

ANALYSIS OF PANDEMIC PICTURE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN BASED ON THE BOOK BY SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, PAN[DEM]IC! COVID-19 SHAKES THE WORLD

Milena Mileva Blažič

Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

E-mail: milena.blazic@pef.uni-lj.si

Received: 2023-01-11

Accepted: 2023-02-17

Published online: 2023-02-19

Abstract

The article contains an analysis of the pandemic and pandemic picturebooks based on the book by the established Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, *Pan[dem]ic! Covid-19 shakes the world* (2020), which consists of ten chapters. For the analysis of selected pandemic picture books, supposedly intended for children, the fifth chapter is relevant, entitled *Five phases of the epidemic*, which Žižek connects with the phases of dying (after Elizabeth Kubler Ross). Žižek says that the virus is similar to an asteroid that can destroy the world. He concludes with the thought that humanity has learned nothing from ecology which reminds us that humans are just one of the living beings on planet Earth and that we are more dependent on nature than we think. According to Žižek, the virus will have a catastrophic impact on the economy, travel, social life, technology, etc. Žižek points out the paradox that technological development has made humanity more independent and at the same time more dependent on nature. The best example of this is COVID-19. The article will try to answer the question of whether pandemic picture books are a reflection of the pandemic or panic?

Keywords: Slavoj Žižek, picture book, pandemic, Covid-19, coronavirus, geo-social class, life.

Introduction

On 14 March 2020, from 6pm onwards, an epidemic of coronavirus disease or COVID-19 was declared in the Republic of Slovenia. All citizens received an SMS message from the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on restrictions on public and private life, which was at the same time similar and different from other (un)constitutional measures in Slovenia. The purpose of the article is to present the function of children's or youth literature at the time of the (un)declared epidemic which, among other things, affected the educational system, children (*Wearing a Mask: A Social Narrative for Children*), children's rights, schooling (*My School is Closed Today*),¹ and politics (*La Magia de los Aplausos*) and the hyperproduction of picture books on pandemics and/or coronavirus disease. (*Birdie and the Virus*, *Joe the kangaroo and her coping with COVID plan: a very special coloring book for kids...*), *kiseborijozoper*

¹ The article lists the original titles of the picture books in various languages on the New York City School Library website; <https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free> (accessed 8 October 2021).

COVID-19. An interesting coincidence, or not, is the fact that as early as the end of March 2020, more than 300 pandemic picture books (Covid-19 Free eBooks) for children in different languages were published on the New York City School Library website (<https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free>) almost simultaneously with the declaration of the epidemic. English picture books published from March 2020 pre dominate. Most of the picturebooks deal with the message in which the main literary characters are children or adults (e.g., *My School is Closed Today*, *Rominaylacuarentena*, *Virus, virus, you cannot scare me!*, *Wearing a mask...*). The COVID-19 virus is presented as a personified creature or as a living being who speaks the target language. Some pandemic picture books are set in the world of personified animals (*Birdie and the Virus*, *Joe the kangaroo and her coping with COVID plan: a very special coloring book for kids...*) fighting COVID-19. The virus is most often presented in a personified form (speaks, flies, lives, etc.), in the illustrations in some picturebooks it is anthropomorphized, e.g. a child as a movie character Superman (*Kid Covid Fights Back!*, *The Virus-Stopping Champion*), and in some only personified as a talking virus (*Hello! I am a VIRUS*, *Cousins with the Flu and Common Cold*, *My name is Coronavirus*, etc.). Nature (flowers, trees, garden; animals: puppies, kittens, bunnies, etc.) is presented as an urban environment (*My New Home School*), as a first-person confession (*Hello! My Name is Coronavirus*). The event space in picture books is often a house/apartment and a view of nature (*Earth Sweet Home 2020*, *Stuck Inside*, *The Inside Book*) through the window (*Windows*). A fictional creature – Corona or Covid-19 – is presented as an invisible/ monster/traveling/wicked virus, etc.

In a relatively short period of three months, more than 300 pandemic picture books were created (March, April, May 2020). The picture books are still being created (September, October 2021). Some of them are published simultaneously in the original and in translations in more than a hundred languages, as the picture books are also supported by the United Nations (Helen Patuk, *My hero is you, storybook for children on Covid-19*, 2020). Well-known authors (e.g., Mark Haddon, *Social Distance*, 2020) and illustrators (Tony Ross, *I don't want to wash my hands*, 2020; Axel Scheffler, *Coronavirus: a book for children*, 2020) have also created some picture books on the subject of the coronavirus disease (March 2020). Very few picture books have a professional review, most of them are market-oriented and intended for self-promotion. To better understand the hyperproduction of picture books, the quality of which varies greatly, it is necessary to understand the context of time and space in Slovenia, Europe and the world. Simultaneously with the picture books, two of Žižek's books on the topic of the 2020 pandemic resonated with the public, the first in the summer and the second in the winter.

Slavoj Žižek: Pan[dem]ic! Covid-19 shakes the world, 2020²

The first book by Slavoj Žižek, Pan[dem]ic! Covid-19 shakes the world, was published in spring/summer 2020. It consists of ten chapters, or twelve, if we also consider the introduction and appendix. For the analysis of selected pandemic picture books supposedly intended for children, the fifth chapter is the most relevant, entitled Five phases of the epidemic, that Žižek connects with the phases of mourning (according to Elizabeth Kubler Ross): denial, anger, negotiation, depression, acceptance.

Žižek says that the virus is similar to an asteroid that can destroy the world. He concludes with the thought that humanity has learned nothing from ecology, which reminds us that humans are just one species of the living beings on planet Earth and that we are more dependent on nature than we think. According to Žižek, the virus will have a catastrophic impact on various areas of life, such as the economy, travel, social life, technology, etc. Žižek points out the paradox that technological development has made humanity more independent and at the same time more dependent on nature, with COVID-19 being the best example of this.

Slavoj Žižek: Pan[dem]ic 2: Chronicles of a time lost, 2020³

The second book by S.Žižek, entitled Pan[dem]ic2: Chronicles of a time lost, was published in autumn/winter 2020. The book has 14 chapters, in addition to the introduction and conclusion and the appendix or four reflections on power, appearance and obscenity (oppression, repression, depression) (Žižek 2020: 147).

For the application of Žižek's theory, it is necessary to briefly present its basic ideas. Žižek advocates active solidarity (2020: 40), social rights, e.g., universal income, basic health insurance, ecology, etc. (2020: 28). According to him, coronavirus disease has established the economics of working from home and exploitation (homedelivery, packages/shipments) (2020: 30). Žižek predicts a vision of a new world based on physical closeness and mental distance. Even children's picture books show that they are based on the concept of the absent rich persons, as their dream is to be as far away from ordinary people as possible.

Žižek's central hypothesis is that a new geo-social class is emerging (a new labor force [the service departments], different from the industrial workingclass), and a new

² An article on Žižek's first book, Pandemic1 (2020), was published on 23 April 2020 in The Guardian; <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/apr/23/pandemic-by-slavoj-zizek-review-the-philosopher-provides-his-solution> (accessed 8 October 2021).

³ In the second book, Pandemic 2 (2020), Žižek mentions that he wrote it at the end of June (2020).

division is emerging according to gender, race and ethnicity. It is precisely this finding of his that is characteristic of almost all picturebooks. He believes that modern times are similar to the Andersen's fairy tale *The Emperor's New Clothes* as global mobilization is based on ignorance. People realize that everything is normal, including 'lockdown', social distancing, masks, etc.

Žižek believes that quarantine is presented as a certain time of excellence (reading books, listening to music, cooking, handicrafts, gardening...). He notes that the pandemic is characterized by a paradox of multiculturalism, nationalism, monoculturalism and traditional values (Žižek 2020: 35-6). All of these paradoxes represent the predominant verbal and visual characteristics of picturebooks. He says there has been a new economic arrangement. He insightfully notes that people, especially children, are blamed if the elderly get sick. It is precisely this "perverse enjoyment of guilt and patronage of the realvictim" (2020: 30) from the point of view of adults which they want children to internalize that can also be seen in picture books. Žižek writes about populism of the new right and conservatism. Both features are present in almost all picturebooks. One year after the publication of Žižek's second book, it became clear that the pandemic highlights health and economic problems, while neglecting international conflicts and mental health (Žižek 2020: 30).

Žižek's essential finding is that the coronavirus revealed a previous poverty crisis (Žižek 2020:108). He believes that it is not possible to curb a coronavirus pandemic without resolving the poverty pandemic (2020: 108). The pandemic has also exposed a health, ecological, economic, social, and mental crisis. Psychological crises, which are implicitly reflected (*Even Heros Feel Sad: Fighting Coronavirus Together*), are also very often presented in children's picturebooks. People think of a pandemic by emphasizing the "Other," which can be God, destiny, nature. According to Žižek, freedom and equality are seeming values. Reality is based on racism and sexism, so imagination acts as a screen that protects us from it, which can also be applied to pandemic picturebooks (2020:136).

Mark David and Davina Lohm: *Pandemics, Publics, and Narrative*, 2020

In declaring a pandemic of coronavirus disease, not only in Slovenia but in the wider area, two categories of temporality and spatiality are important, namely time and space. The discussed monograph *Pandemics, Publics, and Narrative* was published on 5 June 2020 by Oxford University Press – Academic. It consists of nine chapters and an appendix in the form of interviews with project participants.

The titles of the chapters are as follows: Introduction, Pandemic Tales, Being Aware, Don't Panic, Infection, Immunity, Vulnerability, New Media Noise,⁴ The Boy Who Screamed Wolf, and other post-real tales, and Conclusion.

The monograph presents how the public experienced the swine flu pandemic in 2009. The authors use literary metaphors to explain the pandemic declared by politicians and what happened to them in 2009, reflect on news and expert advice, and present their views on vaccination, social exclusion and other infection control measures. The book also includes storytelling from public life, including "be alert, not alarmed" messages from the beginning of the outbreak and the problem of the "boy who cried a wolf" that emerged later, already during the outbreak, when the virus turned out to be less serious for most people than it initially seemed.

The key themes of the book are the importance of personal immunity for people as they think about how to respond to the danger of the flu virus and the ways in which people interpreted general public health advice quite differently depending on their health and biographical status. The book provides a unique insight into the lives of ordinary people in 2009, which was very important for some and barely so for others. Based on socio-cultural research on the narrative of illness and narrative medicine, Žižek develops a new approach to "narrative public health", which connects the communication of the health profession and storytelling. The book therefore brings important new insights for communication scientists and researchers in the social and health sciences.

FREE eBooks about Coronavirus/COVID-19, 2020

The New York City School Library (<https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free>) published more than 300 pandemic picture books (Covid-19 Free eBooks) almost simultaneously with the declaration of the epidemic. Most picturebooks are freely available, but to read some you need to sign up with personal data and/or 'voluntarily' subscribe to news of (self-)publishing.

⁴ In the article, the original title in English (New Media Hype) was translated in Slovene as "Nova medijska tema" or "cirkus, direndaj, halo, hrušč, kraval, pomp, vihar, vihracircus, direndaj, halo, hrušč, kraval, pomp, vihar, vihra" (we could paraphrase W. Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing [1598], which is translated into Slovenian as Mnogo hrupa zanič).

Findings

Most picture books or literary works of the New York City School Library (<https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free>) are unbalanced in artistic quality, which is illogical. Most of the picturebooks are narrow minded, straightforward ideological, unequivocally didactic and moralistic, and do not contribute to the formation of ethical, intercultural and pandemic consciousness. The website presents a collection of picturebooks prepared for the concrete education of children of the second group in the preschool period (from 3 to 6 years) and the initial school period (from 6 to 9 years). Mark Haddon's authorial picture book, *Social Distance* (2020), with the overall title *Lockdown Culture*,⁵ would be suitable for children/young people, but this picture book is not in the electronic collection. There are 371 picture books on the New York City School Library website.⁶ Most picturebooks are from the USA (138), followed by picture books from Spain and South America⁷(48), Great Britain (30), Chile(11), Australia(10), Canada and China(8), Philippines, South Africa, India, Italy and Mexico(6), Rwanda(5), Ecuador, UNICEF and Venezuela(4), Argentina, Colombia and the United Nations(3), the Caribbean, Galicia, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates (2each), one picture book each was contributed by Algeria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Germany, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Liberia, Malaya, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Scotland, Singapore, Wales, wherein only a few picture books are international projects.

Many picture books are self-published projects and do not even contain basic information, e.g., ISBN, year of publication, publishing house, etc. Many of these contain only promotional information about the female authors and illustrators who are in the majority, their family; they even publish photos of their family, etc. They allegedly motivate children to read, but certainly to shop, follow websites, etc. The main literary characters in most picture books (verbally and visually) are not children, as one would expect (names Alicia, Elena, Filippo, etc.), but personified animals (deer, cat, bear, dog, birds, owl, squirrel, etc.). Motifs of personified nature are rare and include trees, flowers, forest, plants, gardens that children observe out the window as part of the outdoor landscape. These children mostly live in houses with gardens.

Event spaces are most often enclosed spaces, such as children's rooms, living rooms, study rooms with a mandatory computer, with which the mother most often works, including the kitchen (mother in the kitchen).

⁵ Cf. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2020/may/20/social-distance-mark-haddon-graphic-short-story-coronavirus-age>

⁶ Cf. <https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free> (accessed 5 September 2021).

⁷ Picturebooks in Spanish are meant. It was not possible to determine the actual country of origin from the factual data.

At the level of verbal and visual text, traditional values are evident: working at home for a woman who is usually surrounded by children, and including a dog. Žižek is right, this is a new economic arrangement (Žižek 2020: 30). The space is shown euphemistically, embellished, without any problematic motifs.

Non-reader writers

Almost all the picture books verbally and visually represent the new economic and social order of the "new working class" (Žižek 2020: 19). The main motif is isolation, but it is also shown in a populist manner (pleasing the social class, verbal and visual expression of likeable promises) and conservatively (mother works at the computer work from home – and bakes cookies at the same time), father is mostly absent, children play idyllically, if they get bored, it's aestheticized. Most picturebooks are similar to soap operas, and at the level of reading these picture books it becomes evident that writers show a lack of vocabulary, linear structure and cumbersome literary style, suggesting that these are generations of non-reader writers who grew up watching television and/or playing on the computer. The aesthetics of the visual image is mostly amateurish, but this kind of visual text goes beyond the purpose of the present article. This means that most authors have transferred simplified and linear soap operas to picture books.

There are no social problems in these picturebooks, poverty is not shown, the characters mostly have sufficient means of subsistence, social services are provided by the family instead of the state, and even "with pleasure". Most often, personified animals and/or children are verbally and visually presented as those who alleviate the social hardships of the vulnerable and injured elderly persons and/or grandparents, neighbors and population groups. In fact, most of the picturebooks are trivial, social isolation is presented in an embellished, linear way, without much needed depth or at least hint at problematic motifs.

Interesting are the literary characters in those picture books in which COVID-19 or the coronavirus are shown in first-person (I am COVID-19/coronavirus), where it is essentially an anti-fairy tale, because the text is written in such a way that readers sympathize with the antagonist (Captain Corona & the 19 COVID Warriors). Some picture books deal with mental crises in a populist way (Žižek 2020: 101), but these are populist. One of the mispresented as the TV series Teletubbies. The picturebook is written and drawn in a childish rather than children's style and expresses the creative helplessness of the authors and illustrators as it tends to simplify. The main role in the text is played by personified pigs and rabbits–COVID-19. With this childishness, they are actually devaluing readers. They introduce elements of the 'Other', as Žižek (2020:

103) says (god, nature, destiny), as well as motifs of new age, mindfulness, etc. The book itself is not of poor quality, but its execution is populist: a thermometer of emotions in groups of three (calm, content, loving; lonely, sad, worried; proud, happy, excited; scared, angry, frustrated), and interestingly, it ends with negative emotions. At the end of the picturebook there is also a 'greeting' or confirmation that the child has completed the "Emotional First Aid" course. Most of the picture books, including this one, are a clear example of populism, appearances and the coronavirus economy (2020: 30).

UNICEF picturebooks

In the online library in question, UNICEF supported four picture books: Once upon a time there was a virus (Habia una vez un virus), Monkey Burbuja fights the virus (Elmonito Burbuja: aprendeacomatir al coronavirus), Cope Covid 19, Conversation with the youngest about the coronavirus (Hablando sobre el coronavirus-19 con los ninos y ninas mas pequenos).

UNICEF's picturebook by three authors, Martha Keswick, Mariko Jesse and Timothy Sim, is subtitled Stay Safe and Smiling. It is in this subtitle that Žižek's category of populism can be found (smiling). The visual text is simplified, so it will be abstracted in the present article. The main literary character is a (Chinese) teacher, a personified snake (Sense) and a dog (Rescue). The text is written linearly, like a short modern fairy tale with elements of multiculturalism, the children's names being Candy, Eddy, Ollie and Ping. There are almost no adults in the picture book, time and space are typical of the middleclass (computers, phones, tea...), there are tips such as washing hands (with the literary character of a personified dog...). The presentation gives the appearance of multiculturalism, but shows parallelism indifferent monocultural cultures (Australia, Japan, Pakistan, Singapore, and Scotland). The picturebook presents the geosocial class, parents of children, e.g., in Pakistan, provide services (mother-nurse, father-seasonal worker). The children of 'service workers' are called "children of heroes" in a populist and conservative manner.

The chapter on Scotland mentions the populist and conservative gesture of "applause to the medical staff". This chapter mentions that the pandemic has hit minorities and the elderly the hardest, which only confirms Žižek's hypothesis about coronacapitalism (Žižek 2020: 29) and the new workforce (services) and the new social division according to ethnicity, race and gender (father - pharmacist, mother - nurse).

The United Nations and My Hero Is You: How Kids Can Fight COVID-19! (2000)

Picture book *My Hero is You: How Kids Can Fight Covid-19* (2020),⁸ which was supported by the United Nations, unjustifiably according to the author of this article, is of poor quality, but still translated into more than 100 languages, including Slovene. I believe that picture books that become a public good and are financed from public funds and recommended to many educational institutions should be reviewed from the point of view of artistic and literary quality and professional data (symptoms, treatment, prevention, prognosis, epidemiology, etc.), and should not literalize the universal fairy tale type ATU313 (The Magic Flight) under the pretext of instructive picturebooks. The very element of the archetypal fairy-tale motif or the magic year is ideological because imagination and flying on a bird's wings are portrayed as escapism, as according to Žižek, imagination is like a "screen that protects against reality".

The United Nations and From My Window: Children at Home during COVID 19, 2020

The United Nations supported two picture books. Their central picture book is *My Hero is You*, and the other is *From My Window: Children at Home during COVID 19*, which has been translated into 141 languages, which is commendable, but it is a picture book of poor quality both verbally and visually.⁹ British picturebook – E.Jenner, K.Wilson and N. Roberts, *Coronavirus and Covid: A book for children about the pandemic*, 2020.

From the library e-collection, which is certainly not complete, of the more than 370 picture books that are still being added, so their number changes frequently, it is necessary to highlight the British picture book by three authors and internationally acclaimed illustrator Axel Scheffler. The book is freely available and translated into many languages, including Slovene. This is the only example of a peer-reviewed picture

⁸<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-mental-health-and-psycho-social-support-emergency-settings/my-hero-you-storybook-children-covid-19> (accessed 8 October 2021).

⁹ The Council of Europe has published the picturebook *Kiko and the Hand* (2011), which is not a pandemic project, noting their responsibility of international organizations. In 2012, the Council of Europe published a picturebook with the motto "underwearrule", the first in a series of picturebooks to protect children from sexual abuse. *Kiko and the Hand* (2012) does not have the name of the author, the illustrator, it does not have the name and surname of the reviewers who confirmed the educational message of the picturebook and translated it into many languages. It's a so called package that includes a film, poster, picturebook and websites as part of children's rights. The picturebook also received a sequelen titled *Kiko and the Manymes* (2020). Both picturebooks are intended for children aged 4–7, as "goodnight stories". The intentional text of the picture book *Kiko and the Hand* (promotion and slogan) is clear and unambiguous, but the verbal and visual text is ambivalent. The main literary character is not a child, maybe an avatar who is in his underwear all the time. The "hand" is rainbow, it says one thing, but it does to the child everything that says on the level of words that it is not right (bribery, groping, etc.).

book, with consultant prof. Graham Medley.¹⁰ The verbal and visual texts of the picturebook are complementary. If we use Žižek's findings, it becomes obvious that the picturebook is multicultural and open to the future. Given that the picture book was published before the invention of the coronavirus vaccine and vaccinations and thus before many waves of the epidemic, it is based on findings from the first phase: people do not wear masks, but school is closed and children get bored. The picturebook also discreetly deals with the motifs of mental health (negative emotions), unlike other picture books based on modern philosophy (new age) and positive thinking which is presented in a populist way in individual picture books.

The scene is set in the British middle class (house, playground, school, dog...). As a traditional value, the character of the mother is mentioned several times, the father is unfortunately not present. A new form of exploitations present, as the mother works at home and from home. According to Žižek, the time of the pandemic is shown as a time of exceptionality for an indefinite period of time: children are bored, including dogs, but at the same time they play (probably) Monopoly, organize the home library, do the schoolwork, etc. The picture book shows literary characters of all three generations, both sexes, including people with special needs. The conclusion of the picture book is interesting, when different people (men, women, multiculturally...), including animals, say that they "can do it together". This slogan shows Žižek's "active solidarity", which is not presented in the picturebooks. An essential feature between this high-quality and other low-quality picture books is that in this picturebook the "geo-socialclass" (Žižek 2020: 21) is presented discreetly, and in the others linearly and in a straight line.

Conclusion

Of the 370 picture books, of which only the British picture book had an expert advisor, aren't owned by an illustrator (Alex Scheffler), most are of poor quality and socially irresponsible, especially those sponsored by UNICEF, UNESCO and the UN. The article also cites an example from the European Union, i.e. the picturebook *Kiko and the Hand* that ambivalently represents sexual abuse of a child. The picturebooks in the New York City Library mostly represent a new geo-social class, a new workforce, and a new division of labor based on gender (working from home and housework for the mother, rarely working from home and without housekeeping for the father, who mostly repairs things or arranges the garden in front of the house).

Most of the picturebooks contain the populism of the new right and the new conservatism. At the same time, they verbally and visually represent the time of isolation and the space of quarantine – home (home sweet home) is presented in an

¹⁰ Cf. <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/people/medley.graham> (accessed 5 September 2021).

idyllic, pastoral way and as a utopia and an opportunity for kitchenwork, reading, work from home, which most people enjoy. In Žižek's words, we could say that they are "enjoying their symptoms."

In the picture books of UNICEF and the United Nations, if we use Žižek's findings, apparent equality and freedom are emphasized only on a descriptive level, but not on a narrative level. In most picturebooks there are old divisions by gender, race and ethnicity, multiculturalism is almost nonexistent. The motif of isolation in the picturebooks is verbally and visually presented as a screen/wall/garden (*locus amoenus*) that protects against reality (pandemic). There is no ecological dimension in the picture books, no health insurance, no social care – they deal with a serious issue without any problems. If we analyze picturebooks in a critical and comparative way, elements of racism (segregation by race, e.g., *Heroes of the White Army*) and sexism (traditional gender representations) become apparent.

The picturebooks reflect the future pandemic of poverty, the representation of the geo-social class and the new workforce (work from home). They cite alleged voluntary isolation that exposes the semblance of equality and freedom. Žižek explicitly mentions the fairy tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*, where everyone pretends to see "new clothes" because the authority has set the criterion that if someone does not see the Emperor's new clothes, he/she is incapable of work and stupid. There is an obvious similarity with the virus, because if someone does not see a new suit/new virus/global mobilization, he/she is incompetent or stupid. Pandemic picturebooks are written from an adult's point of view, vocabulary, views, thoughts are typical of adults who write for children, so they include childish literary characters (e.g., a corn wearing a mask, squirrels/bunnies wearing masks), quarantine is shown also as a characteristic of personified animals (e.g., coyotes, etc. [*M12 is the Magpie & Rex the Rabbit Fight the Coronavirus, Australia*]). Some picture books are inadmissibly pragmatic (*Getting a haircut with mask*). The virus is referred to in the picturebooks as "uncanny" (*There's no monstrous side: It's a virus, USA*). Most of the covers show a daughter and a mother on the cover, the absence of a father is noticeable, which represents a focalization for readers and writers. Political slogans became the titles of the picture books: *I wear a mask*; *Duma Says: Wash your hands, wear a mask!*; *Lucy's in Lockdown*, etc. The purpose of the article is to apply Žižek's theory of the pandemic to selected pandemic picturebooks for children. Based on a comparative analysis, it can be seen that the picturebooks are of poor quality, ideological and misleading. They have become guidelines for behavior and thinking, creating a new geopolitical class which is legitimized with picture books that are not a goal but an ideological means.

References

- BAI, Xue. From My Window: Children at Home During Covid -19. United Nations. <https://issuu.com/unpublications/docs/from-my-window> [Dostop: 08. 10. 2021]
- DAVID, Mark in LOHM, Davina: Pandemics, Publics, and Narrative. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2020.
- JENNER, E., WILLSON, K., ROBERTS, N.: Koronavirus, knjiga za otroke. 2000. Ljubljana: Morfem. <https://morfem.si/knjige/po-starosti/starost-6-8-let/koronavirus-knjiga-za-otroke/> [Dostop: 08. 10. 2021]
- New York City School Library <https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free> je [Dostop: 08. 10. 2021] <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190683764.001.0001/oso-9780190683764>
- PATUK, Helen. You are my Hero. United Nations. Ti si moj junak: Kako otroci pomagajo premagati Covid-19! 2000. IASC – InterAgency Standing Committee. 2020.
- ŽIŽEK, Slavoj. Pandemic! COVID-19 shakes the world. New York: Polity, 2020. P.136.
- ŽIŽEK, Slavoj. Pandemic! 2, Chronicles of a time lost. [Cambridge; Medford]: Polity, 2021. P.191.