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THE CONCEPT OF ADOLESCENCE AND ITS INTERPRETATION IN LITERATURE: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot o‘smirlik tushunchasini psixologik bosqich va adabiy obraz sifatida o‘rganadi. Adabiyotda o‘smirlik — bu identitet izlash, isyon, oraliqlik holati va axloqiy uyg‘onish davri sifatida talqin qilinadi. Turli davr va madaniyatlardagi romanlar (masalan, “Sho‘r uzukni ushlagan yigit”, “Geklberri Finning sarguzashtlari”) va o‘smirlar adabiyoti tahlili orqali avtonomiya va jamiyat o‘rtasidagi ziddiyat, shuningdek, shaxs shakllanishining o‘ziga xos jihatlari ochib beriladi. Xulosa qilib aytganda, adabiyot o‘smirlik haqidagi ilmiy nazariyalarni aks ettiribgina qolmay, balki bu davrning murakkabligi va imkoniyatlarini yangi talqinlarda ifodalaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar. O‘smirlik, adabiy talqin, balog‘atga yetish, o‘smirlar adabiyoti, identitet shakllanishi, adabiyotda isyon, oraliqlik (liminality), psixologik rivojlanish, tarbiyaviy roman (Bildungsroman), o‘smirlik tajribasi, axloqiy uyg‘onish, madaniy tasvir, avtonomiya va konformizm, o‘smirlikda gender, hikoya ovozi.

Аннотация. Данное исследование рассматривает подростковый возраст как психологическую стадию и литературный мотив. В литературе подростковый возраст интерпретируется как период поиска идентичности, бунта, лиминальности и нравственного пробуждения. На основе анализа романов разных эпох и культур (например, «Над пропастью во ржи», «Приключения Гекльберри Финна») и молодёжной литературы раскрывается конфликт между

автономией и обществом, а также уникальные аспекты формирования личности. В заключении делается вывод, что литература не только отражает научные теории подросткового возраста, но и переосмысливает сложности и возможности этого переходного периода.

Ключевые слова. Подростковый возраст, литературная интерпретация, взросление, молодёжная литература, формирование идентичности, бунт в литературе, лиминальность, психологическое развитие, воспитательный роман (бильдунгсроман), подростковый опыт, нравственное пробуждение, культурная репрезентация, автономия против конформизма, гендер в подростковом возрасте, повествовательный голос.

Annotation. This study examines the concept of adolescence as both a psychological stage and a literary motif. In literature, adolescence is interpreted as a period of identity search, rebellion, liminality, and moral awakening. Through analysis of novels from different eras and cultures (e.g., *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*) and young adult literature, the study reveals the conflict between autonomy and society, as well as the unique aspects of personality formation. In conclusion, literature not only reflects scientific theories of adolescence but also reinterprets the complexities and possibilities of this transitional period.

Keywords. Adolescence, literary interpretation, coming-of-age, young adult literature, identity formation, rebellion in literature, liminality, psychological development, Bildungsroman, teenage experience, moral awakening, cultural representation, autonomy vs. conformity, gender in adolescence, narrative voice.

Introduction. Adolescence, as a distinct phase of human development, represents far more than a simple chronological marker between childhood and adulthood. While the term has been part of the English vocabulary since the fifteenth century, it only attained widespread cultural prominence following the publication of psychologist G. Stanley Hall's phenomenally successful *Adolescence* in 1904. This watershed moment established adolescence as a phase genuinely "new in modern life"—a period associated with uncertainty, inwardness, instability, heightened sexuality, creativity, rebelliousness, group-mindedness, and volatility of emotions and beliefs. In literature, these qualities are not merely thematic elements to be described but have become formal principles that shape poetic structures, narrative frameworks, and the very essence of how modern English-speaking cultures conceive of identity itself. This article provides a comprehensive examination of the concept of adolescence and its multifaceted

interpretation across literary traditions, drawing upon extensive scholarly research to illuminate how literature has both reflected and constructed our understanding of this crucial life stage.

The Historical Emergence of Adolescence as a Cultural Concept

The modern idea of adolescence emerged alongside crucial beliefs about youth in the industrializing West: that younger generations differ from their predecessors more sharply than those predecessors differed from theirs; that modern young people have developed autonomous peer cultures or subcultures in which they "acquire norms from one another" rather than from elders; and that the phase itself is marked by creative volatility that may "resemble the virtues sought in a particular kind or genre of art" . This recognition that adolescence could provide aesthetic analogues for artistic innovation proved transformative for twentieth-century literature.

Stephen Burt's seminal study *The Forms of Youth: Twentieth-Century Poetry and Adolescence* (2007) argues that poets across the English-speaking world have consistently "discerned a kinship between adolescence and the kinds of poetry they have striven to fashion and promote" . The book demonstrates how adolescence supplied not only inspiration but also "formal principles" upon which many modern poets founded their works . This represents a fundamental shift in how literature approaches youth: adolescence ceased to be merely a biographical stage to be documented and became a dynamic aesthetic category capable of generating new poetic languages, structures, and modes of perception.

Adolescence as Liminal State: From Temporary Passage to Fixed Condition

A crucial theoretical framework for understanding literary adolescence emerges from Damon Lazzara's dissertation *The Modern Myth of Adolescence: Coming-of-Age as Deviation from Maturation* (2012). Lazzara traces the development of a conceptual trend within Western adolescence studies, determining "how and why coming-of-age in this trend transformed from a temporary liminal stage in ancient myth into a fixed liminal state—or 'liminal trap'—in modern culture and literature" . This transformation carries profound implications for literary interpretation.

Whereas classical coming-of-age narratives—exemplified by Goethe's *Bildungsroman* tradition—presented adolescence as a bridge to be crossed toward stable adulthood, modernist and contemporary literature increasingly depicts adolescence as a destination in itself, a condition from which no genuine maturity may be possible. Lazzara employs Gregory Castle's *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006), which utilizes Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics to explain the

"immanent critique of adolescence found in the modernist Bildungsroman" . This critical tradition exposes the failures and contradictions inherent in conventional maturation narratives, suggesting that the promise of coherent adult identity may itself be an ideological fiction.

The Poetics of Adolescence in Modernist Poetry

The relationship between adolescence and poetic form manifests vividly in the work of high modernist poets. William Carlos Williams "found in adolescents and their peer culture after the First World War important analogues for the newness, demotic speech, and sexual energy he sought in his own New World verse," discovering "models and metaphors for his own deliberately unfinished, always-beginning-again works of art" . This connection between adolescent temporality—its sense of perpetual beginning, its resistance to conclusion—and Williams's aesthetic of incompleteness reveals how deeply the experience of youth could shape poetic practice.

Similarly, Marianne Moore "identified her poetic methods with the procedures of a responsible student," while W.H. Auden's early poetry "at once explored and exemplified that impasse in which youth seeks to mature but describes no adult role worth filling" . In Auden's work, the adolescent condition becomes emblematic of a broader modern predicament: the availability of developmental paths without any convincing destinations. Robert Lowell's sonnets further develop this theme, with "self-canceling lines and sentences" serving as "aesthetic equivalents for both adolescent energy and adult unease" .

Mid-Century Transformations: Adolescence in British and American Poetry

The trajectory of adolescent representation in British poetry moved from the "private space of elite schools to the urban public space of sixties subcultures" . W.H. Auden's early work, Philip Larkin's verse, Thom Gunn's transatlantic poetry, and Basil Bunting's late-modernist masterpiece *Briggflatts* collectively document this spatial and social transformation. Adolescence ceased to be an institutionalized experience confined to boarding schools and universities and became entangled with public life, youth subcultures, and the shifting moral landscapes of post-war Britain.

In mid-century American poetry, the figure of the teenager took on explicitly political dimensions. George Oppen, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Robert Lowell "built and rebuilt their sixties styles in reaction to changing concepts of youth" . The figures of juvenile delinquents, hippies, and student radicals entered the poetic imagination as emblems of both promise and peril—youth as the force that might, "for better or worse, transform the nation" . Brooks's "broken-up, unpredictable,

semimetrical, aggressive, sometimes fragmentary poetics" of the 1960s specifically aimed to capture the "aggression, rebellion, sexualized vigor, fresh attempts at independence" she ascribed to contemporary youth .

Persistent Tensions: Pastoral Nostalgia versus Revolutionary Futurity

Burt identifies a recurring tension across decades and national traditions: the "tension between youth as pastoral and youth as rebellious or revolutionary novelty" that appears in "teen cultures through the twentieth century and in poetic reactions to them" . For some poets—including Philip Larkin, Laura Kasischke, and Larry Levis—adolescence holds an "originary authenticity whose power over the imagination adulthood can never match." This perspective treats youth as a lost golden age, a source of nostalgic longing.

For others, such as Allen Ginsberg and Gwendolyn Brooks at certain moments, "adolescence is less the past than the future, its generativity associated not with nostalgia but with fresh ideas and forces capable of reshaping the world" . Here, youth becomes revolutionary potential incarnate, the vanguard of social transformation. A third group of poets confronts the challenge of understanding how "the pastoral and the revolutionary intertwine," whether in relative success (Williams, Thom Gunn) or in partial or total failure (Lowell, Basil Bunting) .

Formal Equivalents: Closure and the Adolescent Unresolvedness

A second persistent feature across literary representations of adolescence involves the handling of poetic and narrative endings.

Burt identifies a recurrent "conflict between completion and incompleteness, between closure and resistance to closure, in the forms of poems as in the adolescent life course" . This formal preoccupation reflects the essential unfinishedness of adolescence itself—a state defined by what it lacks (autonomy, stable identity, clear purpose) rather than by what it possesses.

This resistance to closure appears in George Oppen's use of "apophyses—open spaces left for experience he has not had, will not have"—which serve to "rebuke other grown-up poets' naive beliefs that their inherited art and their students' tastes might merge in a seamless, revolutionary whole" . The adolescent aesthetic thus becomes fundamentally anti-teleological, suspicious of narratives that promise neat resolutions or comfortable assimilations into adult society.

Contemporary Developments: Female Adolescence and Postmodern Uncertainty

Contemporary poets have extended and diversified the literary treatment of adolescence. Laura Kasischke and Jorie Graham "focus on the discoveries of a specifically female adolescence," recovering experiences that earlier male-dominated traditions often marginalized or

romanticized . Burt speculates provocatively that "the resistance to narrative time Graham so often depicts derives from a resistance to ways of 'being-seen,' to ways of becoming a woman" . This feminist poetics of adolescence interrogates how gender shapes both the possibilities and constraints of teenage identity formation.

The Irish poet Paul Muldoon and the Australian poet John Tranter represent a further evolution, employing "teenage perspectives to represent a postmodernist uncertainty" . In their work, adolescence becomes metaphor for the epistemological and ontological instability that characterizes postmodern consciousness—fragmented, provisional, caught between competing narratives without any master discourse to adjudicate between them.

Adolescence and Empire: Postcolonial Perspectives

Myra Remigio's dissertation *Adolescent Empires: Identity, Liminality, and Advocacy in Contemporary American Literature* (2008) examines the intersections "between the discourse of adolescence and the discourse of Empire," arguing that "the adolescent is a major, if not the central, figure in the rhetoric of Empire, specifically as a site of adult anxiety and imperial contestation" . This framework illuminates how postcolonial literature deploys adolescent characters to explore the "unhomely" condition of displacement and cultural hybridity.

Remigio's analysis revisits Homi Bhabha's reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, filtering the examination of the unhomely "through the lens of adolescence." In texts such as Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, "the postcolonial feeling of unhomeliness joins with the adolescent character's growing unease in her domestic surroundings," generating tension "between the sense of identity and the sense of belonging that the adolescent character must negotiate" . Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* serves as a "prototypical text of adolescent liminality," establishing patterns that later postcolonial writers would both inherit and subvert.

The Novelistic Tradition: Deviations from the Bildungsroman

Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (2024) further elaborates how "modernist-era novels of unseasonable youth disrupt the inherited conventions of the Bildungsroman in order to criticize bourgeois values and to reinvent the biographical plot" . Rather than moving smoothly into adulthood, characters in these texts "veer off course into a state of suspended or stunted adolescence." Esty demonstrates how "narratives of world progress run up against stubborn developmental obstacles" precisely at the historical moment when "post-Darwinian racial sciences and Freudian sexological theories were lending influence to the idea that

some forms of human difference cannot be mitigated by civilizing forces"

This convergence of adolescent suspension and colonial "uneven development" reveals how the literary representation of youth became entangled with broader debates about race, empire, and the very possibility of progress. The "dilatory modernist style" that emerges from this entanglement offers not merely aesthetic innovation but a systematic critique of developmental logic itself—whether applied to individuals, nations, or civilizations.

Bakhtinian Approaches: The Dialogic Construction of Adolescent Subjectivity

Robyn McCallum's *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (1999) provides a comprehensive theoretical framework through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism. McCallum argues that "the ideological frames within which identities are formed are inextricably bound up with ideas about subjectivity, ideas which pervade and underpin adolescent fictions". Her work has a double focus: first, "the images of selfhood that the fictions offer their readers, especially the interactions between selfhood, social and cultural forces, ideologies, and other selves"; and second, "the strategies used to structure narrative and to represent subjectivity and intersubjectivity".

Crucially, McCallum observes that "although the humanist subject has been systematically interrogated by recent philosophy and criticism, the question which lies at the heart of fiction for young people is not whether a coherent self exists but what kind of self it is and what are the conditions of its coming into being". This distinction positions adolescent fiction as a genre uniquely engaged with the practical, ethical, and narrative dimensions of identity formation, even as it remains aware of theoretical critiques of the unified self.

Comparative Perspectives: English and Uzbek Literary Traditions

A significant contribution to cross-cultural understanding of adolescent literary representation comes from Sevara Shermamatova's 2025 comparative study, which identifies "significant differences in how teenagers are portrayed across these literary traditions". The research demonstrates that English literature often emphasizes individualism and rebellion against societal norms, while Uzbek literature tends to highlight family connections, cultural heritage, and collective identity.

These contrasting emphases reflect deeper cultural values and historical trajectories. English-language texts, particularly those emerging from American and British contexts, frame adolescent development as a process of self-discovery achieved through departure from or confrontation with established authority. The teenage

protagonist in English literature typically pursues an autonomous self, even at the cost of alienation from family or community. In contrast, Uzbek literary representations situate adolescence within "socially embedded" networks of obligation and belonging. The Uzbek teenager's journey toward maturity involves negotiating relationships with parents, elders, and the broader community, with cultural heritage functioning not as an obstacle to be overcome but as a resource to be integrated into emerging adult identity.

Complementing this analysis, Oysha Qo'chqorova's 2024 study on "Uzbek Literature's Role in Shaping Teenagers' Moral and Spiritual Worldviews" reveals that "religious texts are strongly associated with the reinforcement of spiritual beliefs, while fiction literature significantly contributes to the development of empathy and ethical reasoning". This empirical research underscores how different literary genres within a single national tradition can serve distinct developmental functions for adolescent readers—a complexity that comparative analysis must account for.

The Contemporary Situation: Adolescence as Permanent Condition

Burt's analysis extends to contemporary poets who treat adulthood as "the state in and for which poetry...seems to have no value any more".

Shanna Compton depicts poetry as "its own subculture, with its own idiom, much like 'jock' or 'skater' subcultures in schools," suggesting how "these terms call into being an energetic community more worthwhile than any substitutes from a recognizable adulthood". This valorization of adolescent subcultural capital—its specialized languages, tastes, and social formations—raises the question of whether contemporary culture has elevated adolescence from a transitional phase to an ideal state worth preserving indefinitely.

Sociologists and cultural critics have increasingly perceived a "worrisome resistance to maturity permeating twenty-first-century adult life," which might indicate that "a poetry celebrating infinitely extended adolescence is complicit with damaging social trends". Whether this represents liberation from restrictive adult norms or an evasion of genuine responsibility remains contested. What is clear is that literature's treatment of adolescence has moved far beyond simple documentation of a biological or psychological stage; it has become a primary vehicle for interrogating the values, failures, and unexamined assumptions of modernity itself.

Conclusion: Adolescence as the Essence of Western Identity

The comprehensive scholarly record establishes that adolescence in English literature constitutes far more than a thematic category. As

Burt concludes, it has come to represent "the very essence of a Western identity"—a state of consciousness that modern culture has learned to value as authentic, creative, and defining . Yet this valorization exists in productive tension with the "liminal trap" identified by Lazzara: the possibility that adolescence, once celebrated as a period of promise, has become a permanent condition of uncertainty from which no genuine maturity is possible .

The literary interpretation of adolescence thus serves as a cultural barometer, registering shifts in how societies understand development, progress, and the meaning of adulthood itself. Whether through the "brilliant callowness" of adolescent poetics, the suspended temporality of modernist fiction, or the dialogic construction of subjectivity in contemporary novels, the figure of the teenager remains one of literature's most powerful instruments for asking what it means to become—and to remain—a self in the modern world. The ongoing comparative study of these representations across national and cultural traditions promises to deepen our understanding not only of literary form but of the very conditions under which human identities are formed, contested, and transformed.

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MASOFAVIY TA'LIM SHAROITIDA RELIGIONIMLARNI O'RGANISHNING INNOVATSION USULLARI

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