**Self-help books as a type of literature: general characteristics and genesis.**

Self-help books are extremely popular with modern readers and are hundreds of works that claim that they can help people to improve themselves and motivate them for self-development. Such a type of literature is not new, as books, aimed at helping people, has been known since Ancient Greece and Romу. They were written by philosophers. Nonetheless, the genre of the literature for self-help or self-improvement as we see it now appeared in 1859. That was the year when Samuel Smiles published his “Self-Help” book. This work has given a name to this genre of popular science literature.

There is no clear definition of the self-help genre. Generally, it includes books, focused on improvement of the self or written with the intention of helping people to make their lives, either personal or professional, better.

Depending on the sub-genre of a self-help book, it can give readers advice on how to overcome anxiety, depression, fear, obsession etc.; they motivate readers and help them to boost their confidence, actualize themselves, improve communication skills, learn how to manage their time, achieve success, earn your first million, and even become happy.

There are a lot of categories of self-improvement literature, but all of them can be united into three main groups:

* Career success;
* Personal relationships;
* Health and well-being.

Self-improvement literature is extremely popular across the globe due to the attractive cover, catchy title, and the belief that reading a book can help you to fix your life. The way such books are written and techniques the author uses also contributes to the popularity of this genre, as the those who have read one work usually come for another one.

Being a somewhat of a guideline on how to improve aspects of one’s life and offering a number of methods to do it, self-help books are usually reader-centered. This means that they are organized in such a way that the advice is given directly to the readers.

The author of the book approaches the audience with some practical or not so practical pieces of advice in an engaging and entertaining way, trying to make the reading not only useful but also amusing.

That is why we can often find stories about author’s personal experience or stories from other people’s life. Anecdotes and numerous example are also frequently used. Such things allow readers to better understand the meaning of what has been said and create an allusion of practical value and usefulness of some methods, techniques or guidelines offered by an author. In fact, storytelling is the key element in the works of such genre because it is a perfect tool for engaging readers and keeping their attention.

Storytelling is frequently used to show readers that other people face the same problems and there is a solution. The life experience of other people gives addressees a hope that there is a way out and those methods, offered in a book, are effective. Examples and anecdotes, inserted in the text, influence emotions of the reader and their feelings.

Another feature of self-help literature is that it is usually written in a simplified and plain language in order to be easily understood by readers, who do not have any background knowledge of the subject. As self-improvement genre belongs to informative texts, the importance of content in self-help books prevails over the style. That is because the main purpose of an author is to render the message, to inform the reader, and develop a positive attitude. That is the reason why general, simple, and readable language is used. Neither terms nor stylistic devices are frequently used in such texts.

Self-help genre is a part of popular culture, and, as a result, it belongs to the category of “popular literature”. Such a place of these works in the system of literature makes them open for transformations and adaptation to the needs of the modern reader. The changing society faces new problems and solutions to them are offered in fresh self-improvement works. Such a flexibility makes it possible for self-help books to hold strong positions on the market, find their audience, and be among shortlisted bestsellers.

This kind of literature offers quick solutions for the problems discussed in works. Usually, authors give a range of methods that can help readers to improve themselves in this or that aspects. Such guidelines are written in a simplified clear language and highlighted with the help of itemization. One can also come across italicized or bold phrases or sentences in a text. This is done to keep the attention of the reader and emphasize the most crucial parts of a book that may help to find the key to a solution of the problem.

There are also a variety of mottos and catchy expressions used in self-help books. They are usually easy-to-memorize in order for readers to remember them and use in everyday life. Such phrases frequently play the role of the summary of the chapter or even the whole book. Some other elements that help readers to percept the message of the text are pictures and drawing. They also keep the audience interested and entertained.

One more important feature of self-improvement genre is that text often leads readers through a series of self-administered exercises, assessments, questionnaires, surveys, and checklists. The use of these assessments or assignments allows the reader to judge their own characteristics, find answers to many questions, and come up with the solution to the problem.