

Syllabus for ENG 300-15

Literature for Children

(Mike Cadden)

Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism
Division of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Missouri Western State College
English 300.15: Literature for Children
Summer, 2000
Dr. Mike Cadden
Class Time and Place: A-202, 7:30 am - 10:20 am MTWTh
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Course Description:

What makes a good teacher? Richard Ishler writes in "The Preparation of Elementary School Teachers: A University-Wide Responsibility":

Persons who will spend their professional lives as elementary school teachers must be liberally and broadly educated, more so than individuals with other careers, because of their positions as role models for our children--positions that are crucial not only to the students whose lives are directly affected, but to the general society as well. Other than a student's parents, no other person has such an opportunity to influence, to motivate, and to inspire a child to value the intellectual life. In fact, acting as an intellectual role model may well be the single most significant aspect of the teaching profession.

English 300 is our opportunity for you to learn about children's literature as an art form, which will have implications for your teaching, ultimately; but the point of the course isn't to teach you how to teach children; the point of the course is to teach you about children's fiction. The two things aren't at all mutually exclusive, but they also aren't the same thing.

The course is an introduction to the genre of literature for children. Through critical examinations of folk tales, novels, poems, and picture books, we will attempt to understand how children's literature distinguishes itself from "adult literature" (if it does) in terms of narrative structure and theme. We will also consider the unique transaction the genre proposes between the author, the reader (of all ages), and the text.

Consider this course the content course companion to your methods courses: EED 320 (Language Arts Methods), EED 360 (Assessing and Individualizing Reading), EED 380-385 (Reading Approaches), EED 440 (Curriculum Methods and Materials in Early Childhood Education), and EED 483-4 (Practica in Reading).

Let's learn together as much as we can about what makes children's literature tick. It is my goal that you'll leave the course more thoughtful about what makes children's literature the interesting and enjoyable genre that it is--for adults as well as for children.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of ENG 108 or 112. ENG 300 is required in the Elementary Education program. This class does not count as an English literature elective for English majors.

Policy on Students with Disabilities: Any student in this course who has a disability which requires different contexts for evaluation or expression should contact me in the first week of the course so those contexts can be arranged.

Late Work: I reserve the right to refuse any late work. "Late" will refer to any work that is not turned in by the beginning of the class hour at which it is due.

Required Texts:

Dorris. Morning Girl

Jacobs, James & Michael Tunnell. Children's Literature, Briefly.

McGraw, Eloise. The Moorchild.

Paterson. Bridge to Terabithia.

White, E. B., Charlotte's Web.

Evaluation:

Participation	15%
Resource Reviews	25%
Midterm (In-class and take-home)	30%
Final Exam (In-class and take-home)	30%

Attendance Policy:

I will take attendance. I will expect that you might miss one day of class this term. Since one day of class is the semester equivalent of a whole week, you should not miss more than once. It is your responsibility to be sure your schedule is free for this class. Emergency medical situations will be considered when I am presented with proper documentation.

Chronic late arrivals will be considered in my attendance assessment.

It will be your responsibility to find out what information was covered during your absence. You are responsible for knowing about date or assignment changes. Ignorance due to absence is no excuse.

Calendar (Subject to Constant and Seemingly Inexplicable Change):

May 31 W- Introduction to the course and discussion of course description; Critical Approaches to Children's literature; Children's Literature, Fable, and Folklore.

June 1 H- Folklore; J & T: Ch. 7.

2 F- Folklore.

5 M- The Moorchild.

6 T- Poetry for, by, and about children; J & T Ch. 14.

7 W- Poetry continued.

8 Th- Morning Girl. J & T: Ch. 10.

12 M- Midterm Exam (in class; take-home due); picture books introduced.

13 T- Picture books; J & T: 4 & 13.

14 W- Charlotte's Web ; J & T: Ch. 8;

15 Th- Picture books.

19 M- Bridge to Terabithia; J & T: Ch. 9.

20 T- Picture books; Revisions of reviews due.

21 W- Final Exam (in class; take-home due).

Library Hours for Summer:

Monday-Thursday: 7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday: Closed.

Sunday: 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

ENG 300: Literature for Children

Review Assignments

Worth: 25%

Due: No more than two in any one week.

I would like for you to review a web site, a scholarly journal, a book (handbook, theory, criticism, or collection of essays), a children's chapter book, and a picture book this term. I want you to write a report for me, yourself, and for your peers about each of those five resources. When you are done revising any given review, we will discuss the possibility of putting them on reserve for your classmates to consult, copy, and take with them for future use in classes and for teaching.

Format for reviewing a journal, book, and website:

1. Provide complete citation information for the video, research source, or web site in question in MLA style.

Book or Journal

Last Name, First Name. Title of Book: Including Subtitle. Edition. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

Website

1. Name of author (if given)
2. Title of page accessed (in quotation marks)
3. Date when the material was posted (if given)
4. Title of the database (underlined) (e.g.. New York Times Online or ERIC)
5. Publication medium (Online)
6. Name of the computer service (e.g. Netscape Navigator or Lexis or Compuserv)
7. Date of your access of the material
8. URL (not in MLA handbook, but something useful for us):

Vandergrift, Kay. "Author Biography and Autobiography Page." Created January 31, 1996, Last Updated February 8, 1997. Online. Netscape Navigator. July 9, 1997.
<http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/special/kay/authorbios.html>

For more specific detail on some of the subtleties of citation:

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 5th ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999.

This text is available in the library and in my office.

2. Summarize what the source offers the viewer/reader as thoroughly as you can in about a third of a page, single-spaced. What is provided? How is it arranged or organized? Remember, you are providing yourself (and possibly your classmates) a review that will enable the reader to visualize the source as well as possible in print.

3. Explain for whom this site/source might be of most use and why. If you think that more than one audience is implied, identify them and why you think so. Why might it be better for childcare workers or parents or teachers or siblings or the child him or herself? Please don't simply assume that the source is for teachers just because most of you in the class are education majors.

4. Provide a critique of the site/source. Given the information you've provided in # 2 & 3 above, how do you rate this resource? Is it something you think you'd return to? Could you improve it somehow? Would you only use part of it? Give us a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of this resource so that when you look back on it later you can remember what you thought of it. Try to give a thoughtful response to this resource beyond "I liked it" or "I didn't like it." Start with those reactions as you review

and ask yourself "why?" and move on to details.

Format for reviewing a picture book and a chapter book:

1. Provide complete citation information in MLA style (see above).
2. Summarize the story. Remember: you are providing yourself a review that will enable you to have a complete sense of the story later when you refer to this. Don't hold back on the ending; it's not a TV Guide listing or something for the back of the book!
3. Focus on one textual feature that the book employs. This might be something to do with the use of character, plot, setting, narrative perspective, language, arrangement of chapters, pictures (be specific about some aspect of the pictures if you go this route) or anything structural.
4. Focus on subtextual issues in the book. What idea, message, issue, or concept does the book contain? Don't feel the need to comment on the "moral" here; don't reduce it to fable, in other words.
5. Focus on a context in which this book might prove useful or interesting (reader) or consider the implications for the context of the writing (something about the author, the place and era in which it was written, etc.)
6. Provide a critique of the site/source. Given the information you've provided in # 3-5 above, how do you rate this book? Is it something you think you'd return to? Could you improve it somehow? Would you only use part of it? Give us a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of this resource so that when you look back on it later you can remember what you thought of it. Try to give a thoughtful response to this resource beyond "I liked it" or "I didn't like it." Start with those reactions as you review and ask yourself "why?" and move on to details.

All reviews should be about one side of one page, single-spaced. A bit more or less is not a problem.

Please proof-read the page before submitting it. I will want it to be as professional-looking as it can be in case we should decide to distribute these to each other.

A Note on Revision: You may revise each review one time. If you are submitting a revised copy of your review, please resubmit the original copy that has my written comments (staple or paper-clip the old to the new).

The act of revision does not guarantee an improved grade. Editing isn't the same thing as revision. If you would like feedback beyond that which I have written on the original, you may visit me to discuss revision strategies at any time prior to submitting a revision.