



A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times

Colin Heywood

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In this lively and accessible book, Colin Heywood explores the changing experiences and perceptions of childhood from the early Middle Ages to the beginning of the twentieth century. Heywood examines the different ways in which people have thought about childhood as a stage of life, the relationships of children with their families and peers, and the experiences of young people at work, in school and at the hands of various welfare institutions. The aim is to place the history of children and childhood firmly in its social and cultural context, without losing sight of the many individual experiences that have come down to us in diaries, autobiographies and oral testimonies.

Heywood argues that there is a cruel paradox at the heart of childhood in the past. On the one hand, material conditions for children have generally improved in the West, however belatedly and unevenly, and they are now more valued than in the past. On the other hand, the business of preparing for adulthood has become more complicated in urban and industrial societies, as the young face a bewildering array of choices and expectations.

A History of Childhood will be an essential introduction to the subject for students of history, the social sciences and cultural studies.

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