

Missouri Western State University
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism

English 300: Literature for Children
Spring, 2007

Professor: Dr. Mike Cadden

Section 01: 9:30 AM -10:50 AM T, Th in 223 Eder Hall

Section 02: 11:00 AM -12:20 PM T, Th in 223 Eder Hall

Dr. Cadden's Office: 222-F Eder Hall

Office Hours: 2:00–3:00 PM T, H; 1:00–4:00 PM W; and by appointment.

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Web Page: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/eflj/faculty/cadden.asp> (syllabus can be found here.)

Course Description:

English 300 is our opportunity for you to learn about children's literature as an art form, which will have implications for those of you who will end up teaching; *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.

The course is an introduction to the genre of literature for children. There is so much more out there than can be covered in fifteen weeks. The course can't be an exhaustive look at the whole field. We'll focus on an introduction to the nature of children's books. 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"--and when it doesn't.

Education majors should consider this course to be the content course companion to some of your education 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). But ENG 300 isn't a methods course; this is a literature course that focuses on children's literature.

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.

Required Texts:

Cadden, Mike. Packet of Materials (available in University Bookstore)

Cleary, Beverly. Ramona the Pest.

LaFaye, Alexandria. Worth.

Milne, A. A. Winnie-the-Pooh.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. Esperanza Rising.

Evaluation:

Participation: 10%

Midterm Exam (folktales and novels): 25%

Final Exam (picture books): 25%

Reviews (1 book, 1 journal, 1 website): 15%

Bibliographic Essay: 25%

Attendance:

The MWSU *Policy Guide* states that "each instructor will determine and make known to the class the requirement for attendance" (45). If you don't come to class you will obviously jeopardize your class participation grade. I will not quantify how much presence equals what grade. I will be judging your total participation performance, not just your presence. I can also tell you that the exams draw heavily from class work. Also, since you are responsible for all announcements in class, you run the risk of missing important information regarding other assignments; I will not accept absence as an excuse for ignorance. In short, if you're not here, you're going to suffer through other assignments directly and indirectly.

Be on time, please.

Academic Dishonesty: All cases in which students pass off others' work as their own will be referred to the Dean of Student Affairs. Students run the risk of failing the assignment as well as the course, depending on the magnitude and nature of the offense. If you are unsure about how you are using sources, please check with me.

Late and Missing Work: I reserve the right to refuse any late work.

Revision Policy: All written work may be revised any time up until the revision due date (please see calendar). I require that all revisions be accompanied by the original graded paper that contains my comments.

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

Calendar

Novels are to be finished by the first day of the week on which discussion begins.

Jan. 16 T: Introduction to course, critical approaches, and folktale types.

18 H: Introduction continued.

23 T: "Red Riding Hood"—tale types and versions.

25 H: Fable as children's literature, children's literature as fable.

30 T: Milne.

Feb. 1 H: Milne continued.

6 T: Ryan.

8 H: Ryan continued; **Review #1 Due.**

13 T: Censorship.

15 H: Censorship continued.

20 T: Cleary; **Bibliog. Essay book lists due.**

22 H: Cleary continued.

27 T: LaFaye

Mar. 1 H: LaFaye continued; **Review # 2 Due.**

6 T: Mode in Literature (handout).

8 H: **Exam I.**

Spring Break

20 T: Popular series: Stine, Christopher, and the American Girls.

<http://www.monroe.lib.in.us/childrens/serieslist.html>

http://www.ability.org.uk/childrens_series_books.html

<http://www.bookloversden.com/bseries.html>

<http://www.bookloversden.com/gseries.html>

22 H: Poetry: issues of interpretation; Russell Ch. 9.

27 T: Poetry; voice and age.

29 H: Poetry; nonsense; **Review #3 Due.**

April 3 T: Poetry collections reviewed.

5 H: Picture Books: introduction and issues of format (have with you both Sendak and a picture book of your choice).

10 T: Picture Books: 3rd dimension.

12 H: Picture Books: 4th dimension; **Bibliographic Essay due for those who wish to revise.**

17 T: Picture books: placement & shared meaning.

19 H: Picture books: medium & style.

24 T: Picture books: *Peter Rabbit*.

26 H: Picture Books: Group work; **Review Revisions Due; Bibliographic Essays Due.**

Exam II: The Final Exam will be held in our regular classroom.

Section 01: Thursday, May 3, 8:30 AM-10:20 AM

Section 02: Tuesday, May 8, 11:30 AM-1:20 PM

ENG 300: Literature for Children

Dr. Cadden

Review Assignments

Worth: 15%

Length: Approximately one-two single-spaced pages each.

I would like for you to review a children's literature web site, a scholarly journal that has a primary focus on children's books, and a book *about* children's literature (the book can be a children's literature handbook or a book on children's literature theory and/or criticism). I want you to write a brief report for me, yourself, and for your peers about each of those three resources.

Please review sources that are specifically *children's book* related. Don't review an education journal that isn't about children's books; don't use journals that deal with teaching reading strategies but which don't address children's literature itself as the primary focus of study.

Finding books and journals about children's literature: You simply need to go to the online catalog (Towers) and, using the quick search function, type in some of these possibilities: "children's literature," "children's literature criticism," "children's literature theory," "children's literature American," children's literature multiculturalism," "children's literature feminism," etc. You should review a book that interests you, and you may decide to do a more thorough search if our initial quick search doesn't look promising. The book needn't come from our library, though we do have plenty!

A list of appropriate journals can be found at this website, some of which are held in our library, though you aren't limited to using our library's holdings: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/%7Emjoseph/journals.htm>. **When you review a journal, review the entire journal as a whole rather than just a single article. I suggest that you look at a number of issues so that you don't mistakenly generalize about the journal based on one issue of the journal.**

A list of websites can be found on my own list of links (<http://staff.missouriwestern.edu/~cadden/>), though, again, you needn't limit yourself to my own discoveries. Find a different site related/devoted to children's literature if my links don't look interesting.

What to include (format):

1. Provide complete citation information for the book, journal, or web site in question **in MLA style.**

Book or Journal

Last Name, First Name. Title of Book: Including Subtitle. Edition. Place of (indent five spaces after first line) 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 CompuServe)
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.

MLA Citation information provided by Diana Hacker and Bedford/St.Martins Press:

Hacker, Diana. Research and Documentation Online. Bedford/St. Martins. 20 Dec. 2003. <http://dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

2. Summarize what the source offers the viewer/reader as thoroughly as you can. What is provided? How is it arranged or organized? What are the most important topics or points? Give a clear sense of the content. 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. This is to be useful to someone who has not seen the source. This is not the place to comment on the content, however; just provide the content information here.

3. Pick a single interesting structural, thematic, or contextual issue connected to the journal and comment on its significance. Examples: Is the website's layout surprising or interesting (structure)? Does the journal prove of use to a variety of people (context)? Does the book seem to imply something interesting or surprising or challengeable regarding children's literature (subtext)?

4. Provide an overall critique of the site/journal/book. Given the information you've provided in # 2 & 3 above, how successful is this resource? How well does it do what it seems to want to do? Is it something you think you'd return to? Could you improve it somehow? Would you only use part of it? Give us a general 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-to-two sides of a page, single-spaced. A bit more or less is not a problem, though much less is likely going to be indicative of incomplete development. Don't include a separate works cited page: the citation is the title (see #1 above).

A Note on Revision: 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.

Please proof-read the page before submitting it. Language is important. I expect that your work will be carefully read and edited before you give it to me. Insufficiently edited reviews will be returned with a failing grade. Help with grammar, citation and other language issues can be obtained in my office or at our own Center for Academic Support.

English 300: Children's Literature

Dr. Cadden

Bibliographic Essay

Worth: 25%

Length: ~10-15 pages.

The Task

You will choose a particular author, theme, or genre *in children's literature* in order to investigate it further. You will choose a number of representative works by that person, relevant to the idea/theme, or in the genre in question. The number of books will vary according to your project, but seven to ten is the usual range depending on the availability of books. ***Seven books is the minimum number.*** The goal here is to become well acquainted with one small piece of the big picture of children's literature beyond our course readings, **so you may not use any class texts in your list of books.**

Who or What?

Author: One possibility would be to choose someone who is a good fit for the readers you'll encounter in the grades you want to teach; but then I also encourage you to read whatever author you're interested in despite his or her curricular "use." If I think your choice is either inappropriate or if I just don't know the name, I'll talk to you.

An alternative to picking one author is to choose another context of origin to examine. You might look at books written by people from a particular place (region, country), ethnicity, tradition, or belief system. Books by Japanese-American writers (as opposed to simply being about Japanese-Americans, which might be written by a non-member of that ethnic group) is one choice.

Theme/idea: You might decide that you want to look at older and/or recent books about orphans, poverty, AIDS, divorce, death, circuses, animal characters, environmentalism, Christianity, gay-lesbian issues, talented/challenged characters, immigration, dance, homelessness, birthdays, dragons, etc.

Genre/mode: Adventure stories, folktale sub-genres (creation myths, Marchen tales, trickster tales, etc.), picture books (though this would have to be paired with another genre or theme or author/illustrator), comedy, tragedy, irony/satire, parody, coming-of-age stories, mysteries, travel, historical fiction, dream stories, poetry (of various sorts), science fiction, diaries/journal-forms, utopia/dystopia, etc.

Where?

Where to find names or ideas from which to choose? Other than your own or your child's reading histories, I suggest that you pore over the bibliography information that I handed you, the websites listed on my links page, the list of resources on children's and young adult literature at our library, the local library's children's section, and local bookstores. I'll be very glad and interested in talking about possible choices for you depending on interests you might have. **Start looking at options right away so that you can begin reading, limiting your subject, and taking notes.** I may have some ideas about books that fit your interests as well and may be able to steer you toward a more manageable focus within your chosen area, so please don't hesitate to employ me as a bibliographic resource!

How?

I don't give models. Why? Well, because I find that people tend to take the model and push the content into that container whether it fits or not. Rather, I'll describe what I want and you try to provide that making your own organizational decisions to accomplish

the task.

Let's consider a sense of format that also deals with matters of focus. I won't give you a page limit here, but you might consider that in terms of double-spaced pages, you could devote a page or two to introductory materials (see below), a couple of pages for each book (summary and analysis), a few pages of conclusions, and a works cited page. This might mean that you have somewhere between twelve and twenty pages.

The introductory material: briefly tell us a bit about the author/theme/genre that you've chosen. What interests you in the subject and what exactly will we be discussing? What have you ruled out in the course of defining this focus? Then tell us a bit about the main connection you'll be covering across the books--the "thread" that ties them together. If I've chosen Gary Paulsen, for instance, I might focus on the fact that he writes about boys in adventurous outdoor circumstances. I'll be sure to compare the books in terms of that focus as I go through the paper. The introduction might note various other trends or patterns in the collection of books that are of secondary importance and interest.

The body of the essay is devoted to discussing each book in turn, focusing on the thread that connects each to the others that you discussed in the introduction, **but also explaining other observations about the book that might not have anything to do with the other books.** Begin your discussion of each book as you do in a book review: summarize the book for us as *briefly* as you can (writing brief plot summaries is tough!) What makes a bibliographic essay distinctive from other essays is that the writer assumes that the reader *isn't* familiar with the books. Be mindful of proportion--the summary shouldn't be most of your discussion, and you should be careful to **include commentary on the idea that links the books as well as on other noteworthy things you've discovered.** Don't just note the presence of the focus ("In this book too Paulsen writes about boys in the wilderness." "This is another book in which Paulsen writes about wilderness-lovin' boys," etc.); discuss it and compare to other books' use of it. If most of what you have is summary and you don't have much commentary, there will be problems.

The conclusion of the essay is very important, and is not simply a formality in which you sum up what you've said. The conclusion should be where you share, in a few pages of detail, what you think makes this collection of books and the thread that unites them interesting, significant, and useful, and where it might be taken from here. Dwell further on the threads that unite them. Feel free to point out shortcomings or problems. What, after having looked at these books in comparison, are your thoughts about trends, limitations, successes in the area of study? Draw thoughtful conclusions about all of these books, their relationships to each other, and the implications they have for young readers.

You should include a bibliography that cites the primary and any secondary materials used. You aren't required to use a certain number of (or any) secondary materials, just what suits your task. You may have consulted a website, biography, journal article . . . cite those. **Please use MLA style** (available on line--<http://www.mla.org> or in the MLA Handbook available in my office or the library). **Be sure to cite any material quoted or paraphrased from another source.**

There are several sources which will give bibliographies of books published by an author including: Something About the Author (Ref. PN 451 .S696), Contemporary Authors (Ready Ref. Z 1224 .C761 .A1), and the Dictionary of Literary Biography (Ref. PS 221 .D554). There also were several other biographical sources mentioned on the MWSU bibliography linked to my web page, but some of them are getting quite old. For additional sources of biographical information you may want to consult the following index: Biography and Genealogy Master Index (Available on the computers, and on Index Table 5).

A word of caution. Few published lists of an author's work are complete or up-to-date (in the case of living authors). You need to check the date of publication of the volume which contains the bibliography you've found. Often the bibliography will not even include the author's works published during the previous year or two.

For more recent information on new books published, you should consult the various periodicals mentioned on the bibliography and more general periodicals such as Publisher's Weekly. Many of these periodicals are indexed through the Reader's Guide Abstracts, Humanities Index, or Masterfile Elite on the library computers. Amazon.com and the Barnes & Noble sites are good resources as well. MWSU librarians are happy to help you with this.

Another source of more recent information is the Baker & Taylor CD-ROM, available on most of the computers in the Reference room. It lists books that are being published, as well as many which have gone out of print. You can search by author, therefore this would be a good place to look for updating most of the printed bibliographies. This is not a reviewing source as it gives only citations.

You'll find lots to comment on as you read. I suggest that you read each book with a pen and paper handy, and even plan on returning to books as you read the others (Reread?! Heavens!) I think that with the pieces of this assignment, the number of books, and the many links, you'll be able to generate a lot of interesting material.

Please proof-read the paper 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. **Language is important. I expect that your work will be carefully read and edited before you give it to me.**

Help with grammar, citation, and other language issues can be found at our own Center for Academic Support (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/cas/>), my office, and Purdue University's Writing Center site: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/index.html>

I hope that you will share these final copies with each other when you're done! Good luck!

Grading Criteria for Writing in Dr. Cadden's English Courses:

A: 90-100 pts.
B: 80-89 pts.
C: 70-79 pts.
D: 60-69 pts.
F: 59 pts. and below

The high end of each range (~7-10) should be considered "plus"; for example, 88 is in the B+ range. The middle of each range (~4-6) should be considered a solid letter grade; for example, 75 is a solid C. The low end of each range (~0-3) should be considered "minus"; for example, 92 is in the A- range.

"A":

General Qualitative Description: Excellent, Superior, Outstanding.

Conception: Your idea should contain some new, perhaps surprising, element, some angle that is uncommonly thoughtful and insightful. You are not rehearsing other people's ideas, and you are going beyond an average reading. You expose and challenge the explicit and implicit assumptions of the text. If you are incorporating research, you will have WORKED your sources--using what supports your argument, and acknowledging and dealing with what challenges it.

Organization: Your organization should be flawless and should match your content. You should anticipate, address, and work through opposition to your argument and build a strong case for your own. You should employ evidence with regularity and in appropriate circumstances. If you are incorporating research, you will spend some time positioning your argument in the context of the larger conversation.

Style: Your presentation should be artful. You have obviously paid attention to the way your language sounds as well as what it says. You have found a way to make your presentation style match the content of your paper (other than a groovy font style!), perhaps through a sustained metaphor, or a particularly apt example that you carry through and refer to in the entire paper.

Grammar and Mechanics: Your paper should be absolutely clean and free of grammatical and mechanical errors of a rudimentary nature, though you may have a few problems with complex functions of grammar. You should never avoid complex language in order to avoid errors, in other words.

"B":

General Qualitative Description: Above average, Good, Commendable.

Conception: Your idea will be better than average, but you may have overlooked or not acknowledged or interrogated the assumptions that inform it. The claim/idea is ambitious and, for that reason, may have gotten away from you. You will be rewarded for being ambitious even if you fall a bit short.

Organization: Your organization will be strong, but the signaling might still be a bit awkward; you may find yourself using a lot of directional phrases because your argument doesn't flow naturally. (Ex. "As I said earlier..." "Firstly, secondly, thirdly...") Here too the organization will match the content rather than being formulaic.

Style: It's clean, readable, there's a consistent sense of voice, and there aren't any places where a reader has to go back and reread a sentence just to understand its structure.

Grammar/Mechanics: Very few (almost no) errors of a rudimentary nature.

"C":

General Qualitative Description: Competent, Average, Fine.

Conception: Your idea for your paper should reflect that you have read, thought about, and paid attention to the way we have talked in class about similar issues. Your main point should be clearly stated and defended with appropriate evidence. You should remain focused on your topic throughout your paper, and you should have thoroughly examined the aspects of your topic from your

perspective. Your ideas should be internally consistent. There won't be anything terribly surprising, daring, or unusual here.

Organization: Your paper should have a logical, clearly identifiable organization. Each paragraph should address only one aspect of your topic, and when you change aspects, you start a new paragraph. Transitions between paragraphs should be competently handled. Your strategy, that is, how you manage the interweaving of your idea and your organization, should be standard and straightforward. For instance, if you follow a traditional pattern of an introduction that includes a flagged thesis statement ("in this paper I will..."), then proceed with evidence and close with a restatement of the initial problem. That's a standard, straightforward organization--a C strategy.

Style: Your style should be clear and readable.

Grammar and Mechanics: Your paper should not contain many distracting errors in grammar or mechanics. Minimally, you should have run a spell-check program, and you should know the difference between a complete sentence, a fragment, and a run-on.

“D”:

General Qualitative Description: Incompetent, Inadequate, Below Average.

Conception: Your idea will be immediately obvious to a casual reader--a no-brainer—yet it will be presented as news. It will likely also be not quite clear what it is that you are really saying. Split focus on more than one thesis or issue is likely.

Organization: Perhaps you split your focus (which means you start out talking about one thing and shift to another) which means that you are covering several or many issues in short paragraphs. You jump from one idea to the next with no logical strategy or transitions. If there is no plan, or if you don't stick to the plan, this is faulty organization. It may be evident that there wasn't ever really a structural strategy at all.

Style: Unclear language, usually. This may also be a matter of using the wrong words for your ideas. Simply put, the language is in bad shape.

Grammar/Mechanics: Consistent problems in sentence structure with little sign of proof-reading.

“F”:

General Qualitative Description: Unacceptable.

(The most common cause of an F is a failure to adequately address the assignment. For instance, if I specify that this assignment is to be researched, or if it is to address a certain topic in a certain way, you have to at least complete the assignment.)

Conception: No clear idea governs the words on the page.

Organization: No plan is evident, much less achieved.

Style: Incomprehensible most or all of the time.

Grammar/Mechanics: Consistent problems with rudimentary mechanical matters.

The four major areas of concern discussed above (conception, organization, style, and mechanics) will be considered separately, when that is possible. I may find that it is difficult or even impossible to assess conception if the style and mechanics are at the “F” or “D” levels. It may well be the case that your organization is a real problem while conception, style, and mechanics are all quite good. The ultimate assessment, then, will be the combined consideration of all four areas. Any challenges to my assessments need to employ the above issues in those challenges.

I cannot assess effort. Note that I do not say that I *will* not assess effort; *nobody* can assess effort unless, perhaps, he or she is there watching you work. I assume that you *all* work very hard on your writing. I can only assess the final product.

I do not give grades based on your perceived needs. If you need a “B” in the course to keep your GPA up for a scholarship, loans, or admittance into a program, then be sure you perform at a “B” level.

I do not give grades on the basis of your sense of identity or personal academic history. I assess each piece of work on its own merits.