

They are moving from simple comprehension to a deeper understanding of nuances and implications. They should achieve the speed and competence in reading that will give them the confidence and taste they will need to thoroughly study Prabhupāda's books in later life. They continue to need practical examples of proper behaviour and choices.

Statistically, people read the greatest volume of books at these ages. Therefore, a student who reads a book a day during these years will not necessarily continue this practice throughout life.

These students should read the stories from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. They should not be forced to read the purports.

An ever-increasing number of adult-level books within ISKCON are becoming available to these students. These can be used both in and out of the classroom.

The amount of moral, non-transcendental books available can be decreased from the previous level. We have the same considerations as for younger children in regard to content and pictures. Some books for this reading level contain romance between boys and girls, and should be eliminated.

*Adolescent readers* (approximately ages 14-18) need to learn the skills for full understanding of transcendental literature. Although this is not strictly an intellectual process, they do need the mechanical skills to discuss and comprehend. A poor reader at this age will often shy away from reading, because it is such a mental strain.

The entire scope of ISKCON publications opens up, within and without the classroom.

We want their students to have some rudimentary knowledge of famous mundane authors. Some of these classic works can be used within the classroom. Any book that isn't at least morally uplifting should have a very good reason for inclusion in the

Title                      Title of the work.

curriculum and be a matter of class study rather than independent reading.

**Summary - What to have in your class or school library:**

A complete set of Prabhupāda's books is desirable. Any bona fide *Vaiṣṇava* English (or local language) publication should be available. The youngest children should have easy access to simple factual and moral books. Books for ages 8-14 should include references, moral stories (true and fictional), factual information relevant to their studies and life, and "how-to" books on subjects from string games (an art of Rādhārāṇī) to computer programming. Any books for the oldest students that require classroom discussion should not be openly available.

## Reviewing Non-Vaiṣṇava Books

It is easy to say, "Use moral and uplifting books". How do we judge? To assist us, Sri Rāma Dāsa has developed a form for evaluation. We suggest that all important books, or questionable selections, be given this written assessment by the teacher/principal/librarian/parent. All adults with responsibility for choosing suitable books should write their conclusions according to this or a similar form for at least five books before attempting to mentally assess a book's value. All mental evaluation should follow a similar pattern. Don't keep a poor book for financial reasons. When in doubt, do without.

Author	Author of the work.
Edition Reviewed	Publisher and date of publication. Abridged or unabridged? Special children's or student edition? Illustrated? Glossary? Any other special qualities?
Type of Material	Book? Magazine? Prose? Poetry? Fiction or non-fiction? Reference? Picture book? Biography? Novel? Historical novel? Short story? Etc.
Reviewer	Your name.
Summary of Plot	Give a brief description of what the work is about. What would make a person want to read this work?
Reading Level	What level of education would a student have to have in order to tackle this work?
Interest Level	Is the work interesting? What kind of person would find it absorbing and worthwhile? What age level is it suitable for in terms of subject matter?
Writing Quality	Is the work well-written according to the standards of the modern reader? Is the plot believable? Is it written in an archaic fashion that makes it difficult to understand? Any major flaws in style, translation, etc? Is the style easy or difficult to follow?
Vocab Quality	Is the vocabulary understandable to the average reader? Does it contain many words a modern reader wouldn't be familiar with, or are familiar words used in unfamiliar or archaic ways?
Theme	In literature, the stories told are meant to be enjoyable. But most stories also teach something, even though the author may not directly mention what it is he is trying to teach. The plot, characters, conflicts and final outcome usually support one main idea, which is often philosophical or moral. This idea is called the "theme". It is important to analyze what the theme (or themes) of a story is and ascertain whether or not it is compatible with Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding.
Hero's Qualities	It is natural for the reader to identify with the heroes or main characters of the story. It is important to ascertain whether or not the main characters that the children will like have qualities which are admirable. It will be rare to find characters who have qualities that resemble those of a devotee, but we can at least look for those who demonstrate good moral behaviour, respect for God and his representatives, respect for bona fide authority, desire for some form of self-realisation or spiritual improvement, etc.
Morality	The best we can expect from many books is that they will teach children to behave morally. This is not a bad goal, as it is neglected by many devotees in their ordinary dealings. It is best if a book subscribes to an absolute sense of right and wrong, ultimately having its root in the laws of God. Books which encourage "situation ethics", where there is no absolute right and wrong, but everyone is to judge what is right and wrong according to the situation, should be considered with caution.
Good/Evil	<p>According to the Vedic conception of drama writing, a work should have a happy ending, where good is rewarded and evil punished. This leaves the reader with a sense of satisfaction and a feeling of faith in the purpose of life. Books which lack this treatment of good and evil, tend to leave one feeling purposeless and wondering if there is any order and justice in life. Ultimately, this means the denial of God or of God's influence in the material world. Many modern books suffer from this defect. However, sometimes they may still have value if they demonstrate the hopelessness of trying to conquer and enjoy the material energy.</p> <p>On the other hand, there are many pieces of classic literature which suffer from the defect of glorifying the material enjoyment one can have if he just lives a good life. Ideally, good and evil should be shown in a balanced way which reflects the influence of the laws of <i>karma</i>.</p>
Logic of Karma	Very few authors have knowledge of the laws of <i>karma</i> . Therefore, one of the big questions of literature is why do people suffer and enjoy in ways that are seemingly unrelated to their present activities. Authors often try to explain this in one of three ways: 1) There is no reason. It is all by the chance interactions of material nature. 2) It is all because of one's actions in this lifetime. 3) It is God's inconceivable plan that some should suffer and some should enjoy. None of these

explanations are logical and they show an unfortunate ignorance of the laws of *karma*. However, in many books, although the author doesn't understand *karma*, he writes in such a way as to make its existence plausible. The reader who understands *karma* is often at an advantage in being able to understand events that the author himself cannot logically account for.

Wisdom/Self-realize	Does the work show a respect for knowledge and wisdom as a way of bettering oneself? Not just superficial knowledge and education, but knowledge of how the material world really works. Are spiritually minded characters shown in a favourable light, or are they treated as naive sentimentalists? Is respect shown for the process of self-realisation?
Varnaśrama	There are several treatments of social structure which are favourable to understanding the value of <i>varnaśrama</i> : 1) The remnants of <i>varnāśrama</i> social structure are presented as serving a useful function, 2) The lack of proper social and spiritual divisions leads to individual or collective bewilderment and dissatisfaction, and 3) The oppression of social positions which are determined by birth only. View #2 is seldom explicitly stated, but an observant devotee can see how people unnecessarily suffer because of lack of <i>varnāśrama</i> . <i>Varnāśrama</i> reduces competition in society and instils social responsibility in individuals. Without it, there is always social chaos and oppression. View #3 is especially common in European literature of the last three centuries. However, the author's conclusion is often that all social distinction and division is inherently evil and should therefore be done away with. This conception is often subtly conveyed and should be watched for.
View of God	Does the author present God as impersonal, either directly or in a covered way? Does he hint that perhaps God is not there, or if he is, has no influence on the world's affairs? Is service to man the same as service to God? There are unlimited views of God and his relationship with man, and most of them are incompatible with the version of the revealed scriptures.
View of Religion	Often in books of the 18th and 19th centuries, authors portrayed organized religion in an unfavourable way. They were struggling to expose religion which was rife with corruption and foolishness and followers who practiced for sentimental reasons and allowed themselves to be exploited in the name of spirituality. This is not necessarily bad, provided they leave room for genuine spiritual beliefs and practices. This must be carefully examined to see that the author has not "thrown out the baby with the bath water".
Secular Humanism	Secular humanism is so all-pervading in modern society and was probably so much a part of our own education that we may not even recognise it when we encounter blatant examples.  More or less, humanism means faith that the intellect of man is sufficient to solve all problems, both individual and societal. Under this conception, man can achieve anything he puts his mind and effort to. Humanism exalts man's supposed superiority over nature, the irrelevance of God's will and influence, and, philosophically, makes man the measure of all things. Secularism emphasizes the importance of the matters of this world rather than the afterlife. Historically, secularists felt that too much emphasis was placed on efforts for salvation, and not enough on efforts to better man's lot in this world.
Meat Eating	Portrayal of the breaking of the regulative principles does not necessarily mean that a book is unsuitable for student reading, as many books show the consequent ill effects of these sinful activities. However, they are most often glorified or shown as normal, essential, or desirable elements of human life.  It will be hard to find books that don't portray meat-eating in this way, but some books are noticeably worse than others.
Intoxication	Is intoxication presented as a necessary part of everyday existence? Is it glorified for its "beneficial" social effects? Are spiritual or otherwise respected persons portrayed as thinkers?
Gambling	Is gambling presented as exciting, adventurous and glamorous?
Illicit Sex	Is illicit sex portrayed as normal and exciting without showing the physical, psychological, emotional, and social consequences?
Romance	& This is perhaps the most difficult aspect, as many otherwise innocuous books are tainted by

<b>Marriage</b>	improper dealings between men and women. Even in books when love affairs are not at all essential to the plot or theme, authors have included them to meet the demands of the reading public.  Is love made out to be the all-important factor in choosing a marriage partner? Do boys and girls meet under improper circumstances? Is the concept of arranged marriages denigrated? Is mundane love glorified as being spiritual? Are intimate dealings graphically portrayed? Is romance a main theme or predominant part of the plot?
<b>Other Problems</b>	Is the work full of unwholesome language? Is there ridicule or abuse of sacred things, overdone patriotism, glorified frivolous activities? Does the author embrace evolution as an unquestionable truth?
<b>Devotional Service</b>	The most important questions about a book is how it leaves one feeling about his own devotional service. Some works make one want to get serious about his own spiritual practices, either because of the good example of some character or because the problems of material life have been graphically and forcefully pointed out. Other books leave one feeling drained, uninspired, doubtful about the purpose of life, enthusiastic for material activities, or feeling that one's spiritual practices are unimportant, foolish or irrelevant. Even worse, an improperly chosen book can leave one with doubts about the reality of God and the spiritual realm.
<b>Proud to be Devotee</b>	After reading the book, does one still feel glad to be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa? Or does the reader feel foolish and out of touch with society, wishing he could be more involved with "normal" material activities?
<b>Major Flaws</b>	What are the major philosophical flaws of the book that should be pointed out? Can the work be studied so that whatever positive points are there can be enjoyed without one becoming negatively influenced by the rest?
<b>Possible Value</b>	What benefit might a Kṛṣṇa conscious reader get out of this book? What would justify a student's reading it? Spiritual value, moral guidance, value as good literature, important and relevant information, reinforcement of Kṛṣṇa conscious principles or viewpoint, educational or reference value?
<b>Free Reading?</b>	Would this book be suitable for unrestricted reading by students?
<b>Guided Reading?</b>	Would this book be suitable for teacher or parent-guided reading by students?

## Recommendation:

How would you recommend this book to be best utilised?

To help you in selecting books, we include some book reviews. Please do not take these as absolute! Different devotees may have different perspectives. An unsuitable selection may be used if the adult is willing to edit out a page or certain references. Some controversial books can be used in the classroom but not for free reading.

<b>Title</b>	<i>Les Miserables</i>
<b>Author</b>	Hugo, Victor
<b>Edition Reviewed</b>	Washington Square Press, Abridged Edition
<b>Type of Material</b>	Novel
<b>Reviewer</b>	Śrī Rāma Dāsa
<b>Summary of Plot</b>	Set in early 19th century France. A man who has spent 19 years in the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread, is finally released. He emerges with a hateful attitude toward the world, but undergoes a moral conversion by the effort of a priest. Throughout the story, he struggles to overcome the



evil side of his nature, and his thorough saintliness shows through.

He moves to an impoverished region and transforms it into a thriving community by his ingenious work. But he reveals his identity when another man is mistaken for him and about to be condemned for life. He is sent back to the galleys, but escapes.

He later adopts a young girl and raises her in hiding. He who has never loved anyone before, gives his whole life to the girl.

When the girl grows up, she falls in love with a young man and this threatens the relationship with the convict. In the end, the convict's selflessness and saintly qualities become known after he has passed through his greatest test.

Reading Level	High-school/Adult
Interest Level	The story is engaging and there should be no problem keeping the attention of most readers. There is, however, a lot of philosophy and some apparent digressions that all readers might not want to go through. Therefore, an abridged edition might be desirable.
Writing Quality	<p>Much of the writing is brilliant, with observations and details which the reader identifies with and which inspire a sense of realisation and insight. However, the grammar of many sentences is strange, making parts a little hard to read. I couldn't tell whether this was part of the inherent style of the book, or whether it was due to the translation. The story is realistic in its detail, but some parts of the plot do not seem plausible and the reader will have to ignore this if he wants to enjoy the story.</p> <p>Perhaps the translation could be better. As far as the editing done to make an abridged edition, I think this could have been done better. The editor has not only cut out whatever is not relevant to the story, but he has cut out whatever is not absolutely essential, including many parts of the plot which might have added to the reader's enjoyment.</p>
Vocab Quality	The vocabulary is not easy.
Theme	<p>There are two main themes:</p> <p>The struggle between good and evil in an individual. Man has both, good and evil natures, and struggle brings the opportunity for one or the other to predominate.</p> <p>Society's struggle of progressive advancement. Society must and will be changed for the better through social action.</p>
Hero's Qualities	The qualities of the hero are admirable, at least from the view of a Christian, who only understands a portion of how to live life properly. He struggles to overcome evil in his own character and strives, almost selflessly, to do as much for his fellow man as is humanly possible.
Morality	The morality of the favourable characters is acceptably portrayed. One interesting element is that the morality of man-made laws is called into question, and it is hinted that there is a higher morality that has its ultimate source in God. However, there is no indication that such God-given morality has existed in the past, but rather it can be found in the future by the efforts of "enlightened" human beings.
Good/Evil	Generally, good is rewarded and evil punished, but this happens most strikingly when it manifests internally. The hero, Jean Valjean, can only be happy when he lives with absolute virtue. Those who are evil, condemn themselves to a miserable existence.
Logic of Karma	However, there are <i>many</i> "loose-ends" of good and evil which are not suitably rewarded within the scope of the book and there is no absolute assurance of divine retribution. The author seems to indicate that the fault lies within the jurisdiction of society. If society can be improved, then all seeming injustice could be corrected within the material realm.
Wisdom/Self-realize	High respect is shown for spiritual self-improvement. However, the author's idea of spirituality is seriously deficient.
Varṇāśrama	The author strongly condemns the idea that a person's social position can be fixed by his birth, previous activities, or other circumstances that are currently beyond his control. Other than that, there is not much that is relevant.
View of God	The book is quite theistic. God has a prominent role as the creator and ultimate destination of the human soul. However, God is not so much portrayed as actively intervening in mundane

affairs. The improvement of human conditions is a task left to man. Also, there is no idea of direct service to God. Rather, service to man is equated with service to God.

<b>View of Religion</b>	Organized religion does not seem to be terribly relevant. The important religious activities take place within individuals.
<b>Secular Humanism</b>	<p>This novel is very much Christian humanism. The author seems to be pushing for the realisation of true Christian principles as he sees them: compassion, charity, a sense of responsibility for one's fellow man, etc. He firmly believes that life in this world can be improved by the efforts of man, and that there is no limit to his potential achievements in this realm.</p> <p>The book is also secular in the sense that emphasis is placed on how much the present life can be improved, and even perfected. However, this is not done to the exclusion of the spiritual, but rather it is considered as the will of God.</p>
<b>Meat Eating</b>	Meat eating is portrayed as normal, but not prominently or as absolutely necessary.
<b>Intoxication</b>	Not portrayed particularly favourably
<b>Gambling</b>	Not portrayed
<b>Illicit Sex</b>	The sad results of illicit sex are clearly portrayed.
<b>Romance &amp; Marriage</b>	Unfortunately, one of the major elements of the plot is a romance between two young people which is repeatedly glorified. In fact, mundane love is conspicuously raised to the level of a spiritual activity.
<b>Other Problems</b>	None
<b>Devotional Service</b>	Whilst there is nothing which is overtly challenging to devotional service, knowledge of directly service to God is conspicuously absent. It is very much a book of Christian idealism, with a humanistic touch. One would only feel inspired about devotional service if he clearly saw the defects in the final outcome of the plot. But because of the power of the presentation, there is every possibility, that one would be enamoured by the possibility of perfecting material existence.
<b>Proud to be Devotee</b>	The book may lead one to believe that being a "good" person is the most important goal of life.
<b>Major Flaws</b>	The main problems of this novel are the beliefs in the ultimate perfectibility of material life and the spirituality of mundane love.
<b>Possible Value</b>	It is interesting literature and one could derive many realisations about material life but the benefit is probably outweighed by the misconceptions that one could walk away with.
<b>Free Reading?</b>	Yes
<b>Guided Reading?</b>	Yes
<b>Recommendation</b>	For whatever benefits one could get out of this book, there are other books which could give those benefits in a better manner.

Title	<i>Pilgrim's Progress</i>
Author	Bunyan, John (Adaptation by Oliver Hunkin)
Edition Reviewed	Dangerous Journey. An adaption for children. Marshall Morgan & Scott, UK 1985. Full colour illustrations.
Type of Material	Book. Allegorical novel
Reviewer	Śrī Rāma Dāsa
Summary of Plot	The author has a dream of a pilgrim who undertakes a journey from the City of Destruction (material world) to the Celestial City (heaven). In part two, his wife and children follow.
Reading Level	Probably readable by anyone over ten, but comprehension of the theme may be limited for those under 16.
Interest Level	It might be interesting for a child as fantasy story, but the real interest is for an older person who wants to study the process of spiritual progress. It was originally written for common people.
Writing Quality	This edition is quite readable and the style suits its purpose.
Vocab Quality	Some words will have to be looked up in the dictionary, but most of the vocabulary will be known by a teenage reader. It will be most helpful to look up the allegorical names of the people and places. Some of the terms are more archaic usages,  There are a lot of references to the Bible and Bible personalities that the reader may be unfamiliar with, inhibiting his understanding of the author's point.
Theme	The author is telling, an "everyman" allegory, describing the process of obtaining salvation according to the Christian concept. He is detailing how one who is serious about returning to God, will have to abandon any idea about enjoying the material world and become very serious and determined to make spiritual progress. All of the pitfalls on the path are illuminated, as well as the ways in which God helps his devotees (pilgrims) on their way back to the spiritual world.
Hero's Qualities	The hero (Christian) is a sincere seeker of transcendental life, and will be easy for any devotee to identify with.
Morality	The concept of morality is transcendental, with mundane morality condemned. There is some emphasis on Christian good works.
Good/Evil	The concept of good and evil is black and white - perhaps a bit too self-righteous.
Logic of Karma	This being a thoroughly Christian work, the concept of <i>karma</i> is wholly absent and the author steers clear of any area where the Christian philosophy is lacking.
Wisdom/Self-realize	Knowledge and spiritual wisdom are totally respected.
<i>Varṇāśrama</i>	Social structures are not dealt with.
View of God	Puritan (see sections "Possible Value" and "Major Flaws.")
View of Religion	The author views the Puritan way as more or less the only way. He was particularly critical of Catholicism and Quakerism. However, criticism of other religious views is played down in this edition.
Secular Humanism	None. Just the opposite.
Meat Eating	Mentioned only in passing.
Intoxication	Intoxication "Spirits" mentioned in passing.
Gambling	Condemned

Illicit Sex	Condemned
Romance Marriage Other Problems	<p>&amp; Marriage is presented as a means to a holy life.</p> <p>See "Major Flaws."</p>
Devotional Service	This will encourage one in the practice of devotional service.
Proud to be Devotee	The reader will feel as if there have been many people who have shared the difficult path back to Godhead. The only problem is that without guidance and knowledge of Christian philosophy, a student ends up feeling there is not much difference between this brand of Christianity and his own practice of devotional service.
Major Flaws	<p>The reader will feel that the similarities between this and his own devotional service are greater than the differences. However, some of the differences which should be pointed out are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is the Christian concept that the world is about to be destroyed by God.</li> <li>2. Spiritual progress is made to sound burdensome because there is a lack of real enjoyable spiritual activities.</li> <li>3. There is a lack of knowledge about the nature of the spiritual world and God and His activities. Very obvious in the descriptions of the Celestial City.</li> <li>4. Hell is eternal damnation.</li> <li>5. Those who fail away from their spiritual practices and die are condemned to hell forever.</li> <li>6. Acceptance of Christ relieves one of one's sins. (Perhaps there is some truth in it, as much as one accepts Christ as one's spiritual master but the concept of Christ as spiritual master is cloudy, and there is no initiation by a <i>dikṣa</i> guru.)</li> <li>7. Calvinistic ideas of predestination and God's chosen (The Parchment)</li> <li>8. No one but a Christian can be saved. (Pagan) The author would likely consider a devotee of Kṛṣṇa in the category of a pagan.</li> <li>9. Martyrdom is an automatic ticket to heaven. (death of Faithful)</li> <li>10. The way of spiritual progress is so difficult and the results so distant that one may doubt that the end is real and achievable. (trying the shortcut near Doubting Castle)</li> <li>11. The spiritual practices of those who don't have perfect spiritual knowledge lead only to hell. (Ignorance)</li> <li>12. Others can help us at the time of death. (Hopeful helps Christian cross the Dark River)</li> <li>13. One needs to be chosen by God. (messages to Christiana and Mercy)</li> <li>14. There is no knowledge of <i>karma</i> and transmigration of the soul.</li> </ol>
Possible Value	<p>The reader will appreciate that the author had a reasonable understanding of many of the steps required in becoming free from the material nature and gaining salvation. Some of the things that seem to be pointed out by the author are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The material world is not here for our enjoyment.</li> <li>2. One 's family members don't always encourage one's spiritual efforts and one might have to leave them behind.</li> <li>3. A spiritual guide (guru) is needed. The guru repeatedly takes trouble to save the sincere disciple. (This idea is not well-developed, but it is definitely mentioned.)</li> <li>4. One must be very serious and determined to get to God.</li> <li>5. One may become discouraged after initial enthusiasm in spiritual life. (Slough of Despond)</li> <li>6. Mundane morality is not spiritual. (Mr. Legality)</li> <li>7. After beginning spiritual practice, one has not automatically left material obstacles behind - until one is completely purified, he will have trouble. The material consciousness is full of contaminations.</li> <li>8. Maya (the Devil) is always trying to turn us away from the right path, but God is always offering help in different ways.</li> <li>9. Spiritual life is a razor's edge (Straight &amp; Narrow Holy Way)</li> <li>10. Help comes internally through supersoul (Interpreter)</li> <li>11. Without God's grace, one cannot successfully clean his heart. (Room cleaning scene)</li> <li>12. One must accept a bona-fide process and not try to cheat. (Holy Way)</li> <li>13. One should not accept the outward practices of religion without actually purifying his heart. (Formality)</li> <li>14. God won't give a test we can't pass. (Lions)</li> <li>15. An organized association of spiritual aspirants is helpful. (Palace Beautiful and Delectable Mountains) But not absolutely necessary.</li> </ol>

16. According to one's degree of pride, one will have to struggle. (Valley of Humiliation)
17. Preachers are not much appreciated by common men.
18. The farther one progresses, the heavier Maya's tests become.
19. Erroneous philosophy and following blind leadership can be perilous. (Valley of the Shadow of Death)
20. Association is essential. (Faithful and Hopeful)
21. Not everyone goes through the same experiences on the path back to Godhead, because different people have different varieties of material contamination.
22. Spiritualists do not blend in well in the material world. (Vanity Fair)
23. Devotees (pilgrims) are often taken for lunatics or criminals. (Vanity Fair )
24. Persecution; like that experienced by our devotees in communist countries, is not unique.
25. Sometimes, one must be ready to die for God. (Faithful) -
26. Some are ready to be religious as long as it is easy and profitable. (City of Fair Speech)
27. By setting a good example, devotees can inspire others. (Hopeful)
28. One may become despondent and forget God's promise to help one get back to Godhead. (Doubting Castle)
29. Many people think that one way is just as good as another. (Ignorance)
30. Beware of false teachers who lead one with sweet words down the wrong path for their own self-aggrandizement. (flatterer)
31. If one doesn't follow the right process, he can't see God and may therefore deny His existence. (Atheist)
32. Sleep and ignorance are detrimental to spiritual progress. (Enchanted Ground)
33. Everyone must pass through death before going back to Godhead. The more faith one has, the easier it will be. (Dark River)
34. If one follows the example of previous saints, the path is easier because one gains faith that the process works. (the whole story of Christiana in general, and the destruction of Doubting Castle, specifically)
35. Study of the scriptures gives faith, hope and knowledge.
36. Great preachers (fighters) can make the spiritual path easier for others (Mr. GreatHeart)
37. For a devotee (pilgrim) death does not have to be a sad, frightening experience. (Christiana crosses the Dark River)

**Free Reading?** Yes. The teacher should study the full edition first.

**Guided Reading?** No.

**Recommendation** Good for literature study: Might be also all right for comparative religion study

**Title** *The Secret Garden*  
**Author** Burnett, Frances Hodgson

**Edition Reviewed** Dell Yearling Classics, Dell Publishing Co. ; Livingston, NJ.; 1986

**Type of Material** Children's novel

**Reviewer** Śrī Rāma Dāsa

**Summary of Plot** A spoiled, unloved girl is orphaned in India and sent to live at her reclusive uncle's manor in Yorkshire, England. She discovers a secret garden and an invalid young cousin who is hidden away, and together with a friend begin to transform the garden into a place of beauty. In the process, she, her cousin, and her uncle also undergo changes, each overcoming their personal handicaps and becoming mature, loving persons.

**Reading Level** 10 yrs. to adult

**Interest Level** Charming story. Anyone who is a little sentimental will enjoy it.

**Writing Quality** Smoothly written and easy to read. The story is a little fantastic, but it doesn't pretend to be totally realistic. It is the kind of fantasy where the characters are larger than life, but nevertheless one can see something of himself in them.

Vocab Quality	Some characters speak "Yorkshire" dialect and there are a few unfamiliar Indian words, but a reasonably intelligent reader should have no problem.
Theme	The theme is about personal transformation and how we bring on our own misery by bad behaviour and ignorance. Reaching out to each other and appreciating the beauty available in life can help us overcome our misery and in the process we can help others to realize their full potentials.
Hero's Qualities	Mary Lennox, the young orphan girl is very bad-natured and selfish, but she doesn't see it. In her, we see something of our own selfish natures. But in the process of trying to help her cousin, she comes to understand her own self and is gradually transformed into a mature girl who can feel compassion and love for others.
Morality	As a Victorian morality tale, one of the goals of the book is to inspire moral and selfless behaviour .
Good/Evil	Good and evil are clearly drawn, according to the Christian conception. One is encouraged to rise from the mode of ignorance to passion.
Logic of Karma	Nothing to contradict the law of <i>karma</i> , but while the point is made that people make their misery worse by ignorant activity, no explanation is offered for why the characters find themselves in such diverse conditions of suffering in the first place.
Wisdom/Self-realize	There is no socially elevated character in the story who is a source of knowledge or wisdom. Wisdom, of a common-sense or folk variety, is highlighted.
Varnaśrama	The issue of social class is not touched upon directly. But one sees the background of Victorian England where social class was rigid, but the characters seem to ignore it in their personal dealings.
View of God	God is more or less ignored, even where mention of him would have nicely fit into the story. This is one of the more curious and troublesome areas of the book. There is continual reference to a force which is called "Magic," — not magic in the way one would usually think of it, but as the ultimate power for good. At one point, one of the characters suggests that this "Magic" may even be the same as God. Unfortunately, there is a real impersonal tinge to the whole thing.
View of Religion	Religion is touched on in only a peripheral way, and one feels its absence.
Secular Humanism	The story is undoubtedly an example of secular morality and there is no reference to anything beyond material affairs. It is not entirely humanistic, as there is acknowledgement of a higher power that is in control. However, it is stressed that by human endeavour that higher power can be tapped and utilised.
Meat Eating	Portrayed as normal activity.
Intoxication	The only incident is where young Mary accidentally drinks a glass of wine and is knocked out of commission for a few days.
Gambling	None
Illicit Sex	None
Romance Marriage	& None, but one can foresee that the intimacy that develops between Mary and her cousin Marriage would probably grow into a romance had the story continued. (In fact, in the movie version, that's exactly what happened.) Mary's uncle is also portrayed as having been unlimitedly infatuated with his young wife: Not a major problem, however.
Other Problems	The story begins in India and some of the worst of English prejudices are portrayed through the immature eyes of a nine-year-old girl. India is described as place that is very unhealthy, especially for children. Mary remembers Indians (she only had contact with servants) as grovelling, subservient creatures. Indians are referred to as blacks and there is no balancing opinion given by any adult who had a more mature or varied experience.

A strange feature of the story is that when the children seek to harness the power of the "Magic", they engage in a kind of pseudo-religious ceremony they invent involving a take-off on mantra meditation which Mary remembered from India. It is exactly the opposite of what we say would happen if one chants some mundane sound, over and over again.

My fear with this book is that it will give children a negative view of India and Indian culture, and may cause them to doubt the transcendental nature of some of our activities, especially chanting.

**Devotional Service** Though there is nothing which is directly adverse to devotional service, a child may end up wondering about its relevance, in a world where problems can be so nicely solved by human endeavour.

**Proud to be Devotee** See "Other Problems," above.

**Major Flaws** The major problems have been described above.

**Possible Value** Children might learn about some of the unhappiness which is caused by gross selfishness, and how it can be recognised in one's own character and overcome.

**Free Reading?** If it were going to be read, it is the type of book which a child would read on his own.

**Guided Reading?** Practically nothing which lends itself to in-depth study.

**Recommendation** Because of the problems outlined above, I couldn't really recommend this book. If one wants to read a book by the same author, I would suggest *A Little Princess*, which is much less troublesome

**Title** *A Little Princess*

**Author** Burnett, Frances Hodgson

**Edition Reviewed** Bantam Classic; Bantam Books, 1987

**Type of Material** Children's novel

**Reviewer** Śrī Rāma Dāsa

**Summary of Plot** Sara Crewe, who was born and raised in India, is sent back to England at the age of seven to attend boarding school. Because she is wealthy and talented, she becomes the "show pupil" of the school. When she is nine, her father, (her mother died when she was born) loses all his money in a bad business investment and dies, leaving Sara with no known relatives. Because her father left unpaid bills with the school, she is put to work there and endures unlimited degradation and cruelty. She maintains faith that things will work out, and her situation improves as an unknown benefactor tries to relieve some of her misery. In the end, her father's business partner finds her and restores her fortune.

**Reading Level** 10 yrs. to adult

**Interest Level** Very engaging story for anyone with a sentimental streak.

**Writing Quality** In general, good. It is a little bit of a fantasy, so the plot might not be wholly believable, but it doesn't detract from the beauty of the story. Sara is a little too good to be true; nevertheless, the characters really come alive. The author could have improved her handling of suspense, as mysteries are often revealed a little before they need to be. Perhaps this was done to make the story more accessible for children. Very smooth and entertaining reading.

**Vocab Quality** No problem, except for a few unfamiliar Indian words.

**Theme**

1. One should never lose faith in the power of good.
2. A noble and good person must never lose control of his mind and senses or he will lose his

good qualities. Basically, it is a story of a girl who is very good-natured and well-behaved when things are going well and successfully struggles to remain good when circumstances turn against her.

Hero's Qualities	Sara's personal qualities are highly exemplary and parents and teachers would be happy if children tried to emulate them. She is a relevant heroine for children because children will see how it is possible and advantageous to control the mind and senses and react in a positive way, even when others are acting cruelly. Her struggle to remain good when her comfortable world falls apart is really interesting. A good example of how one should not become intoxicated by good fortune or discouraged by bad.
Morality	The story very much encourages moral and selfless behaviour . The fault is that morality is presented as its own end. It is a good example of the kind of self-satisfaction which comes from the mode of goodness. One sees that Mary even becomes a little proud of her own goodness.
Good/Evil	Evil Very clear-cut distinctions between absolute right and wrong. Virtue is rewarded and evil punished.
Logic of Karma	Misfortune is explained according to the Christian conception that it is sent as a test of our character, rather than as a result of our previous activities. It's too bad that the author had no knowledge of <i>karma</i> as the story would have lent itself to that kind of insight.
Wisdom/Self-realize	There is no source of knowledge, except for Sara's own instinctive realisations.
Varṇāśrama	Social class is not dealt with directly. However, it is shown how there can be harmony between different classes and how they can help each other. But in keeping with the Victorian English conception, it is never conceived that one can transcend one's social position.
View of God	God is never mentioned, either positively or negatively. Sara keeps going during her period of adversity by her vivid imagination and faith that things could get better. One wonders how long she could have continued in that way without a more transcendental motivation.
View of Religion	Religion is only mentioned peripherally— practically not at all. Sara's religion is the kind of faith in "Magic" that also permeates the author's book, <i>The Secret Garden</i> (see review). However, it is not as bad in this book.
Secular Humanism	The book is definitely secular in that there is no reference to anything beyond material activities. It is humanistic, rather by default. While one gets a feeling that there is higher control, human endeavour is given the prominent role in determining the final outcome of events. There is definite faith that man can make the material world a much better place by improving his own nature. I suppose this is unavoidable in a book which is meant to emphasize morality.
Meat Eating	Portrayed as normal.
Intoxication	None
Gambling	None
Illicit Sex	None
Romance & Marriage	None, though the portrayal of love between father and daughter has a romantic intensity that Marriage would have been romantic had the characters been appropriate.
Other Problems	India is mentioned as an unhealthy place for children
Devotional Service	As with any work of this kind, which avoids reference to God, a child might wonder about the relevance of spiritual activity.
Proud to be Devotee	Neutral
Major Flaws	The major philosophical problem here is the role of Sara's imagination as a tool for keeping her sanity and composure during difficult times. It presents an unreal picture of how one can survive in the material world. However, I think most children will not take it seriously and will consider



it a cute, but not relevant mode of thinking.

Possible Value	There are many practical lessons on how sense and mind control are both relevant and desirable. Children can learn positives modes of behaviour for dealing with other children and also envious adults. A child who could learn to keep secure by thinking of Kṛṣṇa, the way that Sara thinks of her imaginary worlds, would have a valuable lesson.
Free Reading?	Would be nice if the teacher or parent was prepared to discuss the above considerations.
Guided Reading?	Not really the kind of book one would study in a class.
Recommendation	Probably one of the better books of this kind.

Title	<i>Little Lord Fauntleroy</i>
Author	Burnett, Frances Hodgson
Edition Reviewed	Bantam Classic, Bantam Books, 1987
Type of Material	Children's novel
Reviewer	Śrī Rāma Dāsa
Summary of Plot	Cedric Errol, seven-year-old son of a widowed American woman, is discovered to be an English lord and the heir to his Grandfather, an Earl. His grandfather sends for him, intending to turn him against his mother and transform him into a spoiled English lord. Not only does the hard-hearted and lonely earl fail, but he is transformed by the innocent and kind nature of his grandson.
Reading Level	10 years to adult.
Interest Level	Best for hard-core sentimentalists
Writing Quality	Smoothly written and pleasant to read but it partakes of the nature of a fairy tale. Cedric and his mother are impossibly good and plot is beyond the realm of reality.
Vocab Quality	No problem, except for a bit of dialect here and there.
Theme	Theme "Nothing in the world is so strong as a kind heart" In this, the earliest of her novels for children, this theme is unencumbered by many significant co-themes. Unfortunately, this is a fault rather than a virtue as the book comes off as a little simplistic. The idea is that youthful innocence and kindness are more powerful than wickedness and selfishness.
Hero's Qualities	Both Cedric and his mother are perfect creatures with no faults.
Morality	Clear-cut morality.
Good/Evil	No problem
Logic of Karma	Nothing contradictory
Wisdom/Self-realize	As in all Burnett's children's books, there is no real external source of knowledge or Wisdom. Except there is the small element of training which Cedric gets from his mother.
Varṇāśrama	Since the book is something of a comparison between the English and American natures, there is an element of American breaking-down of English class consciousness. But there is also a side which shows that the higher classes have responsibility for seeing to the welfare of the lower classes and protecting them.
View of God	This book does not ignore God as much as some of the author's other works, but He is given no place of importance or relevance.

View of Religion	The church parson is a pious Christian whose main concern is the material well-being of his parishioners.
Secular Humanism	A pious variety, emphasising that man can make a better world by kind behaviour .
Meat Eating	Portrayed as normal.
Intoxication	Not portrayed as desirable.
Gambling	Not portrayed as desirable
Illicit Sex	Not portrayed as desirable
Romance Marriage	& There is an element of respect for independent marriage arrangements when parents unreasonably object to an otherwise good marriage. Marriage for reasons of lust only is not recommended.
Other Problems	None really.
Devotional Service	Like so many books that make no real reference to God, a child might wonder about the relevance of devotional service.
Proud to be Devotee	Neutral
Major Flaws	Kindness is its own end and reward.
Possible Value	Shows the happiness that is created by kindness and good behaviour .
Free Reading?	Yes.
Guided Reading?	Not really the kind of book one would study in class.
Recommendation	Not a great book, but probably harmless and enjoyable for many children.

Title	<i>Lost Horizon</i>
Author	Hilton, John
Edition Reviewed	Pocket Book edition; Simon & Schuster, New York, 1970
Type of Material	Novel
Reviewer	Śrī Rāma Dāsa
Summary of Plot	In 1933, a group of four persons are kidnapped by plane from India and flown to a remote valley in Tibet. They are escorted to a hidden lamasery overlooking a small tropical valley. They are treated very well, but are not told why they are there. Eventually one of the captives (Conway) is told that Shangri-la is a place where life can be extended for hundreds of years, but no one who comes there can leave. Conway is also told that he is to become the next high lama. However Conway and one of the others do leave, with disastrous results
Reading Level	13 to adult.
Interest Level	Good. Nice engaging novel.
Writing Quality	Pretty good.

Vocab Quality	Some geographical names, foreign words and names of historical persons should be looked up in the dictionary.
Theme	This is a utopia novel, not about how the whole world can become a utopia, but how at least one special place can become a paradise and serve to preserve what is valuable in the world culture in a time of mass destruction. But beyond that, the author is exploring the negative relationship between passion and wisdom—"Wisdom begins where passion ends."
Hero's Qualities	The main character, Conway, is a man who is torn between goodness and passion. He mostly acts under the influence of goodness and the positive result is demonstrated. In the end, he succumbs to passion and destruction results.
Morality	The book does not show an absolute sense of right and wrong and casts doubt and whether there is such a thing. Rather, it tries to demonstrate that moderation in everything is the best morality even when the moderation is in virtuous behaviour .
Good/Evil	<b>The good/evil issue in this book is the struggle between the mode of goodness and the mode of passion. Goodness is shown to be clearly superior.</b>
Logic of Karma	<i>Karma</i> is not dealt with specifically, though its action could certainly be implied.
Wisdom/Self-realize	The attainment of wisdom is the major theme of this novel. The lamas are engaged in a kind of self-realisation, that is however, limited to an impersonal understanding in the mode of goodness.
Varnaśrama	The case for having a brāhminical class of men is strongly made in the novel. However, a devotee may note with interest how the whole future of Shangri-la is jeopardised by the lack of understanding that not everyone can be elevated to the mode of goodness in this lifetime
View of God	There is worship, religion and self-realisation, but no meaningful reference to God, except from the missionary woman, whose view is not to be taken as a serious alternative. One can safely assume that the author's conception is impersonal.
View of Religion	It is clearly stated that no religion has a monopoly on the truth—rather all religions have some of the truth. Some legitimate criticisms of Christianity are implied.
Secular Humanism	The book is secular in an unusual way. It isn't worldly in the way we normally consider worldly, because activity in the modes of ignorance and passion is deprecated. However, it is secular because no importance is placed on an afterlife, but elevation to the mode of goodness is considered the highest goal. The book is also humanistic in that the process of reaching the highest goal is seemingly completely in the hands of men.
Meat Eating	Not emphasized
Intoxication	One of the ingredients in the Shangri-la formula for longevity is a kind of mild intoxicant. The use of drugs as part of the process of self-realisation is mentioned.
Gambling Illicit Sex	Not mentioned As part of the Shangri-la philosophy of "everything in moderation, " illicit sex is permissible for those who haven't come to the stage of being passionless. -
Romance Marriage	& There is one romance toward the end of the book, but it ends in disaster, in keeping with the theme that passion (especially passion that gets out of control) is a source of trouble.
Other Problems	None.
Devotional Service	One leaves this book feeling a sense of superiority. The author has something valuable to say, but the devotee will feel that he already knows more.
Proud to be Devotee	A devotee will feel empathy with the lamas who are attempting some form of self-realisation, but he may also understand how much better his position is, in that he doesn't have to speculate.
Major Flaws	Major problems are the "moderation" philosophy, the view of religion, and the sense of impersonalism.

Possible Value	The devotee may find it an interesting study of the nature of the mode of goodness, both its benefits and its shortcomings. One may also come away with a good appreciation of how much we are bound by the time factor.
Free Reading?	It may be marginally alright if you have a liberal attitude about children's reading matter.
Guided Reading?	Quite appropriate and interesting for classroom study.
Recommendation	This book deserves consideration because of the themes about the cultivation of goodness, the fact that a devotee will most probably feel that his knowledge is already superior to that which the characters of the book are struggling so hard to attain, and the ease with which one can identify the book's problems
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Title	<i>The Princess and The Goblin</i>
Author	George MacDonald
Edition Reviewed	Published by Marshall Morgan and Scott Publications, a subsidiary of Zondervan Corporation. This edition illustrated by Alan Parry and abridged by Oliver Hunkin.
Type of Material	Children's fantasy
Reviewer	Ūrmilā devī dāsī
Summary of Plot	Goblins who live underground plot to kidnap a princess or, failing that, drown a group of miners and destroy the mine. They are discovered and stopped by a miner's son with the help of the princess and her magical grandmother.
Reading Level	Elementary
Interest Level	Children who like adventure and magic
Writing Quality	Good
Vocab Quality	Some unfamiliar British terms
Theme	The author shows that good triumphs over evil by hard work, diligence, intelligence, and the causeless grace of some superior power. He also shows that evil deeds bring destruction upon the perpetrator.
Hero's Qualities	There are three heroes: Curdie the miner, Irene the princess, and the magical grandmother. Curdie is selfless, devoted to his parents, respectful of authority, open-minded regarding new spiritual insight, resourceful, and not easily discouraged. Yet he is believable. Irene appears to be a bored, somewhat spoiled child who comes to goodness and right action primarily through the grace of her grandmother. She is simple, with strong faith in the supernatural, very courageous, and a little curious and foolish. The grandmother is all goodness. She is extremely magical with <i>many</i> supernatural powers. It is not clear whether or not she is mortal. She is austere, concerned primarily with others, gentle, and wise. She appears to represent God or a demigod. She is certainly not believable as a human being.
Morality	Everyone in this story is either all-good or all-bad, although many characters need to make further spiritual advancement.
Good/Evil	The book has a happy ending, with the good people rewarded and the evil beings punished. Some of the goblins are redeemed and become human again. There is no hint of the fate of the grandmother.
Logic of Karma	No explanation is given for suffering, except that it may sometimes be a result of foolishness. Protection and enjoyment are divinely bestowed without apparent reason.
Wisdom/Self-realize	The grandmother is portrayed as having vast wisdom and knowledge of material and spiritual

things. Her spiritual knowledge, however, is never revealed.

<b>Varṇāśrama</b>	Caste by birth is portrayed as foolish. The miner is declared to be an actual prince due to his qualities.
<b>View of God</b>	Not mentioned
<b>View of Religion</b>	Not mentioned
<b>Secular Humanism</b>	Although the characters achieve much through their own endeavour, ultimately they are dependent on the grandmother's supernatural help.
<b>Meat Eating</b>	The grandmother lives on pigeon's eggs. Very other little reference to meat-eating.
<b>Intoxication</b>	The king keeps wine but no good characters drink. Portrayed as a deluding force.
<b>Gambling</b>	Not mentioned
<b>Illicit Sex</b>	Not mentioned
<b>Romance Marriage</b>	& This is probably the main problem. From the beginning, Irene, who is eight, promises the Marriage twelve-year-old Curdle a kiss which she later gives him on the lips. It mentions in the postscript that they grow up and marry. This needs to be "whited-out" and changed to a gift for this book to be usable. Unfortunately, in this edition there is a picture of the kiss, as well.
<b>Other Problems</b>	Spiritual guidance is portrayed as magical powers used by higher beings. The Goblins and their animals have changed their forms dramatically after living underground for some time. Although no species changes into another (just variety within a species), this may be considered to hint at evolution.
<b>Devotional Service</b>	After reading this, one wants to find a powerful, self-realized soul and serve him.
<b>Proud to be Devotee</b>	It may seem irrelevant to serve Kṛṣṇa when we can take help from lesser beings. On the other hand, we may feel inspired to depend on Kṛṣṇa for guidance in our times of difficulty. Reading this certainly makes one feel proud to have superior knowledge.
<b>Major Flaws</b>	Spiritual personalities offer material benedictions and help, rather than philosophy or guidance.
<b>Possible Value</b>	The reader learns to trust his guru even when not understanding the instructions and purpose. Trust in higher authority, even when contradicting one's own common sense, will save one from all calamities.
<b>Free Reading?</b>	Possibly
<b>Guided Reading?</b>	This has limited value in a classroom setting.
<b>Recommendation</b>	I would change the pigeon's eggs to pigeon's gifts or leaves or fruit. The kiss should be changed to a gift of a necklace. If the changes are made, this can be a library book for elementary level children.
<b>Title</b>	<i>The Kingdom of Wundle</i>
<b>Author</b>	Robert Siegel
<b>Edition Reviewed</b>	Crossway Books, 1982, illustrated by Marilyn Theurer
<b>Type of Material</b>	Allegory-fantasy
<b>Reviewer</b>	Ūrmilā devī dāsī
<b>Summary of Plot</b>	A kingdom becomes negligent because of prosperity and allows a monstrous Gryfuss to enter and put everyone to sleep. Two children who are immune to this spell travel until they meet a

strange man in the Land Without a Shadow. The girl weaves a magical' tapestry while the boy goes on an adventure to seek knowledge. Armed with knowledge and the tapestry, they return and wake up the kingdom, banishing the monster. Everyone then becomes more vigilant and the children, now grown, marry and rule.

Reading Level	Upper elementary
Interest Level	This is of interest to those who like deep philosophical allegory. Others might like it as a fantasy adventure.
Writing Quality	Excellent
Vocab Quality	No problem
Theme	We must conquer ignorance and rise to the platform of passion and goodness. This is done by our own vigilance and by the grace of a higher personality.
Hero's Qualities	Prince Herald is outspoken and analytical. He is more interested in common sense than accepted wisdom. He is adventurous, sometimes to the point of foolishness. He has great self-control, and is interested in benefiting others. Gwendolyn's character is not very developed. She seems to simply follow Herald and other authorities although she was also sceptical of the general ignorance of her country. She is adventurous and courageous.
Morality	There is little mundane moral instruction. The heroes follow authority and act selflessly.
Good/Evil	Evil is seen as a result of complacency and negligence in regards to one's duty. The only suffering inflicted is further loss of awareness and even existence. Good people voluntarily suffer for the cause of awakening others from this ignorance, <i>which</i> purifies them. Good triumphs through the efforts of the heroes and divine intervention.
Logic of Karma	Ignorance and knowledge are dependent on one's desire. There is no further explanation for enjoyment and suffering.
Wisdom/Self-realize	To gain knowledge is the theme. However, the concept of knowledge is rather vague.
Varnaśrama	There's a nice presentation of an ideal kingdom with everyone doing his duty without envy and inter-class competition. There is also a clear instruction that women should help men not by striving alongside them, but by working at home.
View of God	It is unclear. God is not mentioned, but it could be that the author's analogy of the Flower of Light is his impersonal conception of God. It is also possible that the flower is symbolic of the mode of goodness.
View of Religion	Not mentioned.
Secular Humanism	The characters have to have a personal determination to become free from ignorance, but they can only gain this through the magical guidance of a guru.
Meat Eating	Shown as normal. However, all but one example of meat-eating is in reference to people in ignorance. People in goodness are eating milk and bread.
Intoxication	Not mentioned.
Gambling	Not mentioned.
Illicit Sex	Not mentioned.
Romance Marriage	& This could be a problem. The children mature while on their quest, without realizing it. When they return, the prince is captivated by the girl, walks arm-in-arm with her, and marries her.
Other Problems	Although the girl is told that she will perhaps have the more difficult job by helping at home, all her work is done magically, without endeavour. The prince, however, has to struggle against internal and external obstacles to achieve goodness. The guru gives little practical instruction except that goodness can be obtained by <u>gazing</u> at the Flower of Light. There is definite confusion between mundane and pure goodness, and the ultimate view is impersonal. After

	achieving goodness, the prince becomes captivated by the mode of passion in his desire for the girl.
Devotional Service	After reading this, one feels inspired to do his duty and rise above ignorance.
Proud to be Devotee	It is easy to identify with the prince and feel that one has taken the right path by surrendering to a guru and searching for truth.
Major Flaws	The Land Without a Shadow, which is presumably the Kingdom of God, is always in danger of being overcome by ignorance. In fact, it is closer to a heavenly planet. The source of light, the Flower, is also in danger from darkness, and indeed the prince saves it from being consumed by desire and anger. The guru's words of wisdom are enigmatic and useless, although his concrete instructions prove successful. The analogy of the dragon is unclear. Are obstacles on the spiritual path based on our own fears and perceptions, having no basis in reality? The desire of the prince for the girl is seen as an outcome of goodness. There is also the possibility that a child reading this on his own would conclude that danger is necessary for goodness not to be boring.
Possible Value	One learns the importance of sticking to what is right, rather than following the fashions of society into ignorance. The reader sees that when he desires a spiritual master, he will be led there without his knowledge or further intervention. We learn that knowledge and goodness can be found only from a guru, and not through experience, investigation, or ordinary people. Through bad association, even a spiritual seeker can be diverted, in which case he must give it up and purify himself. We also learn that it is not shameful to expose our weaknesses and seek purification. To achieve goodness, one must face all our desire and anger and reject it. The goal of goodness is to preach and elevate others to that platform.
Free Reading?	No, it is unlikely that a child will understand this story on his own, and may get some wrong impressions.
Guided Reading?	This might be useful after fourth grade.
Recommendation	This could be used in conjunction with a study of Bhāgavatam allegories, in studying religion and philosophy, or in a reading class as an example of symbolic allegorical writing.
Title	<i>Tales of the Kingdom</i> and <i>Tales of the Resistance</i>
Author	David and Karen Mains
Edition Reviewed	Published by Chariot Books, 1983 and 1986. Illustrated by Jack Stockman.
Type of Material	Fable/allegory/fantasy/adventure
Reviewer	Ūrmilā devī dāsī
Summary of Plot	A wicked, powerful Enchanter has control over a city. Hero escapes and joins another society that lives in a nearby Great Park, worshipping a king. In the <i>Resistance</i> , Hero returns to Enchanted City to help restore the king's rule. He is helped by the others, as well as the king.
Reading Level	Upper elementary/junior high
Interest Level	Most children will easily identify with Hero and Amanda.
Writing Quality	The characters and situations, while sometimes fantastic, are true to human nature. The work is absorbing.
Vocab Quality	No problem
Theme	Each chapter has a separate moral or theme. <i>The Kingdom</i> deals with problems and realizations common to neophyte devotees. <i>The Resistance</i> deals with the problems of a preacher in a hostile environment. An example of morals presented (From <i>The Kingdom</i> ): one must be materially exhausted in order to approach a guru, everyone should engage according to his propensities under the guru's direction, you must do the guru's will in order to be a disciple, when we love a

forbidden thing, we lose the guru we actually love. An example of morals presented (From *The Resistance*): When you belong to a spiritual society, one can never be alone in terrible places, devotees are everywhere and can be discovered by preaching, it is easy to give up a lower taste when one has a higher taste.

Hero's Qualities	Hero is a typical new devotee. He is anxious to leave ignorance, but unsure of his commitment to his guru until he finally becomes "initiated". He is a very real person who wants truth and goodness. Amanda is also a typical neophyte, except that she is overly proud, which gets her into trouble. She is redeemed by humility. The other characters are spiritual seekers discovering various truths. In addition, there are the all-bad authorities of Enchanted City who use orphans as slave labour and the all-good "king" (guru) and the authorities under him who are full of mercy and knowledge.
Morality	There are many good lessons in compassion and mercy. The value of helping others on the spiritual path is emphasized.
Good/Evil	There is absolute bad which is punished, and absolute good which is rewarded. However, in certain times and places, bad may temporarily be supreme. Most people are presented as constantly having a choice between this good and evil.
Logic of Karma	No explanation is given for the extreme suffering in Enchanted City except that the people originally wanted such an evil leader. However, this doesn't explain the hellish conditions that the present generation and children are undergoing.
Wisdom/Self-realize	There is definite respect for gaining genuine knowledge through following a process, working in a spiritual association, following a guru, and gaining realisation.
Varṇāśrama	We simply learn that everyone has a "gift" that he should use in the king's service. One is warned not to imitate other's duties.
View of God	It may appear that the "king" is God, probably because of mistaken Christian concepts about a guru. However, once or twice the king prays to his father for help. The people in the spiritual society only know and revere their guru.
View of Religion	Shows an organization of spiritually minded people to be essential to make advancement. Emphasizes regular worship, in a group, as important. No reference to any specific religion.
Secular Humanism	Characters become good by both their own endeavour and realisations and the grace of their guru
Meat Eating	Mentioned once or twice as normal
Intoxication	Not mentioned
Gambling	Not mentioned
Illicit Sex	Not mentioned
Romance & Marriage	This is a problem in the <i>Resistance</i> , when Hero and Amanda are growing up and Hero realizes that he is in love with her. In one story they sit together in the evening, discussing their preaching plans. Hero seems to love her basically for her dedication to a spiritual goal, and there is little actual romantic interaction between them. However, I feel that this may render the second book unsuitable.
Other Problems	In the <i>Resistance</i> , the king sacrifices himself and then rises from the dead in order to save Enchanted City. (Why this is necessary is not clear) Such blatant Christian propaganda mares the general message and is unsuitable.
Devotional Service	These books definitely inspire one to be more serious and vigilant in his devotional service.
Proud to be Devotee	would feel that they are right whereas the rest of society is foolishly suffering in ignorance.
Major Flaws	These books never define God or spiritual life. The descriptions, although relevant to devotees,



are only superficial without in-depth philosophy.

Possible Value	<i>The Kingdom</i> is a nice book of "fables for a spiritual seeker," as it is non-sectarian.
Free Reading?	<i>Tales of the Kingdom</i> , only.
Guided Reading?	Both books have possible value in reading class.
Recommendation	<i>Tales of the Kingdom</i> can be put in the library for extra reading. Some chapters, such as "Princess Amanda and the Dragon", could be read in class, starting in third or fourth grade. <i>Tales of the Resistance</i> has too many sectarian and romantic references to be useful, unless some chapters were edited and some removed. However, this might create a cliff-hanger.
Title	<i>Animal Farm</i>
Author	George Orwell
Edition Reviewed	1946 by Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Signet Classic paperback
Type of Material	Political satire
Reviewer	Ūrmilā devī dāsī
Summary of Plot	Animals on a farm in England revolt and overthrow their human masters. Although promising a classless society, the pigs quickly become leaders. Gradually they become corrupt and exploit the other animals more than the original masters did. These pig leaders then turn into human beings.
Reading Level	Junior high
Interest Level	High school
Writing Quality	Excellent
Vocab Quality	Some "English" terms
Theme	The author's intentions are unclear. He is either saying that suffering and exploitation are inevitable or that it is our duty to be intelligent and well-informed in order to maintain justice in society. In either case, he makes several clear points: that we become like those we despise, that we shouldn't follow authority blindly, and that communism is an evil system of government.
Hero's Qualities	It is doubtful whether or not there are heroes in this story. If so, they would be Snowball, Boxer, and Benjamin. Snowball, although taking some slight advantage of his leadership position, is genuinely concerned for others' welfare. He is a true ksatriya, first in battle and providing for all his citizens. However, he is naive and fails to protect himself and his "kingdom", militarily, against internal enemies. Boxer is the ideal sudra. He is totally dedicated to whoever is his master. He suffers greatly for his tolerance and hard work, however. Benjamin is a cynic who has no hope of anything but suffering under any government. His position seems to be supported by the author.
Morality	Morality is seen as useless. A reader would feel that doing good to others and developing the mode of goodness simply allows others to exploit your sentimentality. The world is hard and cruel and one must look out for his own interests.
Good/Evil	Those who are good are seen as naive and foolish. They are simply exploited and suffer. Those who are evil and clever reap all the material rewards, although it is clear that they have lost all true happiness.
Logic of Karma	Everything appears to be unfair.
Wisdom/Self-realize	The highest concept of wisdom is political and historical knowledge which is seen as very important. It could be said that Orwell considers such knowledge to be the only possibility for

	human society to exist peacefully.
<b>Varṇāśrama</b>	Classes are portrayed as inevitable yet exploitive. There is a hint that all classes can cooperate under a good leader.
<b>View of God</b>	Not mentioned
<b>View of Religion</b>	The crow, a preacher of heavenly enjoyment after death, is shown to be an easily corruptible fool. Religion is portrayed as a tool to manipulate people.
<b>Secular Humanism</b>	We could conclude either that all endeavour for betterment is useless or that man can only better himself through his own effort. Following authority is condemned.
<b>Meat Eating</b>	Condemned
<b>Intoxication</b>	Condemned
<b>Gambling</b>	Condemned
<b>Illicit Sex</b>	Not relevant
<b>Romance &amp; Marriage</b>	Molly's interest in romance is seen as a source of bondage
<b>Other Problems</b>	This book is very depressing.
<b>Devotional Service</b>	One might feel foolish to be looking for a spiritual solution to life's problems.
<b>Proud to be Devotee</b>	If the reader agrees with the author, he would feel uninspired. If he disagrees, he would feel very glad to have the actual solutions to Orwell's intractable problems.
<b>Major Flaws</b>	We are left feeling very lost and hopeless. Should we tolerate suffering and become a cynic? Try to grab a leadership position by cruelty and cheating? Provide free education to the masses and maintain a free press? Study history carefully? Have courage to stand up for justice at any cost? Orwell simply presents the problem, offering no solution.
<b>Possible Value</b>	Animal Farm graphically shows that it is impossible to find material solutions to the problems of life. It is very convincing that good intentions, hard work, morality, altruism, patriotism, and all the other "good qualities" of the materialists are worthless in the long run. It is an excellent satire of godless communism. It also clearly shows how the four sinful activities cause someone to lose all good qualities.
<b>Free Reading?</b>	For adolescent students.
<b>Guided Reading?</b>	This could be used in a high school course on literature, government, or history.
<b>Recommendation</b>	If this book is used, students should read no more than a chapter at a time on their own. The teacher should be familiar with the personalities and events in the former Soviet Union that Orwell is satirizing. The teacher should be very careful that students don't become emotionally depressed, but realize that this depression is the normal condition of thoughtful people who have no spiritual knowledge.
<b>Title</b>	<i>The Forbidden Door</i>
<b>Author</b>	Jeanne K. Norweb
<b>Edition Reviewed</b>	Published by Cook and Lang, 1985, paperback
<b>Type of Material</b>	Adventure/science fiction/moral story
<b>Reviewer</b>	Ūrmilā devī dāsī

Summary of Plot	Two cousins open a mysterious door to save a baby dragon and find themselves in another planet or universe inhabited by good and evil dragons. They learn about etiquette, selflessness, courage, and death. They return to this planet with a new outlook on life.
Reading Level	Upper elementary.
Interest Level	Children interested in adventure and chivalry.
Writing Quality	Excellent.
Vocab Quality	No problem.
Theme	If we live in the mode of goodness we'll have a happy life and return "home" after death.
Hero's Qualities	There are many heroes. The dragon king and prince are ideal ksatriyas—brave, just, courageous, deeply concerned about the citizen's welfare, religious, honest, and faithful. The dragon heroines are maternal, merciful, brave, truthful, and faithful. David and Laura have some mild faults that are quickly rectified in the association of the good dragons. Their character is exemplary. The Grandfather is pious, understanding, and open-minded.
Morality	The whole purpose of this book is to teach morality.
Good/Evil	The good obtain true happiness, while the evil characters suffer internally.
Logic of Karma	Suffering for a good cause (martyrdom) is seen as a source of happiness. No explanation for enjoyment or suffering in general.
Wisdom/Self-realize	The Masters of Wisdom, the gurus, are esteemed as a source of wisdom.
<i>Varṇāśrama</i>	Definite class system by birth, with all classes happy and satisfied. Demoniak and pious entities also determined by birth. There is clear indication, however, that rare individuals can change their position.
View of God	Mentioned as "Great One" and a "who" not a "what". No further description.
View of Religion	Every good dragon takes some kind of initiation where he promises CO follow the laws of the Great One. This is considered essential. No other mention of organized religion.
Secular Humanism	Generally characters make progress through their own efforts to improve, good association, and some divine guidance.
Meat Eating Intoxication	Fish eating mentioned once as normal. It is not clear whether or not the dragons' drink is an intoxicant. Probably not. .
Gambling	Not mentioned.
Illicit Sex	It is mentioned that the evil dragons do not restrict themselves to monogamy.
Romance & Marriage	It seems that David and Laura, 13 and 12 year olds, would have some romantic interest, especially since they are cousins only by adoption. However, they are platonic friends. The reader might assume that they marry later in life. Good dragons marry with their families' permission, although they have a chaste courtship. I do not see this as a problem.
Other Problems	None
Devotional Service	This book certainly inspires the reader to be devoted and helpful.
Proud to be Devotee	There: is a possibility that a reader could. assume that one can be "happy" in the material world by the mode of goodness. Generally, the story confirms one's faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
Major Flaws	This book definitely preaches that mundane goodness is the path back to Godhead. It also,

subtly, preaches the concept of "only one life." The good characters all go back home at death if they remain faithful to their "initiation" vows, but the laws of God are never defined and no one follows a spiritual process. The gurus are material healers who offer material benedictions in exchange for some austerity. They also offer some material knowledge and guidance.

Possible Value	There is a definite message that <i>any</i> intelligent person will accept the idea of other universes, other beings, and different concepts of time in other parts of the universe. It also teaches the greater happiness in serving others over one's one sense gratification. The characters are ideal mundane role models while believable (no small accomplishment). We also learn that the goal of life is to please God, remember Him, and go to His kingdom at the time of death.
Free Reading?	Yes, perhaps editing the one reference to fish eating by the children. Dragons eating fish seems acceptable.
Guided Reading?	Possibly
Recommendation	This is a nice addition to a children's library of moral fiction.
Title	<i>Alpha-Centauri</i>
Author	Robert Siegel
Edition Reviewed	Crossway Books, paperback, 1982, illustrated by Kurt Mitchell
Type of Material Reviewer	Fantasy/science fiction/moral and religious story Ūrmilā devī dāsī
Summary of Plot	Becky and her horse, Rebecca, travel back in time to England and a society of centaurs. They have been called there to save the centaurs from destruction from the Rock Movers, human's ancestors. Becky learns <i>many</i> lessons and then returns to her own time.
Reading Level	Upper elementary
Interest Level	Anyone who likes adventure.
Writing Quality	Very good – too much description
Vocab Quality	No problem
Theme	God chooses each of us for a mission which we must execute with obedience, courage, determination, and selflessness. There is also a sub-theme about the history and destiny of the planet.
Hero's Qualities	Becky is an ordinary girl who loves nature and animals. She develops good qualities such as kindness, courage, and austerity in the association of the centaurs. The main centaur characters are full of good qualities, although they show occasional failings. The First Ones are great yogis and mystics.
Morality	One of the main purposes of this book is to teach morality and proper behaviour .
Good/Evil	Both are portrayed graphically, with suitable consequences
Logic of Karma	It is explained several times that only God knows the reason for things and has His own purposes. It appears that He purposefully allows faithful people to suffer for some higher cause. It is explained that God can use the evil deeds of cruel entities for good purpose.
Wisdom/Self-realize	It is clearly stated that the ideal life is one dedicated to extreme austerity, meditation, and cultivation of spiritual knowledge. Although it is accepted that most living beings cannot follow this path completely, it is foolish to chase after material sense pleasure.

<b>Varṇāśrama</b>	We see a class system of the good characters where society goes on peacefully and without envy and a class system among the Rock Movers that is full of exploitation and cruelty.
<b>View of God</b>	God is referred to as the Shaper. He directs everything and all power comes from Him. There is no further information.
<b>View of Religion</b>	The centaurs take initiation where they receive a new name in meditation that is known only to the Shaper. They engage in worship and chanting every eight days. The First Ones definitely practice some religious system of chanting, meditation, and regular meetings.
<b>Secular Humanism</b>	Characters achieve their ideals through obedience to saintly persons, faith in God, and divine intervention.
<b>Meat Eating</b>	This book is rather astonishing. It presents meat eating in about six or seven places as normal. However, the First Ones are explicitly vegetarian. It is directly stated that meat-eating is a symptom of fallen humanity.
<b>Intoxication</b>	Engaged in by evil characters.
<b>Gambling</b>	Not mentioned.
<b>Illicit Sex</b>	Not mentioned.
<b>Romance &amp; Marriage</b>	No problem
<b>Other Problems</b>	None
<b>Devotional Service</b>	This is certainly inspiring
<b>Proud to be Devotee</b>	Definitely
<b>Major Flaws</b>	The major flaw is the Christian philosophy which is stated allegorically. Children unfamiliar with Christianity may not be bothered. The First Ones give a whole history of the fall of man and his redemption by Jesus (called the Healer). However, the description could also be taken to be of the various yugas. A reader might also feel that Becky's mission had no relevance to his own life. There is confusion between spiritual life and mundane morality. The use of time travel subtly denies reincarnation. In addition, although God is referred to as a person, there are subtle impersonal concepts. Obviously the author is confused about God.
<b>Possible Value</b>	There are many useful messages in this book. It stresses tolerance and cooperation with nature and living entities. It gives good moral examples and stresses austerity and spiritual life. It also condemns artificial, modern cities. The book stresses that intelligent theists will accept that other planets are inhabited, some by higher beings with long life spans and lives full of goodness. A life of sense gratification is described as a search for "that which is not" (maya).
<b>Free Reading?</b>	Possibly. You might want to edit out the meat-eating
<b>Guided Reading?</b>	Possibly.
<b>Recommendation</b>	This is definitely science fiction. This could be put in a library, possibly with some editing, or could be rejected because of the subtle Christianity.
<b>Title</b>	<i>The Hobbit</i>
<b>Author</b>	Tolkien, J.R.R.
<b>Edition Reviewed</b>	Ballantine Books, paperback, revised, 1966
<b>Type of Material</b>	Fantasy/adventure
<b>Reviewer</b>	Ūrmilā devī dāsī
<b>Summary of Plot</b>	A hobbit, a small fanciful creature, is asked by a wizard to go with some dwarves on an adventure

		to reclaim their gold and land from a dragon. The hobbit becomes a hero, and returns home wealthy, famous, and somewhat wiser.
Reading Level		Upper elementary.
Interest Level		Anyone who likes adventure.
Writing Quality		Excellent.
Vocab Quality		Challenging.
Theme		It is difficult to name one over-riding theme. Tolkien's message is that it is better to risk your life and comfort to do great things, than to have peace at home. Greatness is measured in loyalty, courage, and resourcefulness.
Hero's Qualities		Bilbo the Hobbit is a simple, ordinary man who steadfastly follows through on his obligations. He is very believable though extraordinarily truthful, kind, loyal, renounced, generous, and brave. Gandalf is powerful and supernatural, yet beset by ordinary failings as well. He is only concerned about the good of others. Other lesser heroes display many good moral qualities.
Morality		There is an absolute standard of morality, although its source appears to be. "general consensus".
Good/Evil		Many characters are inherently extremely good or evil, although there is also a struggle between good and evil in various individuals. All evil is punished and good rewarded.
Logic of Karma		Suffering and enjoyment appear to come from one's actions in this life, and chance.
Wisdom/Self-realize		All wisdom is greatly esteemed. Wisdom is defined as good character and judgment, and knowledge of subtle material laws.
<i>Varṇāśrama</i>		There are strong class structures according to birth, with some minor allowance for individual quality.
View of God		There is no mention or hint of a Supreme Being or Power.
View of Religion		No organized religion or religious ceremonies are even hinted at.
Secular Humanism		Primarily, man is shown as the master of his fortune and surroundings. Yet there are slight hints that everything has some superior control, if just by nature.
Meat Eating		Shown as normal. The meat-eating is a bit explicit and frequent. There are several good characters who are vegetarian.
Intoxication		There is frequent mention of alcohol and tobacco as normal and desirable. The vegetarian characters (who are highly esteemed) abstain from intoxication as well.
Gambling		Not mentioned
Illicit Sex		Not mentioned. It is clear that the main heroes are celibate.
Romance Marriage Other Problems	&	Not mentioned None
Devotional Service		This book is neither spiritually inspiring nor depressing.
Proud to be Devotee		Yes
Major Flaws		None

Possible Value	This book is valuable primarily so that the student is exposed to "classic" literature.
Free Reading?	I would not recommend it because of the meat-eating and intoxication.
Guided Reading?	This book is suitable if the references to meat-eating and alcohol are "whited-out" and changed. The tobacco is too firmly woven into the story.
Recommendation	This book is certainly not very harmful, even without editing. It can be used with editing, but is not so valuable as to be worth the time to do so.
Title	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i> , trilogy
Author	Tolkien, J.R.R.
Edition Reviewed	Ballantine books, paperback, 1982
Type of Material	Fantasy/adventure
Reviewer	Ūrmilā devī dāsī
Summary of Plot	The ring Bilbo found in "The Hobbit" is the great ring that has built the kingdom of evil Sauron. Bilbo's nephew is deputed to destroy it rather than try to use it against the enemy. The ring is destroyed, Sauron made powerless, and a righteous king installed. The ring was also the foundation of good power, and its destruction ended the influence of good, wise beings as well.
Reading Level	High school
Interest Level	This book is extremely engrossing and absorbing, if the reader likes adventure.
Writing Quality	Superb
Vocab Quality	Difficult and challenging. Much of the sentence structure and word choice seems Biblical. The author also creates a new world and freely uses the names of <i>strange</i> people and places which can sometimes be confusing.
Theme	The means to a good end must also be good and righteous. No one is strong enough to use evil things for good purposes. No matter how apparently strong, the foundation of evil strength is shaky and temporary.
Hero's Qualities	The heroes, and there are many, are believable characters with internal struggles and doubts. They triumph through a love of nature, beauty, truth, kindness, mercy, loyalty, courage, and friendship.
Morality	There is definitely an absolute standard of morality, but its source is never defined.
Good/Evil	Good is rewarded and evil is punished. These results are subtle as well as gross, and Tolkien shows a keen understanding of material nature.
Logic of Karma	Suffering and enjoyment come mostly from choices in this life, although much is unexplained.
Wisdom/Self-realize	Wise, gentle people who are in harmony with the subtle laws of nature are greatly esteemed.
<i>Varṇāśrama</i>	Class is strictly determined by birth, with rare exception according to quality. Women are portrayed as feminine yet with qualities according to their class. The women are very inspiring and refreshing.
View of God	There is no mention of a Supreme Being or Power, which is the major flaw of this work
View of Religion	There is no mention of organized religion or rituals.
Secular Humanism	Beings are seen as partially in control of their destiny, and partially moved by circumstance and birth.

Meat Eating	This is portrayed as normal, although not nearly as pervasive as in "The Hobbit." The elves and some other very highly esteemed characters are vegetarian.
Intoxication	Tobacco is closely interwoven into the plot. Alcohol is drunk by all good characters except the elves and some others. Again, it is not nearly as frequent as in <i>The Hobbit</i> . (The elves have an invigorating "liquor" which clearly is a tonic rather than intoxicant.)
Gambling	Not mentioned
Illicit Sex	Not mentioned. Many of the major heroes are celibate.
Romance & Marriage	There is some slight romance in the last book of the trilogy, which may be a problem. The only marriages mentioned are between mature adults, who are also concerned about the approval of the'r parents. There is consideration that marriage should take place between equals. Romance and marriage are a very minor consideration in the book.
Other Problems	The difficulty with this work is that it is totally absorbing. It is hard to put it down or think about or do anything else.
Devotional Service	This work made me want to read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam for the real adventures.
Proud to be Devotee	Yes
Major Flaws	There is only one slight hint of God. The characters have to depend on themselves and other fallible beings.
Possible Value	This work is certainly a modern classic and could be studied as part of Western culture. It is certainly morally inspiring.
Free Reading?	Acceptable
Guided Reading?	It would be good to edit out the meat-eating and alcohol by good characters.. The tobacco cannot be taken out. The one brief romance section could be slightly edited, as well. It might also be worth some time of class discussion, but some students would find the vocabulary a hindrance, and some simply do not like fantasy.
Recommendation	These books can be put in a library, preferably with editing.
Title	<i>The Hiding Place</i>
Author	Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill
Edition Reviewed	Edition Reviewed Spire books, paperback, 1971
Type of Material	Autobiography, history
Reviewer	Ūrmilā devī dāśī
Summary of Plot	Two spinsters and their father aid the Dutch underground during WWII, eventually hiding many Jews in the'r home above the'r watch repair shop. They are put in prisons and labour camps where they deepen their religious faith. After the war, the remaining sister helps others who suffered under the Nazis.
Reading Level	Junior high.
Interest Level	This is a fascinating story.
Writing Quality	Excellent
Vocab Quality	No problem.



Theme	All difficulties can be used to better our character, and to glorify God. We should sacrifice to help others.
Hero's Qualities	One sister is saintly in all respects. The other, the storyteller, is more human although extremely pious. The heroes are selfless, charitable, tolerant, merciful, and patient.
Morality	All morality is absolute and comes from the Bible.
Good/Evil	The lines of good and evil are clearly drawn, as <i>they</i> actually were at this time and place in history. While many good people suffered, and often because of their goodness, real suffering was shown to be controlled by the individual from within. The apparent injustices, therefore, are accepted by the characters as God's mercy.
Logic of Karma	No explanation is given except that everything is inconceivably the will and plan of God.
Wisdom/Self-realize	People of wisdom and religious learning are highly esteemed.
<i>Varṇāśrama</i>	There is an accurate portrayal of Europe during WWII.
View of God	Christian
View of Religion	The family does not practice some very organized, sectarian rituals, nor often attend any church. They have daily prayer and Bible reading, and consider various sects a hindrance to real religious understanding.
Secular Humanism	They feel that people have the choice to use all situations to act according to God's will. Very nice.
Meat Eating	Portrayed as normal—not very explicit or excessive. It would seem all right to break one's dietary vows in times of emergency.
Intoxication	Rare references to wine as normal.
Gambling	Not mentioned.
Illicit Sex	Condemned with wit and humor. The author and her sister are celibate.
Romance Marriage Other Problems	& Very nice portrayal  The major problem is the overriding Christianity. However, the "Christian" truths understood and lived are real religion. Children might become attracted to Christianity however.
Devotional Service	Very inspiring
Proud to be Devotee	The reader is happy to philosophically understand what is incomprehensible to the characters suffering. Although the characters' reaction to their horror is very moving and inspiring, the devotee can go beyond this.
Major Flaws	The problem is that an apparently saintly person eats meat as a matter of course, and, despite her deep faith and realization, remains trapped within the religion of the Yavanas. These contradictions may bewilder children who cannot understand the difference between her character and the depth and purity of an actual saint. The amount of violence and suffering might be disturbing to some young children.
Possible Value	This book gives the reader a good education on WWII, the Nazis and Jews. It also shows that there are many sincerely religious people who simply need education in order to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.
Free Reading?	For older students only
Guided Reading?	It would be nice to include this in a study of history. (I don't recommend editing out meat-eating or wine drinking in a true story. The problems here aren't very significant.)