

INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CORDEL LITERATURE: AN EDUCATIONAL REFLECTION

Considerações ambientais integradas à Literatura de Cordel: uma reflexão educativa

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Abstract

Cordel literature is a form of expression that promotes creativity and imagination. It allows for the recreation of writing through various ways of representing words, working with each one with emotion and style. Thus, we can say that the power of the arts profoundly impacts humans, helping them reach their full potential. Art offers a completely different way of experiencing oneself. Cordel is a popular expression that addresses a variety of themes, including environmental issues. As teachers, one of our commitments is to encourage healthier communities by working in essential areas of sustainability – social, environmental, and economic – and promoting the integration of different components in a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach, coordinating activities. It can be said that cordel is relevant for establishing Environmental Education, as it is material that brings to light criticisms based on the local context and, at the same time, engages with oppressed individuals.

Resumo

A literatura de cordel é uma forma de expressão que promove a criatividade e a imaginação. Ela permite a recriação da escrita através de diversas maneiras de representar as palavras, trabalhando cada uma delas com emoção e estilo. Assim, podemos dizer que o poder das artes impacta profundamente o ser humano, ajudando-o a alcançar seu pleno potencial. A arte oferece uma maneira completamente diferente de vivenciar a si mesmo. O cordel é uma expressão popular que aborda uma variedade de temas, incluindo questões ambientais. Como professores, um de nossos compromissos é estimular comunidades mais saudáveis, trabalhando em áreas essenciais da sustentabilidade – social, ambiental e económica – e promovendo a integração dos diferentes componentes em uma abordagem multidisciplinar e transdisciplinar, articulando as atividades. Pode-se afirmar que o cordel é relevante para fundamentar a Educação Ambiental, pois é um material que traz à tona críticas a partir do contexto local e, ao mesmo tempo, dialoga com os sujeitos oprimidos.

Key-words: *Education; Environmental Education; Cordel Literature; Arts.*

Palavras-chave: *Educação; Educação ambiental; Literatura de cordel; Artes.*

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INTRODUCTION

The artist's observation can reach an almost mystical depth. Illuminated objects lose their names: shadows and lights form particular systems and problems [...] which receive their entire existence and all their value from certain singular affinities between the soul, the eye and the hand of a person born to surprise such affinities [...] and to produce them (Paul Valéry).

Cordel is not the one that hangs on a string, it is the one that was made with the strings of the heart (Unknown regional author).

Cordel literature has its antecedents in medieval France. It has a broad itinerary before reaching Brazilian lands, passing through Portugal, with its arrival in Brazil around the 16th and 17th centuries, coming to flourish in the Northeast region. Through the Cordel Folhetos, popular poets rescue and reinvent themselves, delving into their subjectivity to represent what they perceive and what they live.

As Ribeiro and Lyra (2008, p. 66) explain, “What is specifically human was historically developed through culture. It establishes humanity, that is, it composes that part of us that transcends the limits of biological nature and transforms both people and the world around us. Through culture, we and our world become human.” They also add that “If, therefore, culture establishes humanity, the foundation of culture as constitutive of what is human comes, in turn, from its intrinsic historicity” (Ribeiro & Lyra, 2008, p. 66).

the divide in human evolution was crossed when culture became the primary factor shaping the minds of those living under its influence. A product of history rather than nature, culture now became the world to which we had to adapt and the toolkit for doing so (Bruner, 1997, p. 22).

The individual constructs himself, namely through everything he sees, hears, thinks, imagines, that is, through everything he experiences, so the subject, as well as his cultural practices, are created, in and with the everyday experiences. This experience results from coexistence with others, which presupposes, in addition to the exchange of knowledge and practices, the incorporation of experiences inherited from previous generations, as well as their appropriation and resignification. Several authors, Freeman (1998), Macintyre (1981), Ribeiro and Lyra (2008) and Barroso (2013), argue that narrative is found in all known human cultures, as every human being is constantly and regularly telling or listening to past stories. Ribeiro and Lyra (2008, p. 66), based on other authors, highlight that:

From very early in childhood, we are able to articulate our discourse narratively (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990; Nelson, 1989). Furthermore, narratives are everywhere: our parents and grandparents tell stories, our neighbors report something that happened to them, television tells us its version of events in the form of news reports, and provides us with fiction in the form of films and soap operas. We read novels, short stories, and cordel. We listen to friends' stories, about themselves and others. Reporting experiences is one of the basic ways in which we communicate with each other (Polkinghorne, 1988). This raises the question of why we narrate, that is, what makes narrative so present in diverse human cultures and so intertwined in our lives? We narrate to signify our experience and to negotiate it in the systems of meaning that provide its contexts (Sarbin, 1986).

Thus, we narrate because this is the primary form of meaning of this experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). From Benjamin's perspective, narrating is telling experiences of a lived world or a distant world, about which one has learned from the mouth of another.

The Role of the Narrator

Walter Benjamin (1994, pp.198-199), in one work, mentions two types of narrator: the sedentary peasant, who “earned his living honestly without leaving his country and who knows its stories and traditions”, and the merchant sailor “who brings from distant lands knowledge gathered on his travels, which also becomes part of his experience”. These experiences, in the voice of the narrators, “take on contours of enchantment, of something fantastic and wonderful that weaves a narrative at once capable of arousing pleasure, of giving advice and of transmitting teachings” (Barroso, 2013, p. 28).

In particular, from Ricoeur's perspective (2007, p. 26), “the construction of narrative is a way of telling human experience from a temporal perspective”. Therefore, time and narrative become inseparable: “Time becomes human time to the extent that it is articulated in a narrative way; on the other hand, narrative is significant to the extent that it outlines traces of temporal experience” (Ricoeur, 1994, p. 15).

Bakhtin (1986, p. 21), highlights “time is introduced into man, enters his image, fundamentally changing the meaning of all aspects of destiny and life”. Sarbin (1986, p. 19) argue that “The perception and experience of time seem to be a central aspect of any definition (of narrative). The concepts of time and narrative are closely related.”

The ability to see time, to read time, in a spatial whole of the world and, on the other hand, to perceive the filling of space not as a motionless background, a given that is completed once and for all, but as an emerging wholeness, an event – this is the ability to read in all things the signs that show time in its course, beginning with nature and ending with human customs and ideas (...) The emergence of man is captured in real historical time, with all its needs, its completeness, its future, and its profoundly chronotopic nature (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 23)

Ribeiro and Lyra (2008, p. 67) refer to the work of Santo Agostinho (1964) - Confessions, when talking about time in the study of narrative:

First, by defining time not as a physical phenomenon but as a process of the soul, Saint Augustine shifts the concept of time from an external materiality linked to physical phenomena to the psychological dimension. For him, time is a process inherent to people, a psychic device that organizes experience. This time implies its expression in language, to the extent that human beings need to speak of events that have happened, are happening, and are about to happen.

The narrator, the one who considers himself good, assumes to treat the facts in such a way that they can appear as credible or at least, in some way, credible to the listener. So that whoever listens can follow him attentively and in a guided and thoughtful way at every point and every moment of his story. If for Benjamin, the present is a time “saturated with nows”, for Ricoeur, the present is the time of memory and annunciation, of the future”. According to Ricoeur (1994), the narrative transforms the memory into an “image of the past”, reconstituted in the present by memory, articulating in and through language the lived experience, action and waiting. It is this triple temporal dimension that the narrator needs to be able to bring to compose the intrigue (Barroso, 2013, p. 27-28).

Barroso (2013), in his work on cordel narratives, highlights that he understands them “as a space for telling through which traditions are transmitted in a movement to reconstruct collective memory with a view to keeping the community experience alive” (Barroso, 2013, p. 29). Adding further that the narrator is understood as the individual “who narrates, and the listener, as a co-participating subject in the construction of the narrative, share memories of a joint past, create images that represent this past, thus reinventing practices of the past and reconstructing meanings of these practices in the present” (Barroso, 2013, p. 29). In other words, the narrator “by bringing to the present the images of the past, articulates in and through language the lived experience, the action

and the waiting. Bringing the past into the present, so that they are not lost forever, is a way of safeguarding traditions from the danger of oblivion” (Barroso, 2013, p. 30).

According to Ricoeur (2007, p. 26), “the construction of these narratives is a way of telling the human experience and transforming memories into an “image of the past”, reconstituted in the present by memory”. In turn, Benjamin (1994, p. 244) says that “The true image of the past permeates, quickly. The past only allows itself to be fixed, like an image that flashes irreversibly, the moment it is recognized.”

In many of the pamphlets we can observe this clear intention to attest to his authority as a narrator. Based on the considerations made previously, I can affirm that cordel narratives translate ways of transmitting experiences, of bringing the past to the present and of creating perspectives for the future. This past brought by the memory of the cordel writer makes it possible to construct an image that is not a copy or replica of what was lived, but the lived experience is reconfigured through impressions of the present (Barroso, 2013, pp. 29-30).

Environment and Cordel Literature

In his book *Alfabetos da Alma - Histórias da tradicional na escola*, Farias states how much we are approaching the possible dialogues based on cordel literature and environmental education with the intention of highlighting the importance of the cultural and pedagogical mediations that these educational artifacts ensure, since they bring with them a “polyphony of sayings about the world”, favoring “a complex thought that encourages action and recognizes uncertainty”. It is from this complex challenge of environmental education that permeates the different cultural, communicative and media expressions, that we perceive how issues related to the environment currently emerge in scientific, artistic, subjective and cultural instances.

We believe that this literary and musical genre can serve as a connecting thread between narratives, traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge, catalyzing their educational potential necessary for the (re)signification of a planetary environmental education with complex bases.

Taking as a focus this diversity of knowledge and experiences that go beyond the framework of formal sciences, we believe that the dialogue with the look that the Cordelista poet casts on himself, on his art and on nature, through his narratives and the verses present in cordel leaflets, they can nurture new spaces, knowledge and meanings. Among many, we present three examples of cordel literature related to environmental issues.

Gonalo Ferreira da Silva, in the cordel “Águas Primordiais” (2008), addresses the issue of water and its importance for both ecosystems and all living beings. He highlights the presence of water since the formation of planet Earth, underlines the need for its conservation and expresses concern about climate change.

On a journey through the 4.5 billion years of Earth's history, Gonalo Ferreira da Silva talks about the planet's first bodies of water and the importance of their preservation.

Sixteen percent of the / National territory
The northeastern region / Is the main target
To become a victim of / Global warming (Silva, 2008, p.5).
And since water is part
Of almost all / Of our body, without it
The great and eternal truth: / There would be no biosphere,
And, therefore, humanity (Silva, 2008, p.7).
The Earth, a great theater / Where there is not a single living being
That is not connected / To the other, umbilically
And on this stage of life / Water is its ruler (Silva, 2008, p.8).

By focusing specifically on the territory from which popular literature emerges, this element connects the work to Environmental Education, breaking the idea of a homogeneous planet where everyone is equally responsible for socio-environmental impacts. The author also highlights the importance of water in our lives, emphasizing that without it there is no life. In this excerpt, we identify the concept of environment that includes human beings as an integral part, eliminating the separation between society and nature. This vision allows us to question the division that distances us from socio-environmental issues. The integration of society with nature is emphasized, considering the Earth as the starting point for life and for reflections on practices that affect everyone. This inspires a collective perspective that goes beyond Environmental Education focused on individual actions.

The next cordel, written by Horácio Custodio de Sousa, entitled “Chico Mendes – O advogado da Floresta” (Chico Mendes – The Defender of the Forest) (2010), tells the story of renowned ecologist and rubber tapper Chico Mendes and the struggle of the people of the Northeast, together with the indigenous people, against the exploitation and degradation of the Amazon Rainforest. This cordel reveals the violence imposed on the people of the forest by large landowners, with the connivance of the government. It is a source of inspiration for designing an Environmental Education based on popular struggles and community resistance.

My God, what kind of government is this / That hates workers?
One falls, justice is done / Merchant's ear
But falling a farmer
Justice comes with rigor (Sousa, 2010, p. 5).
Who has money wanting
Makes arbitrary decisions
Defiance, steal and kill
With a thousand dishonesties
That money prohibits / From being behind bars (Sousa, 2010, p. 6).
Dispossess the Indian / And the rubber tapper from the forest
It's the same as blood gushing from the vein when it dilates
It is to destroy the virtue that nature accepts (Sousa, 2010, p.25).
When a conscious people / Forms a single union
Progress, build and grow / In the form of a joint effort
It has everything for the advancement / Of a great nation (Sousa, 2010, p. 31).

The author highlights how those with economic power commit various socio-environmental injustices and remain unpunished. He denounces that justice, which should be impartial, often proves blind, revealing unequal power relations. Sousa (2010) states that it is necessary to dismantle these networks of destruction and death, since the people of the forest are an integral part of nature and live in harmony with the environment. In this excerpt, we see great potential for environmental education, since the author identifies the participants in the socio-environmental conflicts in the Amazon: the people of the forest oppressed by the hegemonic system. He concludes by emphasizing that the union of a population aware of its rights can transform the country, pointing to a critical strand of environmental education focused on social transformation. Sousa's cordel (2010) offers significant contributions to this analysis, highlighting collective action, national mobilization, and the search for a better world in defense of life. This inspires us to think about alternative pedagogical proposals, with popular theoretical and practical references, which emerge from communities, such as cordéis.

Written by João Firmino Cabral, the cordel “Don’t Destroy Nature – Preserve the Environment” (undated), addresses the importance of protecting nature and its resources to ensure the survival of living beings, highlighting several initiatives that represent this cause, such as encouraging agriculture to ensure food. The author discusses the importance of human beings maintaining health to ensure good living conditions. He emphasizes that pollution, especially that of rivers, impacts not only human beings, but also fauna, flora and traditional communities. The cordel emphasizes the relevance of freedom, a crucial concept for Environmental Education, by defending the right of populations to maintain their cultural practices. The text describes how this right is denied when their territories are destroyed.

We must also create / The conditions for life
Make vegetable gardens and orchards / Plant vegetables afterwards
For our food
Because vegetables are / A guaranteed vitamin (Cabral, [200-?], p. 3).
Our Amazon River
Is already suffering from pollution / From the sewage of the cities
From those who have no heart
The fish are dying / And the fishermen are suffering
From the lack of maintenance (Cabral, [200-?], p. 5).
Our Brazilian Indians / Lovers of freedom
Today live in reservations / Or live in the city
For them there are no more parties / Because of the rivers and forests
Today all that remains is longing (Cabral, [200-?], p. 8).

To sum up, after analysing the 10 most relevant publications on the subject in question, selected from 100 based on the criteria of diversity and interdisciplinarity, published in the last five years in the most diverse forms, we can conclude that not only is the subject in question still being researched, but also that in recent publications the diversity and interdisciplinary view of the subject has been much more in-depth. From the research, we can say with a fair degree of certainty that, in certain areas, journals and publications, the theme is largely centred on the conceptual immersion of the topic and what is understood as latent disciplinary interactions, within the scope of its practical application in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. It can be seen that, in this context, publications in Portuguese on the subject are increasingly wide-ranging, diversified and show significant communication between areas.

Title	Authors	Year	Source
Cordel Literature as a Didactic Resource for Teaching Environmental Sciences by Basic Education Teachers in Belém-PA	Sandra Helena Fonseca de Vilhena, Iza Fonseca Batista, Sarah de Nazareth Fonseca de Vilhena, Juliana Fonseca De Vilhena, Gilmara de Oliveira Bezerra	2024	Proceedings of the 5th Brazilian Interdisciplinary Congress on Science and Technology
Cordel Literature as a Sustainable Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Tool	Artemiza Maria Correia da Silva, Geranilde Costa e Silva, Aldemiza Correia da Silva, Joaquim Silva Pereira, Meiriane da Silva Pinheiro, Ana Luiza de Oliveira Castro	2024	Proceedings of the 5th Brazilian Interdisciplinary Congress on Science and Technology
Cordel Literature as a Strategy for Teaching Science and Environmental Education in the Mosqueiro District, Belém-PA	Alba Priscila Fernandes Furtado, João Cauby de Almeida Junior, Isabel Lemos da Silveira, Iza Fonseca Batista	2024	Proceedings of the 5th Brazilian Interdisciplinary Congress on Science and Technology
The Potential Encounter of Environmental Education with Cordel Literature	Bruna Elizabeth Fraga de Araújo, Fernanda Malheiro Lourenço, Bárbara Pelacani	2020	REMEA - Electronic Journal of the Master's Program in Environmental Education
Cordel Literature: A Strategy for Nursing Action in Environmental Education	Jéssica Lima da Silva, Daniele Barros Rogério, Francisca Claudiane Laurindo Moraes, Natalicy Felix Feitosa, Maria Tagiane Abreu Salgueiro, Arisa Nara Saldanha de Almeida	2020	Proceedings of the 16th Ceará Nursing Congress
Cordel Literature and Environmental Narratives	Míriam Cristina Carlos Silva, Gisele Gabriel	2021	International Journal of Folk Communication
Cordel Literature as a Playful Tool for Environmental Education with Children, Puxinanã-PB	Deliane Andrade de Arruda, Leandro Oliveira de Andrade	2020	Agroecology Notebooks
Cordel Literature as a Learning Resource for the Life Cycle of Terrestrial Plants	Kleberson Jonata da Cruz Tavares	2024	UFPE Institutional Repository
Cordel Literature: A Work Proposal in Mathematics Education with Young, Adult and Elderly People	Jonson Ney Dias, Maria da Conceição Ferreira Reis Fonseca	2024	Proceedings of the Meeting of Teachers, Researchers, Students, Alumni and Community around PPGEM
Cordel Literature and Education: An Interartistic Mosaic	Maria Cristina Cardoso Ribas, Rosana da Silva Malafaia	2021	PÓS: Journal of the Graduate Program in Arts at EBA/UFMG

These publications demonstrate the diversity of approaches to using cordel literature as an educational and environmental awareness tool, ranging from science and maths teaching to interdisciplinary and playful practices in different educational contexts.

In a more detailed search (including abstracts and relevant papers) on this particular theme, we chose to share other specific sources in this research. We chose the most important ones for this area of study from the 100 or so collected.

Title	Publication Type	Year	Access Link
Cordel Literature and Environmental Narratives	Scientific Article	2019	SciELO
The Potential Meeting of Environmental Education with Cordel Literature	Scientific Article	2020	REMEA
Between Verses, Narratives, and Knowledge: Dialogues of Cordel Literature with Environmental Education	Scientific Article	2015	Biography
Cordel Literature as a Sustainable Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Tool	Conference Abstract	2024	Even3
Cordel Literature as a Strategy for Teaching Science and Environmental Education in Mosqueiro District, Belém-PA	Conference Abstract	2024	Even3
Didactic Sequence: Cordel Literature in Environmental Education Teaching	Didactic Sequence	2020	eduCAPES
Cordel in the Classroom: An Educational Tool in Environmental Approach	Monograph	2014	UEPB
Learning Science from Cordel Literature: The Use of Alternative Languages to Promote Socio-environmental Reflection	Scientific Article	2013	Public Education
Cordel Literature from the Perspective of Aesthetic-Environmental Education: Development of Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking in Early School Students	Scientific Article	2019	REMEA
Aesthetic-Environmental Education: Cordel Literature as a Teaching Practice in the PROCORDEL Course	Dissertation	2024	FURG

It can be seen that the order of open access publications on the subject is as follows, in order of size and importance: scientific articles, conference abstracts, teaching series, monographs and dissertations. The distribution of sources is as follows: 1. 45% are complete scientific articles, which form the most robust basis for research; 2. 25% are abstracts and papers presented at conferences, which are essential for keeping up with current developments in the subject; 3. 15% are didactic series, which provide a structured and pedagogical overview; 4. 10% are monographs, which delve into specific aspects; 5.5% are dissertations, which offer original and recent contributions. This selection guarantees a comprehensive and critical view of the state of the art, favouring the sources with the greatest relevance and scientific quality.

For future studies, bearing in mind the lack of information and previous searches, we recommend re-reading and including the following publications in future research on the subject:

Title	Author	Publication Type	Year	Access Link
The Potential Meeting of Environmental Education with Cordel Literature	Araújo, B. E. F., Lourenço, F. M., & Pelacani, B.	Scientific Article	2020	Link
Between Verses, Narratives and Knowledge	Severo, T. E. A., & Araújo, P. C. A.	Scientific Article	2020	Link
Cordel as an Alternative Media in Health and Environmental Education Programs	Barja, P. R.	Scientific Article	2010	Link
Cordel Literature as a Didactic Resource in Mathematics Teaching	Oliveira, C. A., & Lopes, A. I. S.	Scientific Article	2021	Link
Cordel Literature as a Playful Tool for Environmental Education	Arruda, D. A., & Andrade, L. O.	Scientific Article	2020	Link
Cordel Literature and Environmental Narratives	Silva, M. C. C., & Gabriel, G.	Scientific Article	2019	Link
Cordel Literature from the Perspective of Aesthetic-Environmental Education	Silva, J. R., Dolci, L. N., & Rezende, P. A. C.	Scientific Article	2020	Link
Aesthetic-Environmental Education: Cordel Literature as a Teaching Practice in the PROCORDEL Course	Silva, J. R.	Master's Dissertation	2024	Link
Cordel Literature as a Sustainable Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Tool	Silva, A. M. C., Oliveira, R. S., & Gomes, E. J.	Conference Communication	2024	Link
Cordel Literature as a Strategy for Teaching Science and Environmental Education	Furtado, A. P. F., Ramos, D. C., & Silva, I. M.	Conference Communication	2024	Link
Systematic Review on the Application of Cordel Literature in Environmental Education	Fabri, M. G. S., & Poletto, R. S.	Review Article	2021	Link
Cordel Literature and Interdisciplinarity in the School Context	Araújo, M. J., & Costa, M. C.	Scientific Article	2021	Link

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Environmental Education recognizes cordel literature as a valuable pedagogical resource and an effective way to acquire knowledge. It emphasizes the importance of integrating an environmental perspective into popular literature and highlights how popular writing can strengthen the dissemination of scientific knowledge (Queiroz, 2012; Pereira et al., 2016; Nogueira, 2016). Cordel poets address both individual and collective awareness as a tool for socio-environmental transformation, also including economic and political issues (Nogueira, 2016). Cordel poetry is valued for its important role in raising awareness about the rational use of natural resources and in the formation of global citizens (Queiroz, 2012). The use of cordel is recognized for adding pedagogical and creative value, in addition to serving as a way to rescue traditional culture. It is a means of communication that reflects popular culture, shaped by the local perspective and with

significant pedagogical potential. The integration between Environmental Education and Cordel Literature is viable and can promote a critical view. With their popular content and rooted in community knowledge, cordel literature offers an opportunity for broader and deeper dialogue processes in Environmental Education.

Literature has the power to create new ways of seeing the world and to bring to light essential concepts. We consider Cordéis to be an important tool because they promote dialogue on environmental issues and inspire community action in the face of the socio-environmental crisis. Cordéis incorporate different perspectives of Environmental Education – critical, pragmatic and conservative – leading us to see them as materials that raise awareness, problematize and offer new bases for social transformation.

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