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"Little Brothers" By Agniia Barto: Gender and Ideology in Soviet Era Picture Books, 1920s-1930s

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Oral Presentation O9.2

**“LITTLE BROTHERS” BY AGNIIA BARTO: GENDER AND
IDEOLOGY IN SOVIET ERA PICTURE BOOKS, 1920s-1930s**

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In the early 1920s, Soviet children's literature was to provide the blueprint for becoming model citizens of this newly formed society. It became the precursor to the new two-fold ideological discourse: depicting life of Soviet children as paradise, while condemning children's hardship and exploitation of their less fortunate counterparts abroad. Such educational and ideological tendencies are prominent in Agniia Barto's poem, "Little Brothers" (1928), as it visually and textually represented the theme of internationalism, which was to nurture and shape a feeling of unity in struggle, as well as compassion toward the fates of foreign children. I will explore the existing imbalance between the verbal and visual messages and demonstrate how the attention of a young reader was constantly shifted from the ideologically correct verbal message to the engaging exotic picture of foreign surroundings, thus subordinating ideology to the entertainment value of these books.