

**After Water Swallowed Everything:
The Great East Japan Earthquake and Children's Literature**

Children's Literature has some responsibility to teach children traumatic experiences in human history in specific ways that children can comprehend them at each stage of development. The East part of Japan experienced the massive earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011. A large number of people died, and a multitude of people lost their precious members of family or relatives, pets or cattle. The Great East Japan Earthquake is still vivid experience for many people, and many children have a clear memory of the disaster including the case that children watched the scenes of the tsunami swallowing people, cars, houses and buildings on TV.

This paper will investigate how children's literature and picture books depict this traumatic disaster and what they teach children through the tragedy. After reading the literature on the earthquake and tsunami how do children have hope or courage to establish the new future? What consideration do these books for young children have to learn the meanings of nature or the relation between nature and human beings? This paper will analyze several books for children aged 5 to 10. *Himawari no Oka* (*The Hill of Sunflowers*), and *Kaze no Denwa* (*A Phonecall of the Wind*) do not depict the disaster directly, but both tell the sadness of losing friends and familiar people. Literary works have the power to show the essential meanings that the data or records cannot convey. Literature can introduce young children to the tragic events that happened around themselves. Nature is the origin of the world, the origin of nature is water, and water is the origin of life. To feel nature intimately in one's childhood has a significant influence on one's formation of lifestyle and senses of values. But nature is not always tender to human beings. Disasters caused by natural phenomena destroy thoroughly human lives. This paper will focus on how the children's literature on the Great East Japan Earthquake narrate blessings and menace of nature, despair and hope, and frustration and courage.