

Librarian by Day, Dance Queen by Night

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LIS 600

FUN PROJECT

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The Purpose



The purpose of my FUN project is to show how librarians are portrayed within children's animation. The two examples I have selected are Sylvia Marpole, the head college librarian in the Disney video, An Extremely Goofy Movie, and Ms. Paige Turner, the local librarian in the TV series, Arthur. Although I could not locate the actual episodes with Ms. Turner, the librarian, in them for this project, I was able to locate her in several of the Arthur books written by Marc Brown. For the purpose of this project, I will refer to the books as references only in order to maintain the focus on children's animation and not examples in written fiction.

Arthur's Ms. Paige Turner



Paige Turner

Paige Turner

Favorite joke: What's a bookworm buffet? A whole shelf of Scare Your Pants Off books.

Place I most want to visit:
The Library of Congress

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Paige Turner

Paige Turner

Favorite color: Navy blue

What I like: Yard sales, napping in window seats, wall-to-wall carpet.

What I want to be:
Journalist, truck driver,
book critic,
English teacher.



pbskids.org/arthur

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Ms. Paige Turner is the librarian at the Elwood City Library, a fictional town which is the setting for the TV series, Arthur. This TV series is based on the popular children's books written by Marc Brown. As far as the story-line tends to go, she is a minor adult character who is not seen outside of the library. Most of her scenes place her behind the circulation desk. However, the few scenes where she wasn't behind the desk, she was outside the library addressing a group of users waiting for a new book release, talking with children and a visiting poet at a special event in the library, and encouraging a younger character who had lost a book in the library. Turner's character doesn't change much. She wears the same clothes throughout the chapter books. Her clothes are simple and conservative. She wears glasses and has a pencil sticking out from behind her ear. According to Wikipedia, her hair color was brown for the first eleven seasons then changed to blonde (Wikipedia 5). This gives some youthfulness to the character. Turner is often asked for assistance from the children in the stories.

Goofy's Sylvia Marpole





Ms. Marpole is the head librarian at the college that Goofy and his son, Max, are both attending. In an attempt to distract his father so he can “enjoy campus life,” Max takes Goofy to get a library card. Ms. Marpole enters the scene by stamping a stack of books at her desk. She quickly begins to cite the rules of having a library card which she says is a privilege and not a right. She is always in a white top and black long skirt when she is seen in the library. She and Goofy get side-tracked from the library card when he comments on her mood ring. She tells him she collects 70’s memorabilia and an enthusiastic personal interest conversation takes place, very uncharacteristic for a library setting. Later, Marpole and Goofy go on a date to a dance club where she arrives in a lime green go-go dancing outfit, hair up and styled into a 70’s do. All the students present are shocked. Scenes with Marpole go back and forth from the library to her attending activities on campus and with Goofy. Again, each library scene shows her in the same outfit, doing library activities such as shelving books. In her scenes away from the library, she is stylish for the occasion.

Similarities



- Both librarians are focused around their job in the library. Activities are stamping books, answering questions or assisting users, and shelving books.
- Both librarians are conservatively dressed.
- Both librarians are single women.
- Both librarians are authoritative about library rules.
- Both librarians are friendly and helpful.
- Both stories focus on the students using the library for many things, such as a quiet place to do homework or to study, a place to get information, and to check out books. The library is not the main focal point in either story-line, but it is repeatedly utilized.

Differences



- Turner is always in or about the library whereas Marpole has a personal life outside the library.
- Turner's users are children whereas Marpole's users are college students.
- Turner is a minor character. Marpole takes a leading role in the sense that she becomes Goofy's girlfriend. As such, when Goofy is not focused on Max, he is usually with or focusing on Marpole, in or out of the library.

What I Liked



I liked that both librarians were very good at their job and were respected for their positions. Turner is always available to help Arthur and his friends. They go to the library to do homework, write in their diaries, research stuff for school, and check out books for pleasure reading. They often ask her for help which she kindly gives. Likewise, Goofy and Max went to the library on more than one occasion to study and do homework, but also went to look into checking out books. This portrayal of the library as a place to go for many reasons helps promote the use of libraries. The knowledgeable and helpful librarian also is a positive and good image for the profession.

I also liked that Marpole had a social life, making her a real person with dimension and personality. I liked how the students responded in shock when they saw her dressed in her 70's outfit at the dance club. It is a true example of the mindset of patrons that certain professionals don't have a life outside their profession. Despite the inside the library stereotype, having a personal life helps the image of librarians overall.

What I didn't Like



I didn't like the blandness of the inside of the library. The library was a typical library scene, book shelves, tables and chairs, and a librarian behind a desk. I'm not sure if the library could be jazzed up in its portrayal. At least the books were colorful on the shelves and not muted into the background as gray or beige. The attire given to both librarians inside the library seemed to be very conservative and matronly. Their jobs were shown as routine even though they were done with friendliness.

I also noticed that the libraries in these two examples were technologically outdated. Not only was the librarian doing outdated activities like stamping books, but there were no computers and there was a card catalog. This does not promote the library as up-to-date for research needs today.

Conclusion



Children's animation portrays these two librarians with mixed images, mostly with stereotypical personas. While the librarian is deemed helpful, authoritative, and knowledgeable, she is also pictured as matronly and old-fashioned in her personal image. The place where she works, the library, is viewed as a great place to go for quiet study and to get information – recreational or otherwise, but her job there is routine and not up-to-date with modern technology.

Why This was a FUN Project for Me



This was a fun project for me because I have not used PowerPoint before. I learned how to import items, set up a slide show, and have background music! This became a learning experience as well as a project to have fun doing. I liked being able to submit my written component in a new format. I enjoyed the research of the librarians within children's media as well, and I thought the paper doll was a cute way to represent the two images of the Goofy librarian, Sylvia Marpole, who I dubbed the dancing queen.



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