

**Ngày Xưa Ngày Xưa: Children's Literature, Ideology, and the Self-Reliant  
Literary Group, 1939-1945.**

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The development of a specialized literary genre for children remains an important but often overlooked aspect in the formation of national identity. Children's literature in the modern world carries a strong socializing imperative; it functions to inculcate moral and civic values vital to citizenship from one generation to the next. For the historian of culture and ideas, children's literature provides rich material to examine what a culture valued in a particular time, as well as the issues it struggled to resolve. In Vietnam studies, children's literature remains almost completely untouched. This study will examine the Sách Hồng (Pink Books), a series of popular children's books printed by the Đồi Nây publishing house between 1939-1945. Mostly written by members of the Self-Reliant Literary Group (Tự Lực Văn Đoàn), this body of children's literature has been largely marginalized even in existing scholarship of the group. I argue that the Sách Hồng reveal less about children than about their authors and their sociopolitical context: the books provide penetrating views into the political and cultural project of the Self-Reliant Literary Group. A number of themes emerge in the Sách Hồng: a return to nature and pastoral roots, self-reliance and discipline, science and knowledge, and human compassion.