

## Activism and Empathy in Nineteenth-Century British Children's Periodicals

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This paper situates activism and empathy within the context of late nineteenth-century Britain, a period in which children were actively encouraged to support philanthropic enterprises both at home and abroad. The question of children's ethical responsibility to help others in need is central to this discussion. Many critics of children's literature concede that 'at least one function of a children's book is to shape the evolving moral character of its readers' (Mills 2014, p. 5). Yet just how that moral character was defined and enacted in nineteenth-century British children's periodicals is based on specific understandings of the extent to which children could be expected to engage with key social problems of the era and how the engagement should manifest. By examining the Church of England children's magazine *Brothers and Sisters* (1890-1914) and Barnardo's *Young Helper's League Magazine* (1892-1914), this paper will examine how empathy was encouraged in the form of financial contributions and community fundraising while also interrogating whether children were prompted to agitate for change.