



Analyzing, Describing, and Seeing the Physical Book: A Study in Children's Literature

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University of Pittsburgh, Department of English, Archival Scholars Research Award

Works:

Peter Pan:

- Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906)
- Peter Pan and Wendy* (1924)
- Peter Pan* (1928)
- Picture Story Book of Peter Pan* (1931)
- The Littlest Ones Peter Pan & Wendy* (1930)
- Peter Pan Picture Book* (1907)
- Blampied Edition of Peter Pan* (1940)
- Peter Pan* (1980)

Alice in Wonderland:

- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and Through the Looking Glass* (1881)
- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1893)
- A New Alice in the Old Wonderland* (1895)
- Alice in Wonderland in words of one syllable* (1908)
- New Adventures of Alice* (1917)
- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1907), illus. Arthur Rackham
- Alice in Wonderland* (1900), illus. Blanche McManus

Robinson Crusoe:

- The life and strange surprizing...* (1719)
- The most surprising adventures...* (1795)
- The Story of Robinson Crusoe Arranged for Youngest Readers* (1898)
- Robinson Crusoe in Words of One Syllable* (1869)
- An Eskimo Robinson Crusoe* (1917)
- Young Crusoe; or, The Shipwrecked Boy* (1868)

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INTRODUCTION

Housed in the University of Pittsburgh's Archives and Special Collections library is the Nesbitt Collection. Margaret Hodges, founder of the **Nesbitt Collection**, created and curated a collection of "the literature of childhood" from 1976-1990.

This project tackles **versioning**, or the retelling of famous or well-known stories often for a specific audience. For the purposes of this project, the Nesbitt collection was browsed for multiple versions of the same story and selected based on the unique and interesting books available. This concept is especially fascinating within the realm of children's literature, since Western culture often finds itself preoccupied with discussions of what is and is not appropriate for children. The way that we retell stories for them, then, can be quite a **revealing measure of culture**.

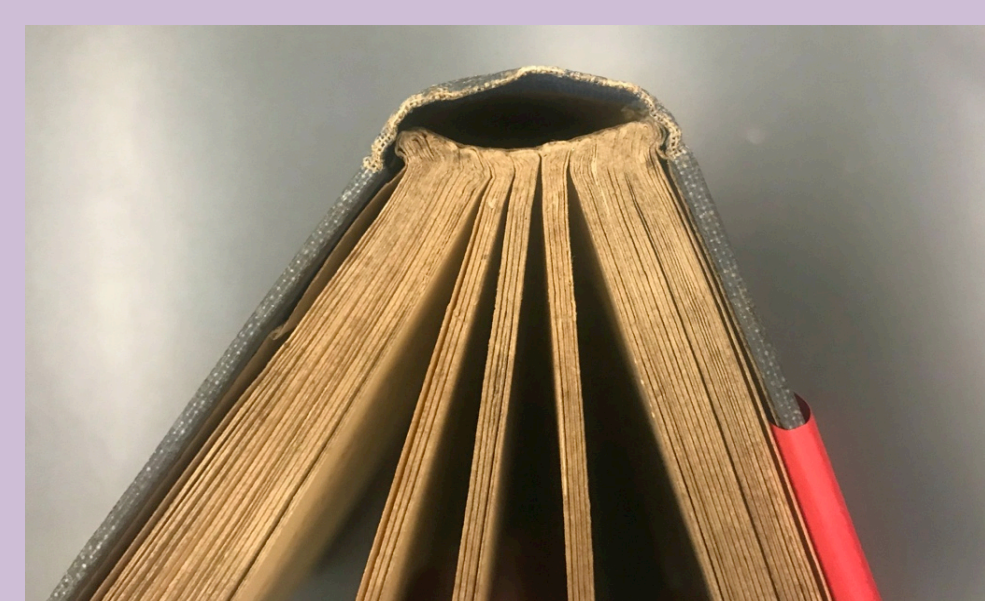
Rather than beginning with a more traditional mode of research such as content analysis, this project takes a different approach to analyzing the print object: **descriptive bibliography**. This project attempts to explore the **physical characteristics of print objects** to allow for a new perspective on its creation, intended audience, and cultural moment.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Descriptive bibliography: the aspect of bibliography concerned with the close physical study and description of books and other works

Online tools such as identifont.com and abebooks.com to identify typesetting and compare the present version with other versions available

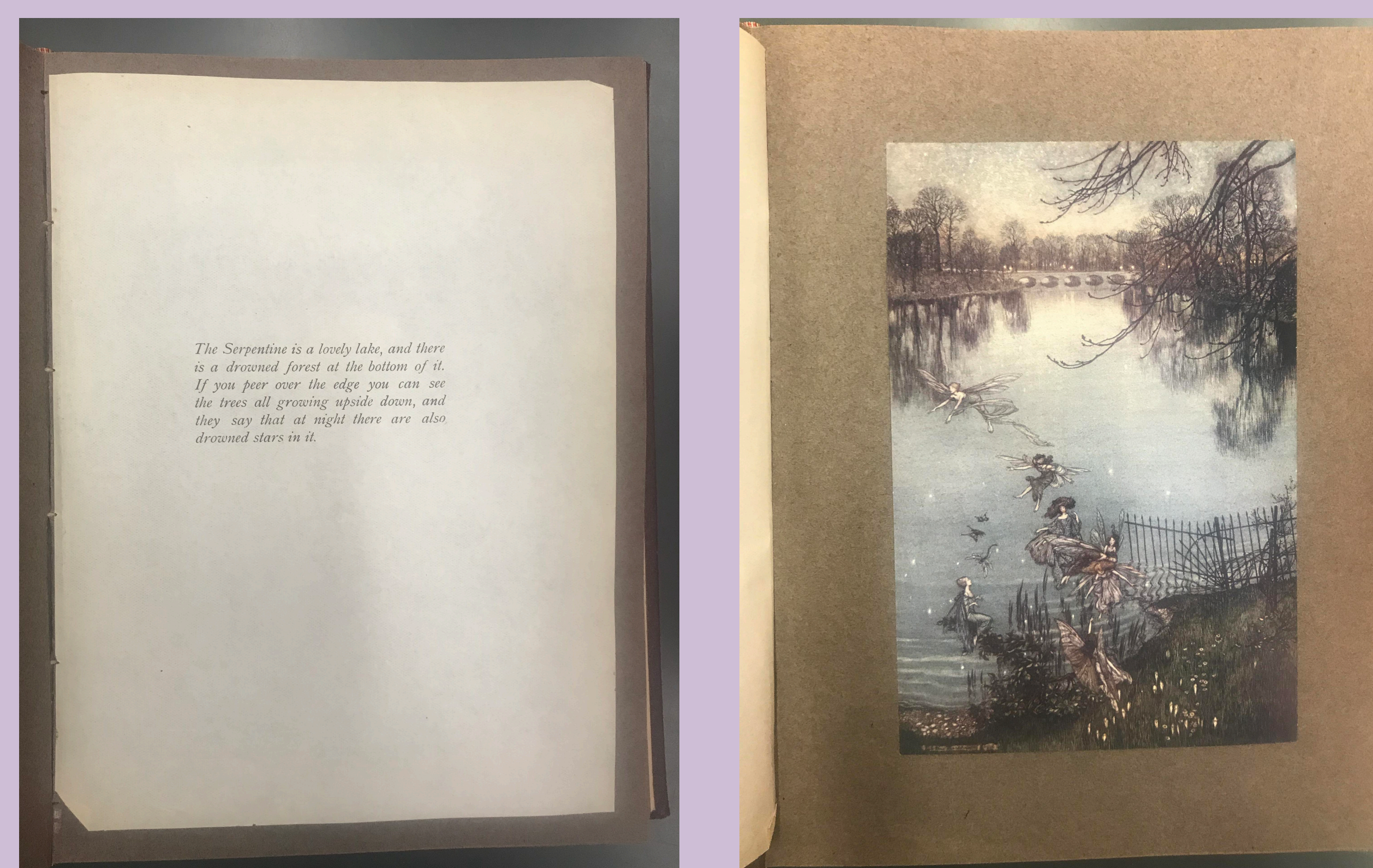
Millimeter ruler and microscope for close physical study



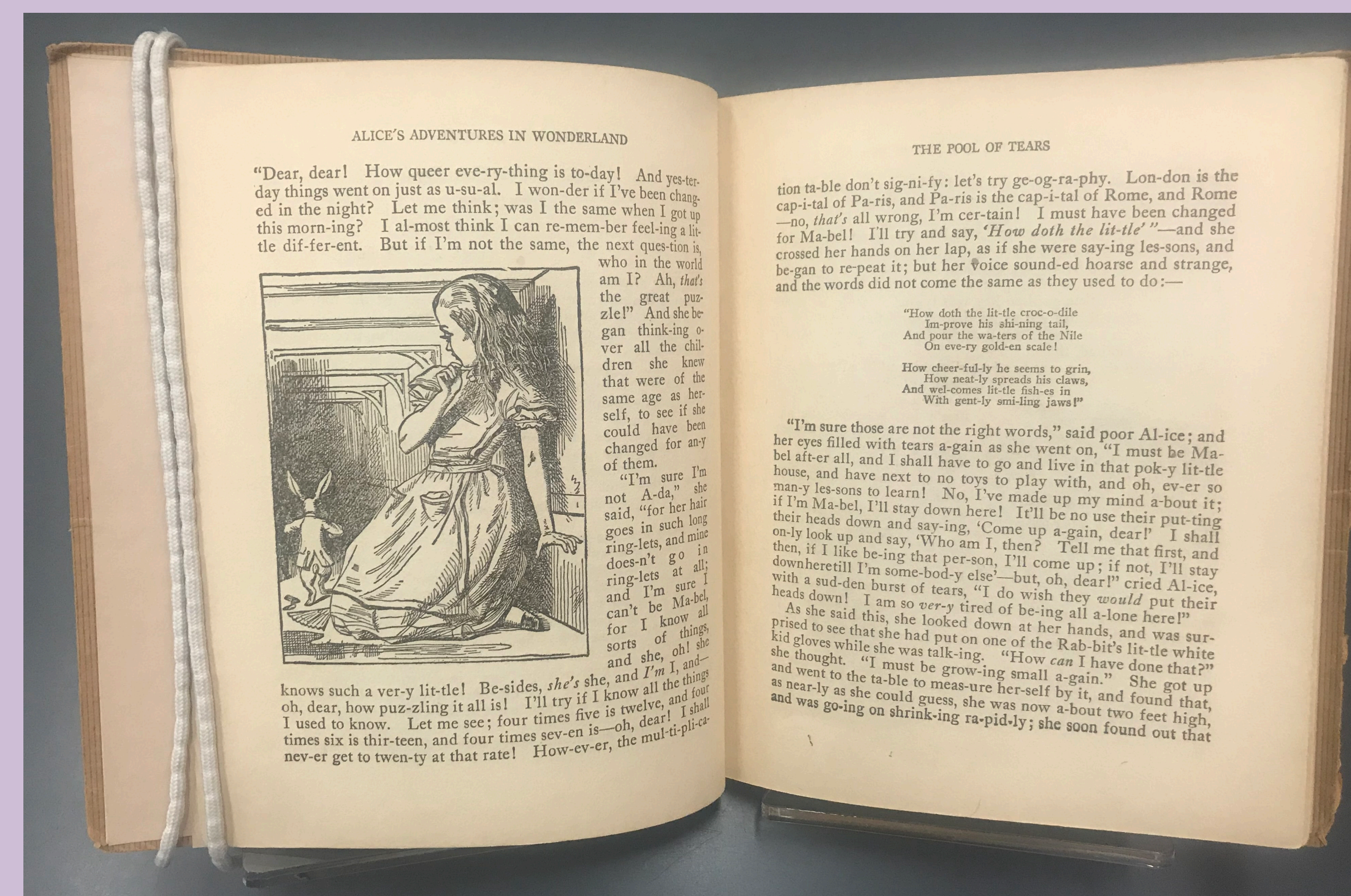
Close-up image of gatherings from *An Eskimo Robinson Crusoe*



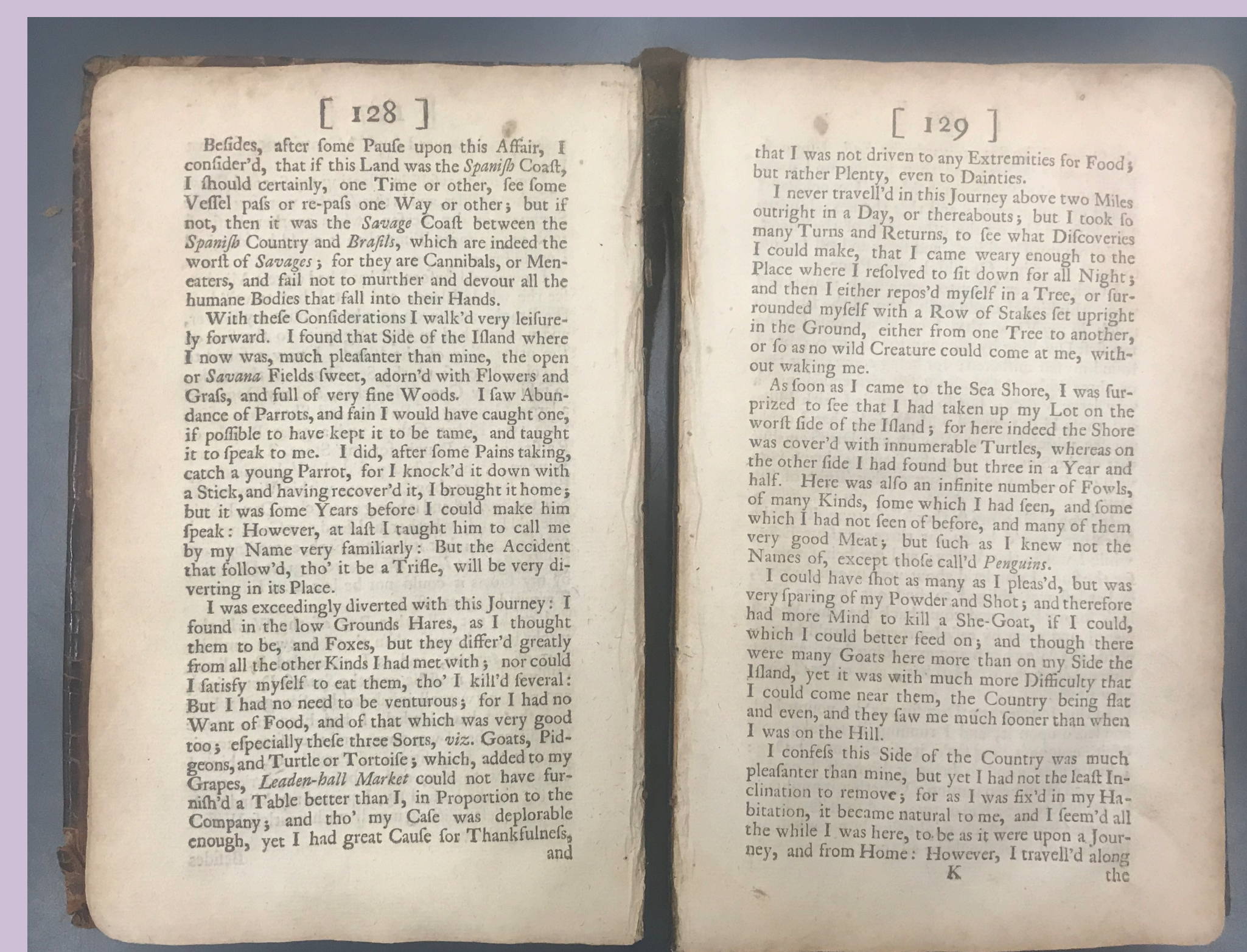
Close-up image of gilt-edged pages from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



Descriptive tissue paper cover and color illustration plate from Arthur Rackham's illustrated edition of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*



Alice in Wonderland in words of one syllable



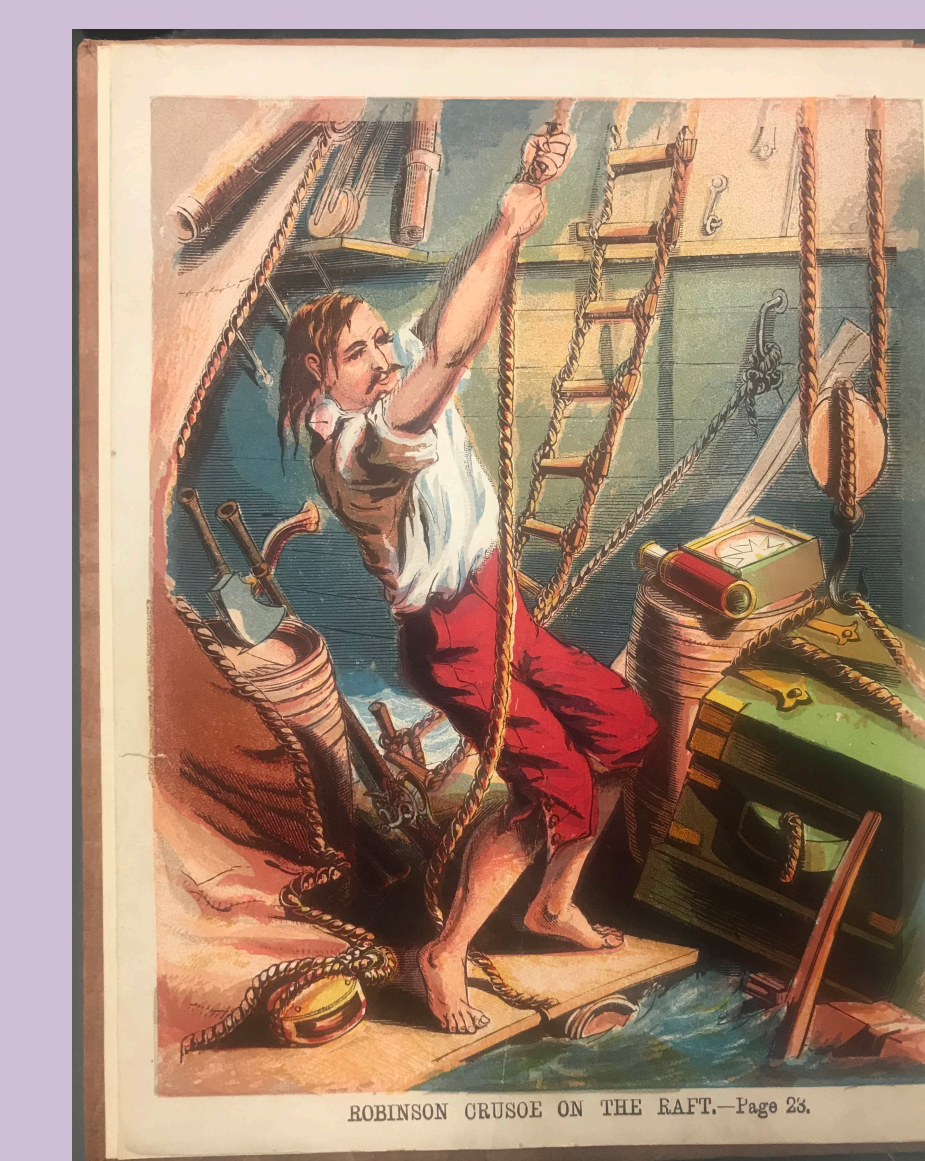
"Third" edition of *The life and strange surprizing...* (1719)
Examples of signature marks and catchwords

Texts

Commonalities

Poorer Quality	Better Quality
Fewer, larger gatherings	More, smaller gatherings
Flimsy/quarter binding	Sturdy/full binding
Smaller margins	Larger margins (esp. bottom and top)
Black and white illustrations	Color illustration plates

While not true of every book, these are some standout trends observed among the bibliographic measurements



Robinson Crusoe in Words of One Syllable color illustration plate

Further Research

Descriptive bibliography reveals a whole new plane of print culture beyond a book's content. When applied to versioning in children's literature, it illuminates a perspective on culture not often discussed.

Although descriptive bibliography offers many unique insights into the print object, these findings would be best supplemented by a detailed content analysis or additional study of archival materials not available at the University.

Special Thanks

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