



The Adventures of Pinocchio in The Arab World

By:

Prof. Antoine Al Chartouni

Dr. Shereen Kreidieh

The story of Pinocchio is a realistic fantasy.

The story of Pinocchio is an Italian children's folktale known worldwide. At the time of its conception the author, Carlo Collodi, did not know that this story would gain so much traction. Since 1881 this story has been widely told to children till today, there have also been several cinematic adaptations and articles that refer to the character of Pinocchio. Through this, the concept of the 'Pinocchio Effect' emerged which describes the child who lies and engages in socially undesirable behavior. The attention this story has received can be seen as a sign that this character exists in the conscious and subconscious mind of every person, be it an adult or a child.

Pinocchio in the Arab world

This famous classic modern fantasy children's book is well known in the Arab World through Disney movies and several published classical collections. Nowadays, Pinocchio is not very attractive to the new Arab market for several reasons. When looking at the Arab market we find that the main buyers are schools, parents, or government organizations with the primary aim of teaching a child and exposing them to essential topics in their education. As a result, realistic fiction books sell well in the Arab World. Several elements of the story affect its sales and demand. The element of magic is not very well-liked by Arab consumers due to religious beliefs, especially the presence of a fairy which is translated in Arabic into "JINNIYA" which refers to the term "jin" making it a rather sinful terminology. The wooden boy transforming into a donkey and then into a human child are more reasons customers from this background are deterred. On the other hand, punishing the protagonist for lying and rewarding him at the

end for his improvement in behaviour as well as the aspect of forgiveness are important values sought out for in children's literature. Lately in the Arab World, there has been a high demand for original Arabic texts which exposes children to their contemporary issues and problems in addition to respecting and honouring the Arab culture and values which are highly affected by religion and human relations.

Tens of different editions were found in the Arabic language ranging from board books to chapter books by publishers from different Arab countries. The plot, characters, and story lines change in the editions. Two editions published by two different Lebanese publishers will be reviewed.



Edition one is a board book under the collection the golden Library. The story line is very simplified where there is a woodman who wished for a child and then the magician came and changed the toy he was working on to a wooden boy whose nose will elongate when he lies. The woodman gave Pinocchio money to buy medicine but Pinocchio bought candy instead and he lied to his father when Pinocchio said he lost the money on the way. As a result, his nose elongated and the witch appeared again telling him that his nose will get longer again if he lies. That night the woodman was sick so Pinocchio gave him medicine and took care of him at night because he felt guilty. The witch wanted to reward the child for his deed and she changed him into a real boy and they lived happily ever after.

This version shortened the original version and excluded many characters like the Green Cricket. The author did this so the story can be small and simple for young readers with few pages. The Fairy is replaced or named as a witch in this version too. The story line concentrated on the importance of telling the truth, being good to elderly, and being rewarded at the end which are all important elements in Arabic children's literature and Arabic culture.



The second edition is for an older age group published under the collection of lady bird series. Pinocchio in this edition is messing up from the beginning and he was happy when Gepeto was taken into prison. Then the Green Cricket appears trying to guide Pinocchio yet Pinocchio tries to kill him. In this version, the aggression displayed in Pinocchio's behaviors, the urge for revenge, and the lack of acceptance of others might explain Pinocchio's self-rejection, especially since the storyteller stated from the beginning that Pinocchio is just a useless piece of wood. The use of words indicating self-aggression, such as knives, throwing oneself into the sea, hanging oneself, stabbing, and others, points to the self-aggression that many children, especially teenagers, suffer from. Perhaps the writer in this Arabic version attempted to raise awareness about the issue, but in such psychological disorders, it is better to address the topic clearly and directly. The images used in the story are not cheerful childlike illustrations but rather images depicting sadness, suffering, and anxiety experienced by the wooden child, reflecting the struggle he faces to live up to his father's expectations. The absence of the mother figure can be interpreted through the presence of the fairy, whom the writer portrayed as a single nice girl, especially in the Arab context, where the term 'fairy' is not commonly used in children's literature or is better avoided. Some physical deformities, expressed through words like blind and lame, cannot be used in a children's book. Such labels fall under the category of bullying. Therefore, it is an educational obligation to read a story as such before presenting it to children.

Looking at covers of Pinocchio published in Arabic, what is clear is the wide range of age groups that the editions have been addressing starting from early readers with soft and board books to picture books, series of books, and young adult versions. Some appear to be a more

direct translation of the original version while others have a changed perspective. Some editions are sold in very reasonable price reaching 0.5 USD in Egyptian editions while the others are fancier and more expensive to be purchased. In some editions Pinocchio seems like a lovable character while in others he is less relatable to. One edition has a different subtitle, Pinocchio: The Journey of Looking for God. Sometimes Gepetto or the dad is shown as an old man while in others he is portrayed as a middle-aged man. What is clear that Pinocchio is very different in so many ways highlighting its spread in the Arab World as a children's classic.



Pinocchio has two inseparable sides:

The first side portrays reckless behavior seen in his lies, his destain at following orders, etc. Due to this, he has come to represent impoliteness with no respect for boundaries. This changes throughout the story with help from his father, the blue fairy, and his friends, Pinocchio learns how to become a polite and ‘socially acceptable’ child.

The flip side describes a child with a big, loving heart, a transparent and conscious soul with a strong will that helps him traverse situations where he is the victim of aggressive behavior and ridicule from Cynics.

The author took a prominent role in defining what a normal child’s personality and upbringing must look like. Through this story, the author portrays an unrealistic depiction of a child. The child he describes is one who is obedient, polite, and does everything asked by his parents with no complaints. The perception of reality in Pinocchio is different from children’s stories which were popular at the time. Despite the ‘strangeness’ of the story, Collodi ends the story with a clear message: Pinocchio can only become a real boy when he listens to his father, goes to school to be educated, and becomes ‘civilized’.

Another notion that appeared in the story is the physiological transformations that turned the protagonist from a lost child “made of wood (cheap wood)” to a donkey and to finally reach the full “human” state. This represents the gradual transformation of the child’s feelings from neutral/no feelings to feelings of guilt, which continue to develop into feelings of complete humanity. This is what unconsciously attracted people to the story, old and young, since it projected the feelings that are actively searched for throughout the different stages in our lives.

Pinocchio’s personality from a psychoanalytical perspective

While reading his story, we notice that Pinocchio is a rebellious child, he likes discovery, moves a lot, suffers from a lack of attention, and is curious about the outside world although it confuses his focus, amongst other things that resembles the characteristics of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). These characteristics are found frequently in clinics for psychotherapy and psychological counseling, and oftentimes, their parents deal with problems of separation, divorce, or there are cases of parental rejection of the child. However, we cannot place the full blame on the parents, there is also the company of deviant friends, the failure to

comprehend and apply the idea of limits that the child learns from his father and the surrounding society; so many things that can push any child, including Pinocchio into social deviation.

To add, Pinocchio kept refusing to listen to his Super Ego, or simply put, his conscience. Instead, he followed the path of social pleasures, the “Pleasure Principle” for many reasons such as the absence of the true image of the father that determines the child's behavior. This helps him in forming his ‘supreme superiority’, the lack of a sense of security due to the absence of the mother and her presence, and instead replaced with the presences of friends who also had problems being in contact with their conscience.

However, the educational role allowed its hero to try his best to change and to comfort his father and the blue fairy who played a positive role in Pinocchio's life, despite the presence of characters who were bad friends such as the fox, the cat, etc. So why do we love Pinocchio? Why do we project onto him, and why do we empathize with his character? The answer is very simple: Pinocchio is not a child, not a machine, not real and not imaginary (because he speaks and moves), not emotionless and not full of emotions... He is simply a wood “personage” who has no past (or childhood), he has no real people in his life except the wood and the carpenter who made him. Despite all these components that made Pinocchio the character he is, we, as readers of all ages, love his independence, his "free" and sometimes reckless way of thinking. This is all in some way what a person strives for, which Pinocchio portrayed in his life.

Some of the characters that accompanied Pinocchio on his adventures:

Many characters had a turn in the spotlight and all played a prominent role in this story be it directly or indirectly:

- Gepetto, the man who had dreamt of playing the role of a father in any form. He had prayed for the doll he made from scraps to come to life, and this carpenter's wish was fulfilled. This man was a role model for his son and an example of fatherhood despite having some flaws, such as the inability to set the limits that parents should set towards their children.
- The fairy (or The Blue Fairy), who played the role of a "social worker" or even a child psychologist. She tried to help Pinocchio, to guide and support him in difficult times and urge him to make good decisions in his life. It's worth mentioning that the Blue Fairy played the

role of a mother to Pinocchio, something which he missed in his childhood. This made him suffer from attachment disorder which has prompted him to act in a random, chaotic, and non-social manner to express his discontent and fear.

- The Green Cricket who speaks in the form of pronouns, ethics, and social norms. At the level of psychoanalysis, we are talking about the most prominent division in the human personality which Freud spoke of as an organization for the human being: the superego. The cricket was nothing but the conscience which tried in various ways to direct Gepetto to apply the socio-educational-psychological rules to his "wooden" son, Pinocchio.

Other characters played a major role in the adventures of Pinocchio, including:

Candlewick, who encourages Pinocchio to break parental decisions and tells him to run away and live in the Land of Boobies or Toyland. Five months later, Pinocchio gains what no one expected: he turns into a donkey. The young reader learns that the child must respect what his parents say.

The Whale or Dogfish is a character that swallowed the father, Gepetto, and later Pinocchio, who found his father living in its stomach. Eventually, Pinocchio, with the help of his father, were able to escape from this aquatic creature and return to their normal lives.

The green fisherman, a half-human humanoid creature, green in color, lives near the ocean in one of its caves. This man caught Pinocchio and considered him a rare talking fish. While he was preparing to fry him and eat him, Pinocchio was saved by Alidoro the dog. Of course, the idea of swallowing and chewing is one of the ideas that scares and excites the child at the same time. When it comes to the notion of the dog saving Pinocchio, it was during the events of the story that Pinocchio saved the dog from drowning. The dog wanted to thank Pinocchio again, so he pulled him out of the green fisherman's teeth.

What are the most important topics to talk about in Pinocchio's story:

Numerous topics can be the focus of discussion with the young reader. This will be the focus of this paper in the next few pages, and it is also how we were able to use the Pinocchio story in a reading activity within Bibliotherapy. Before delving deeper into it, here are the main points of this story:

- The idea of independence and the freedom to make random decisions without prior thinking and knowing the possible consequences of those reckless decisions.
- Disobeying orders from higher authorities (the father, for example), while complying with the orders of the "pleasure principle", which can lead to many problems if a person surrenders to them.
- Punishment for lying and its consequences are "distortions" in the body image (the idea of the nose becoming longer after the act of lying).
- The image of a parent and their interest in their children, no matter how difficult their characters are or in need of help and company.

General Summary:

By passing a questionnaire to master's students in the Department of Psychology from the Lebanese University, (n=280) on July 10, 2023, it was found that 90% of them know the story of Pinocchio and 75.6% of them like to read it again. 91% saw that Gepetto was a good father who explained to his son, while 83% did not find any major role for The Fairy. It also indicated that the story of Pinocchio could be directed more at boys than at girls and had more impact on the males than on the females (but this is only a hypothesis that can be studied). 88% of the participants in the survey that was passed through the Google platform stated that Pinocchio was dealing with hyperactivity or behavioural problems, while 59% considered Pinocchio a victim of the lack of an image of motherhood (passion, tenderness and concern) in his life. As for Pinocchio's missing needs, the results were as follows: 55% of the hero of the story needed a parental image - 65% needed sympathy and acceptance - 75% needed to belong to a family.

Numbers do not lie, and according to the numbers and case studies, we can consider that the story of Pinocchio can be a source of inspiration for many people who work with children who are less fortunate than others and suffer from abuse, which leads them to take crooked and abnormal paths. It would be suitable to use the situations of this story and the behaviours of the wooden hero who tried his best to draw the attention of his father, Gepetto, and searched for the image of motherhood that he found with Fairy who helped him as much as possible. Of course, studying other cases and delving deeper into the story of Pinocchio can also help us in the correct and therapeutic use in our psychological clinics.





Bibliography

BETTELHEIM B. 2003. *Psychanalyse des contes de fées*. Paris, Robert Laffont.

COLLODI, C. 2003. *Les Aventures de Pinocchio*, Paris, Folio classique.

VON FRANZ, M.L. 2007. *L'interprétation des contes de fées*. Paris, Albin Michel

كولودي، ك. 2012. *حكايات للصغار: بينوكيو، بيروت، المكتبة الوطنية*.

Antoine Maurice Al Chartouni, Lebanese is both a writer of children's stories (over of 700 stories) and a Doctor of Psychoanalysis and Psychopathology who works with children who suffer from psychological issues and family problems in his own clinic. Alongside that, he is also a Professor at the Lebanese University.

Currently, he still works with children with special needs and writes stories which he noticed helped him understand their world.

Antoine Al Chartouni tries to use “stories” as a “therapy” for children with family problems, as he used Music therapy in his sessions. He specializes in Bibliotherapy and is an active member of “The Association Francophone de Bibliotherapie - Paris”.

He has articles and books about raising and bringing up children, besides the university books on projective tests.