 64)

Published by John Newbery in 1765 in his London publishing house of children's books, *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* is one of the earliest novels of modern English children's literature.[2] [3] In the narrowest sense, *Goody Two-Shoes* narrates the life story of Margery Meanwell, the daughter of a farmer. Margery's parents lose their farm to an opportunist landowner and tenant, and they die soon leaving Margery and her elder brother as orphans in cruel, competitive, and materialistic world. The main story follows Margery's development from a farmer's daughter into a self-taught educator and

[2] There are controversies regarding the authorship of *Goody Two-Shoes*. John Newbery is often considered to be the writer of *Goody Two-Shoes* as he is known to have written most of the children's books published in his publishing house. Some sources attribute the authorship of *Goody Two-Shoes* to Oliver Goldsmith, a noteworthy eighteenth-century novelist (Bottigheimer, 1998, p. 193).

[3] Even though Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* is one of the earliest examples of modern children's literature in England, it cannot be called a novel for it is a collection of fairy tales, songs and alphabet. Contrarily, *Goody Two-Shoes* follows a plotline which features Margery's development.

respectable woman in a small village, which consists mainly of farmers and men of religion. The story is often called a modern Cinderella story as it inculcates in its child readers the dignity of enduring hardships as well as the importance of being patient, humble, and good-hearted in every circumstance. Margery's acquisition of high socioeconomic status eventually reveals the central moral of the story, assuring the naïve reader of the fact that the good ones are always rewarded.

Although *Goody Two-Shoes* is not the first book that comes to mind when children's literature is in question, it saw great sales figures reaching 29 editions in 30 years (Rose, 1995, p. 219). Moreover, it has become a pioneer in the history of children's literature laying certain themes and leitmotifs that would recursively be used in modern children's classics such as Swedish children's classic *Heidi* (1881) by Johanna Spyri and American children's classic *Pollyanna* (1913) by Eleanor H. Porter.[4]

Goody Two-Shoes has received many critical explorations by the scholars of children's literature, specifically regarding its differences from the earlier texts written for children. However, there is hardly any study which focuses on Margery as an independent female character. The greatest novelists of the eighteenth-century literature such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Charlotte Lennox, and Henry Fielding have been applauded for focusing on female experiences and featuring their female protagonists' social, economic, and psychological upheavals. However, Margery Meanwell, who can be called the child counterpart of these eighteenth-century female characters, has been debarred from readings that focus on her character. Being one of the first novel-characters of children's literature, Newbery's Margery is of great importance in terms of being a self-educated and individualistic female child. Margery resists normative gender roles in the patriarchal social order of the eighteenth-century England first as a female child, then as a young woman, and finally as a lady of profession and good fortune. In this regard, she also becomes a female epitome of Enlightenment, which has bred individualistic and economically independent self-made literary characters.

In its present context, the concept of goody two-shoes has disapproving associations. According to *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, it is "a person who always behaves well, and perhaps has a disapproving attitude to people who do not" (n. pag.). Similarly, *Cambridge Dictionary* defines goody two-shoes, a.k.a, "goody goody" as "someone who is ready to behave in a way intended to please people in authority" (n. pag.). Contemporary and popular associations of goody two-shoes may sound disturbing for the feminist reader and critic. Morality, kind-heartedness, and helpfulness of extreme degrees, which also mark Margery's character, arguably entail misconceptions and assumptions concerning womanhood, and they give way to a stereotypical and idealized image of womanhood. Nevertheless, the idiom of "goody two-shoes" obviously did not have such disapproving associations when Newbery published his book; contrarily, it was a repercussion of a popular literary practice, which was to name characters in line with their outstanding traits. As Sister M. Charles Veronica (1965) states,

> occasionally writers of the eighteenth century used words so aptly in names that the reader could glean the central traits just by being introduced to the characters […] the names of

[4] Such texts similarly revolve around social, economic, and psychological developments of their female characters, and they serve as exemplary rags-to-riches stories for the child reader/listener.

> characters in *Goody Two Shoes* show the same literary flair; among the better known are Meanwell, Gripe, and Graspall. (p. 575)

It is not known whether the idiom was already popular before Newbery's book, or the book popularized it; however, it is crystal clear that goody two-shoes did not bear any negative association regarding womanhood or femininity at the time, and better yet, its connotations helped underline Margery's character as a kind, helpful, and individualistic woman and educator. Even the surname of Margery, which is Meanwell, accords well with her nickname, pointing at the fact that her motivations are not marked by any prejudice and selfish interest.

Margery's independent character as a young woman is first emphasized in the beginning of the novel when her brother, Tommy leaves Mouldwell to work on sea. Tommy can live and work away from home as a boy, whereas Margery is left behind as a female child who needs the care and protection of others. At first, "With Tommy gone, Margery was inconsolable" (Crain, 2016, p. 24). She cries all around the village with a single shoe on her foot for she is left parentless with no sibling and home. After a benevolent man gives her a new pair of shoes, which earns her the eponymous nickname, she overcomes her grief. Margery's acquisition of a new pair of shoes, which is a powerful leitmotif, marks the start of her transformation. As Patricia Crain (2016) argues, "Goody's shoes invest her with some to-be-specified new powers, along with her new name" (p. 24). Her new shoes indeed empower and liberate Margery. They transform "her grief into an energizing delight" (Crain, 2016, p. 26). On symbolic level, Margery's new shoes also mark her departure from rural childhood and protective boundaries of domestic sphere as an emblem of culture and modernity. That she starts to be called Goody Two-Shoes highlights her independence, stability, and self-assurance, "rendering her the opposite of footloose or vagrant" (Crain, 2016, p. 26). With the shoes, Margery enters the public sphere and the harsh world of men as well as the world of intelligentsia where she can prove herself as a woman of letters.

Having no close family member or relative who is willing to take care of her, Margery displays an individualistic attitude and expects no favour from other people. Firstly, she educates herself with the use of borrowed books, and then starts to instruct other children who are "more ignorant than herself" (Newbery, p. 18). She turns this into her livelihood. Margery does not let poverty and loneliness make her life miserable, instead the disadvantages of her life encourage her. Her goal is to become a good educator. Becoming a governess, or tutoress was already a popular profession for women in the eighteenth-century England. It was even promoted as a respectable and favourable profession for the young ladies in the fictional texts of the period including Sarah Fielding's *The Governess*, which is an early school story written for young women. However, Margery's self-imposed discipline proves much more liberating. Margery's development into a working and self-sufficient woman occurs without the help of any institution or authority. As Barbara Siderius (1976) indicates, "Goody Two-Shoes shows traditional rise from rags-to-riches through virtue, as a poor little girl gains learning and wisdom, and thus ascends to fame and fortune" (p. 37). Her success comes with self-assurance, self-confidence, hard work as well as virtue.

Margery proves to be a unique educator as she introduces an unconventional pedagogy as a young tutoress by liberating herself from traditional ways. She cuts letters out of wood, and she turns theoretical education into an entertaining and engaging one, in other words, a game which makes the students an active part of education.[5] The students learn spelling and writing by forming syllables and then words using wooden alphabets. Margery becomes a guide who helps the students only when it is necessary. In doing so, she embraces Newbery's as well as Locke's "recipe" in children's literature which is "amusement and instruction" (Leeson, p. 27). Margery's letters, along with actual cuts sold by Newbery, can also be found inscribed on the actual pages of Newbery's book. This makes reading Newbery's book an interactive experience. Using Margery as his alter ego, Newbery achieves to incorporate his child readers into Margery's education and enables a bond and identification between his readers and Margery's students. In this way, both Margery's students and Newbery's readers learn how to spell while they simultaneously enjoy themselves.

Margery's educational style is more than a simple academic learning. She becomes a role model and an exemplary figure for her students with her virtuous and equalitarian approach. She places her students in a circle making sure that her students receive the same education regardless of their gender as well as economic circumstances:

> The usual manner of spelling, or carrying on the game, as they called it, was this: suppose the word to be spell was plum-pudding, (and who can suppose a better?) the children were placed in a circle, and the first brought the letter p, the next l, the next u, the next m, and so on till the whole word was spelt; and if any one brought a wrong letter, he was to pay a fine, or play no more. This was their play; and every morning she used to go round to teach the children with these rattle-traps in a basket […] (Newbery 18)

Margery's techniques are reminiscent of Lockean ideas related to the education of children as suggested in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.[6] Locke considers "worldly education" a necessity in the light of his "emphasis on sensory experience" and his idea of *tabula rasa* (Fleming, 2013, p. 464). The earlier examples of children's literature, specifically Puritan books, were marked by morbid depictions, and they were highly moralistic and religious-oriented. Nevertheless, Locke's ideas on the importance of the education of children increased the importance given to the reading material offered to children, and this accordingly necessitated a secular literary production for children which would prepare children not for death or an afterlife but for a decent life as well as the competitive and harsh public environment outside the secure family house.

At this juncture, as Heather Klemann (2011) writes, "Newbery marries Lockean pedagogy and epistemology in his publications, bringing more of the wide world tangibly into the purview of the

[5] As indicated on its first page, *Goody Two-Shoes* came "ornamented with cuts", that is to say, with actual wooden letters similar to that of Margery. It was a common practice for Newbery to sell toys or educational equipment with the books for an extra couple of pence. *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* is also accompanied by a ball, a pincushion, and pins to be used by the child reader to count their good and bad actions (Brown, 2006, p. 352).

[6] As a publisher of children's books, John Newbery himself advocated Locke's ideas about children's education, and he is also known to have designed his books in the light of Locke's views concerning ideal reading material for children. Therefore, Margery's educational style may be considered an embodiment of both Locke's and Newbery's ideas in practice.

child he is preparing for integration into that world" (p. 225). Newbery's book embodies Locke's prescription for an ideal book for children, and in the *Goody Two-Shoes*, Margery becomes the voice of Newbery and Locke at the same time as a progressive educator. As a wandering tutoress, Margery makes sure that everyone can reach education regardless of their economic and physical limitations. Moreover, Margery takes into consideration special needs of children. While she teaches sounds to younger children, she includes more advanced subject matters in her syllabus while educating older ones. Additionally, akin to Locke's theories, Margery bases education on experience. She incorporates children's daily activities and their lifestyles into formal education in order to make education relatable to life:

> The next place we came to was Gaffer Cook's cottage. Here a number of poor children were met to learn, and all came round Little Margery at once; who having pulled out her letters, asked the little boy next her, what he had for dinner? He answered, "Bread," (the poor children in many places liver very hard.) "Well then," says she, "set up the first letter." He put up the B, to which the next added r, and the next e, the next a, the next d, and it stood thus, Bread. (Newbery, p. 23)

As Ruth B. Bottigheimer (1998) indicates, Locke discusses "educating the young in terms of religion, food, travel, speech, and learning to read" but he advises "against promiscuous reading of the Holy Bible" (p. 195). This accordingly requires a refined and secular way of incorporating religious doctrines into fiction for children. As an advocate of Lockean education and enlightenment, Margery does not take religious education out of her agenda. Even when she teaches vices and follies, she achieves to find a balance between academic and religious education as well as between entertainment and morality. In this regard, Newbery achieves to appeal "both to the child and to the adult at the same time [via Margery] without violating the values of the educators and parents" (Shavit, 1995, p. 33).

Her religious education prioritizes fundamental and practical outcomes of following moral principles, thereby exemplifying the secularisation of education and literature for children at the same time. Her lectures are often followed by anecdotes, verses, stories, or references to the Bible all of which emphasize the importance of modesty, gratefulness, kind-heartedness, helpfulness, and sharing. Margery's religious lessons occasionally contain references to death or life after death; however, they significantly diverge from the discourses found in the children's books of earlier periods which feature morbid scenes of afterlife and punishments. One of Margery's lectures on religion reads as follows:

> **A LESSON *in Religion***
> Love God, for he is good.
> Fear God, for he is just.
> Pray to God, for all good things come from him.
> Praise God, for great is his mercy towards us, and wonderful are all his works.
> Those who strive to be good have God on their side.
> Those who have God for their friend shall want nothing.
> Confess your sins to God; if you repent, he will forgive you.
> Remember that all you do is done in the presence of God.

> The time will come, my friends, when we must give
> Account to God how we on Earth do live. (Newbery, pp. 26-27)

As Patrick C. Fleming (2013) puts it, "the focus here is on secular morality, rather than Puritan piety, and children are to acquire this morality through reason" (p. 464). Like Newbery, Margery conveys intended moral precepts through amusement and reasoning instead of solemn impositions. In line with this profound emphasis on reason, Margery's understanding of Christianity rejects the occult, the supernatural, and the superstitious. There are two main instances in the novel where Margery affects the townspeople's beliefs. Firstly, she changes the townspeople's belief in ghosts when she is mistaken for the ghost of a deceased woman after being locked inside the church. The townspeople are ready to believe that there is a ghost in the church when they hear the bells ringing. Nevertheless, Margery assures them that she rang the bells, and that church is a safe place to sleep in as there is no such thing as a ghost. Margery is surely a devoted Christian, but she bases her faith on reason not hearsay or ancient stories. She displays a great power changing the townspeople's assumptions and beliefs even when she is a child. The narrator's reflection on this incident lays bare Margery as a woman of Enlightenment:

> **REFLECTION**
> After this, my dear children, I hope you will not believe any foolish stories that ignorant, weak, or designing people may tell you about ghosts; for the tales of ghosts, witches, and fairies, are the frolics of a distempered brain. No wise man ever saw either of them. Little Margery was not afraid; no, she had good sense, and a good conscience, which is a cure for all these imaginary evils. (Newbery, p. 33)

A similar rejection of the occult is seen when Margery is dubbed a witch after she teaches the farmers how to use a barometer to prevent the destruction of crops during heavy rains. It is obvious that Newbery aims to introduce barometer to his child readers through an amusing story. In addition to this explicit function, this incident also serves to problematize the subjugation and demonization of women in patriarchal societies, especially in small agricultural communities. Margery is considered a threat not only because she introduces a new technology but mainly because she is a clever and rational woman who trespasses public sphere. Her defence is a unique one as she self-assuredly lays the barometer on the table and says that if she is a witch, that is her "charm" (Newbery, p. 63). Margery not only challenges but also mocks the patriarchal community by saying that "I never supposed that any one here could be so weak as to believe there was any such thing as a witch" (Newbery, p. 63).

Margery becomes a spokesperson for women who are cast evil because they cure people using herbs, who are seen dangerous because they know more than men, and who are seen rebels because they deny being submissive and resist traditional gender roles. Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* problematizes gender roles and female stereotypes even before the arrival of literary fairy tales in the early nineteenth-century, which painstakingly reinforce patriarchy through stereotypes such as witches, damsels in distress, evil stepmothers, submissive princesses, and saviour or authoritative male

characters. The narrator's reflection accordingly prescribes the kind of education and literary production that should be given to children in the Age of Enlightenment:

> And so it is true! And they have taken up Mrs. Margery then, and accused her of being a witch, only because she was wiser than some of her neighbours! Mercy upon me! People stuff children's heads with stories of ghosts, fairies, witches, and such nonsense, when they are young, and so they continue fools all their days. (Newbery, p. 61)

Goody Two-Shoes soon becomes the principle of the Country College, proving herself an industrious person. In accordance with her new position, her name changes to Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes. Margery achieves to successfully adapt her experimental, equalitarian, and liberal educational method to an organized institution. Margery's understanding of being a good person includes the education of mind and body at the same time. To this end, Margery arranges the classroom and lectures in such a way that keeps her students mentally and physically active. She places "her different letters, or alphabets, all round the school" to make sure that her students "get up and fetch a letter, or to spell a word, when it [comes) to their turn" (Newbery, p. 38). This not only keeps "them in health" but also fixes "the letters and points firmly in their minds" (Newbery, p. 38). Such a practice resonates well with Locke's opening sentences in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, rendering Margery a Lockean teacher:

> A sound mind in a sound body, is a short, but full description. He that has these two, has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them, will be but little the better for anything else. Men's happiness or misery is most part of their own making. He, whose mind directs not wisely, will never take the right way, and he, whose body is crazy and feeble, will never be able to advance in it. (p. 5)

In line with this, Margery's lectures are accompanied by other outdoor activities that make close interaction with animals and nature possible. The Country College under the rule of Margery values respect and love for nature and animals. Margery rescues animals from their abusive owners or "naughty boys" and turns the school into a kind of farm (Newbery, p. 40). The animals, in return, "serve Goody and her students" becoming "mentors in their own right" (Crain, 2016, p. 31). There are various benefits of having animals in the school ranging from teaching children to be up early to alarming them against dangers. Once, the school dog prevents a disaster by evacuating Margery and the children from the school building just before its roof collapses. In general sense, Margery shows that there is a lesson to be learned from each and every animal: "Tippy the Lark teaches early rising, Ralph the Raven supervises the capital letters, Tom the Pidgeon carries important messages and takes care of the small letters, Will the Ba-lamb rewards good children by carrying their books" (Crain, 2016, p. 31). Moreover, Margery incorporates animals into academic and moral education in order to show that animals "are God Almighty's creatures as well as we" and "God placed them in this world to live among us; so that they are our fellow-tenants of the globe" (Newbery, p. 38). The respect for nature and the ethical use of its sources combined with morality are what make Margery a woman of Enlightenment. Goody Two-Shoes, true to her name, becomes a protective fairy godmother of children and animals and she teaches the child readers how unconditioned love and kindness pay back.

Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* also refers to social and economic problems of the period. Newbery uses Mouldwell's opportunist owner and tenant to call into question feudalist inclinations and materialistic pursuits of landowners in the eighteenth century. Sir Timothy Gripe and Mr. Graspall's scheme to eliminate small farmers out of Mouldwell is linked mainly to immorality, functioning as a moral message to the child and adult reader at the same time. Juxtaposed to the opportunist characters, Margery represents innovative and modernist spirit of the Age of Enlightenment, and her exemplary life story serves as a projection of a new nation that is on the rise. As Robert Leeson (1982) puts it, the eighteenth century was not an era of "folk heroes of the past" (p. 28). The audience of the period "wanted their stake in the kingdom and could believe in Goody Two Shoes growing up to run a dame school or her brother coming back from sea with a bag of gold" (Leeson, 1982, p. 28). Therefore, Newbery turns his face to rising industrialism and individualism of the eighteenth century and his focus becomes a woman's development starting from her childhood in a changing society. Margery's development into a woman of letters heralds a new era which makes social and economic mobility possible through education, rationality, and scientific thought. In this regard, as Leeson points out, Margery's experiences reflect "the switch from children's stories based on the folk heritage of the village era and the oral tradition, to children's stories specifically written for the literate section of industrial society" (Leeson, 1982, p. 28). Likewise, as Crain (1982) argues, "Goody emerges as a product of print and of the eighteenth-century public sphere" and that means she embodies not only the innovations seen in the publishing industry for children but also economic, social, scientific, and political developments that took place in the Age of Enlightenment (p. 23).

Once Goody Two-Shoes, then Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes, Margery eventually becomes a lady marrying the widower, Charles Jones. On her wedding day, she acquires "an ample fortune" with the return of her brother, Tommy, from the sea (Newbery, p. 66). For Newbery, "virtue" leads first to literacy "and then to prosperity", and only those who can use it truly and wisely can keep it (Bottigheimer, 1998, p. 199). Margery uses her fortune for good purposes regularly donating to the church and becoming "a mother to the poor, a physician to the sick, and a friend to all who were in distress" (Newbery, p. 70). Margery eventually purchases the Mouldwell estate from which she had been expelled. Margery's humbleness and diligence combined with her virtuous personality are used as lessons, showing "how to achieve eventual reward through constant avoidance of naughtiness" (Siderius, 1976, p. 40).

Even though Margery's upheaval seems to "weld fairy tale upward mobility to parables of Christian progress", Newbery's story, as a matter of fact, "promise[s] earthly rewards and present[s] an abundance of details extraneous to the didactic plot" (Brown, 2006, p. 356). At this juncture, Newbery's text leaves conventional didacticism of children's literature and reveals itself as a manifesto of enlightenment, pointing at the possibility of success welded by the individual strife on/for this world. Obviously, Margery is a self-made child and then a woman who knows how to build a future and fortune by not yielding to moral corruption. Her purchase of the property is also a symbolic replacement of the corrupt patriarchy by the productive and self-assured matriarchy. As a representative of the progressive spirit of the enlightenment, Margery brings a new order to Mouldwell.

She makes equality, justice, and kindness her priorities, and she simultaneously shows that anyone who leads an honest and industrious life can become successful.

Although Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* seems to be conveying qualities that are associated with stereotypical childhood and womanhood drawn by the patriarchal society such as kindness and virtue, Margery achieves to dismantle gender-normative assumptions and ideas through her pedagogy, discipline, compassion, and independence especially when she is compared to her literary ancestors. Margery's qualities serve to fulfil the didactic function of children's literature while they simultaneously help mirror the philosophical mindset of the Age of Enlightenment. In that regard, Margery proves to be a seminal character marking the start of a new era for children's literature, which is instructive, entertaining as well as moralistic on secular terms. Even though children's literature of the later periods has produced female children who act in ways that reiterate and reinforce normative gender roles, Newbery's Margery remains to be a character of many firsts. Goody Two-Shoes was ahead of her time, a self-made child, and probably the youngest feminist of English literature.

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