English 208C Section 01
Children's Literature
Spring 1997
website address goes here

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Course Description
This course explores literature intended for “children” across time and in different mediums. Along the way, we’ll examine how the portrayal and definition of “children” in “literature” has changed, explore both classic and popular fiction, look at the art that accompanies the text, and discuss how today’s technology may potentially affect tomorrow’s definition of “literature”. You’ll be looking at a wide range of selections from fiction and non-fiction, and will be expected to participate in discussions based on the weekly readings and accompanying questions.

Textbooks
1. English 208C 01 Course Readings (available in the Bookstore)
2. ONE book from each of the following groups. (You should end up with 5 books plus the English 208C Course Readings.)

Group 1 (for Week 4):
Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows
Farley Mowat, The Dog Who Wouldn’t Be
E. B. White, Charlotte’s Web
Roald Dahl, James and the Giant Peach

Group 2 (for Week 5)
L. M. Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables
Jean Little, Mama’s Going to Buy You a Mockingbird
Joyce Carol Oates, Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang
Sue Townsend, The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole

Group 3 (for Week 6)
Avi, The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle
Janet Lunn, The Root Cellar
Bernice Thurman Hunter, That Scatterbrain Booky
Carol Matas, Daniel’s Story

Group 4 (for Week 9)
E. Nesbit, The Railway Children
Joy Kogawa, Obasan
Anne Holm, I am David
S. E. Hinton, The Outsiders

Group 5 (for Week 10)
C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
J. R. R. Tolkien, The Hobbit
Madeleine L’Engle, A Wrinkle in Time
Lloyd Alexander, The Black Cauldron
Assignments

Assignments are designed to include both research strategies and creative components. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. The late penalty is 2% per day, 10% per week.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an academic offence punishable by disciplinary action. Plagiarism is defined as “the act of presenting the ideas, words, or other intellectual property of another as one’s own” (UW Policy # 71). Students using the “ideas, words, or other intellectual property of another” must acknowledge that person or persons appropriately according to the guidelines given in A Canadian Writer’s Reference.

Assignment 1: Weekly writings
Worth: 15%
Due date: As called for.
Minimum length: 1 page (200 words) per week.
Think about the week’s question in relation to your selected book or readings, and give your opinion in a page or so. These writings will form the basis of the weekly discussions. Weekly writings will be evaluated on the basis of the thought, analysis and effort you put into them, as well as individual progress.

Assignments 2 & 3: Book/CD-ROM/Web Site Reviews
Worth: 10% each.
Length: 600 - 750 words.
Due Dates: Assignment 2 (first review): May 26
Assignment 3 (second review): June 16
Review and evaluate a children’s or teenager’s book, magazine, CD-ROM or Website. One of the reviews must be on a work that is NOT on the course list. Questions you may want to consider can include: What is the purpose of the piece, and does it succeed in its purpose? Why or why not? Does it have a particular age group or audience in mind? If so, do you think it would appeal to this group? Why or why not? Is it creative? How does it portray children? What social values does it transmit, and do you agree with those values?
To sum up: would you give this piece to a child or teenager? Why or why not? Feel free to let a child or teenager read or use the piece and express an opinion about its merits or demerits.
Reviews will be evaluated based on the quality of analysis of the work, the thoughtfulness of your commentary, and the quality of the written presentation.
Reviews will be published on the course web-site as a reference source.

Assignment 4: Academic Essay
Worth: 30%
Length: 1200 - 1500 words
Due date: July 7
Discuss an aspect of children’s literature. Topics and plans must be approved by me at least two weeks before the due date. Some suggested topics include:
• Analysing a work or works
• Comparing an older work with a current version (for example, a revised book or a movie)
• Researching methods of teaching children literature in public school or high school
• Tracing the development of a trend in children’s literature; for example, science fiction, series books, or illustrations.
• Writing a biography of an author or illustrator
• Discussing the artistic development of a children’s illustrator.
Important: Papers that include research must identify and acknowledge all sources.
Essays will be evaluated on the quality of their ideas, supporting evidence and/or research, and written presentation.
Assignment 5: Creative or Non-fiction Article
Worth: 35% (25% for Part I; 10% for Part II)
Length: Depends on what you choose to do.
Due date: July 28
This assignment is in two parts: an article, and an accompanying justification.

Part I: The Article
Write an article suitable for a children's or teenager's magazine of your choice. The magazine you choose can be real or fictional, and can be from any era. Your article can consist any one of the following suggestions. If you want to create something not on the list, please discuss it with me. Articles can be suitably illustrated if you so choose.

- A short story. Minimum length: 1200 words
- Poetry - a longer poem, or a group of shorter ones. Minimum length: discuss with me.
- Any type of non-fiction article, as long as it suits your magazine. Travel, biography, history, sports, science — wherever your interests lie, as long as the topic is suitable for the age group. Minimum length: 1200 words.

Remember that this assignment is targetted at children/teenagers. Therefore, do NOT write an academic essay.

Part II: The Justification
Minimum length: 500 words
Describe the magazine you have chosen in terms of its purpose, content, and target audience. (If your magazine is imaginary, you'll need to describe it fully.) How does the magazine "capture" and hold its audience's attention and interest? Next, describe how your article "fits" the magazine: what have you tried to do in your work that is consistent with the magazine's purpose, content and audience? What features of your work are designed to capture the audience's attention and interest?
Weekly Schedule of Readings and Questions

**Week 1 (May 5): Introduction**
Guess who’s coming to dinner . . . the development of children’s literature . . . children portrayed.

**Week 2 (May 12):**
Poetry (hand-out)
**Roots & Beginnings 1** (from Course Readings)
Your Question: Do you feel that today’s children would still enjoy these works? Why or why not?
- Catharine Parr Traill, *Lost in the Backwoods*
- Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*

**May 19 - NO CLASS**

**Week 3 (May 26): Roots & Beginnings 2; Cliffhanger Classics**
Assignment 2 (first review) due.
**Roots & Beginnings 2**
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*
- Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*
- Rudyard Kipling, “Mowgli’s Brothers”

**Cliffhanger Classics**
Your Question: Read EITHER Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys. How do the two versions of the same book differ, and why do you think these changes were made?
- Carolyn Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock*, revised version
- Carolyn Keene, *The Secret of the Old Clock*, original version
- F. W. Dixon, *The Tower Treasure*, revised version
- F. W. Dixon, *The Tower Treasure*, original version

**Week 4 (June 2): “If we could talk to the animals”**
Read ONE of the following books, plus the excerpts for the other three in the *Course Readings*.
Your Question: *Fictional animals can communicate values that human characters can’t.* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*
- Farley Mowat, *The Dog Who Wouldn’t Be*
- E. B. White, *Charlotte’s Web*
- Roald Dahl, *James and the Giant Peach*

**Week 5 (June 9): Life’s Like That: Realism**
Read ONE of the following books, plus the excerpts for the other three in the *Course Readings*.
Your Question: “Pinewoods are just as real as pigsties — and a darn sight pleasanter to be in.” How much “reality” (and what type) do you think is appropriate for children or teenagers? Do you feel the “version of reality” given in the book you’re reading is appropriate for its age group?
- L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*
- Jean Little, *Mama’s Going to Buy You a Mockingbird*
- Joyce Carol Oates, *Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang*
- Sue Townsend, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*

**Week 6 (June 16): Disguises & Other Guises: Historical Fiction**
Assignment 3 (second review) due.
Read ONE of the following books, plus the excerpts for the other three in the *Course Readings*.
Your Question: How does the fictionalizing of history change our -- or children’s -- perception of historical events?
- Avi, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*
- Janet Lunn, *The Root Cellar*
Bernice Thurman Hunter, *That Scatterbrain Booky*
Carol Matas, *Daniel’s Story*

**Week 7 (June 23): Interpretations: Non-fiction (from Course Readings)**
Your Questions: Answer ONE of these questions:
*Life Writing: Two of these excerpts are written by adults about their childhood (Wilder & McClung); one is a teenager’s diary (Montgomery); the remaining letters are written by children for other children. Which of these works do you feel would be most useful and/or entertaining to teach children or teenagers about another era, and why? How would you “teach” with the work you’ve chosen?*

*Science: How has North American science writing for children changed over the last century? Are these changes positive or negative?*

*Life Writing*
Rose Wilder Lane, “Grandpa’s Fiddle I”
Nellie McClung, *Clearing in the West*
L. M. Montgomery, *Selected Journals*
Letters to St. Nicholas, 1876 - 1915

*Science*

**Week 8 (June 30): The Art Gallery**
No readings this week.

**Week 9 (July 7): Courage Under Fire: “Kids” in Adversity**
*Assignment 4 (Academic essay) due.*
Read ONE of the following books, plus the excerpts for the other three in the Course Readings.
Your Question: *Adversity builds character, and is therefore a positive experience.* Based on the book you’re reading, is this statement realistic?

- E. Nesbit, *The Railway Children*
- Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*
- Anne Holm, *I am David*
- S. E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*

**Week 10 (July 14): Out of this World: Fantasy & Science Fiction**
Read ONE of the following books, plus the excerpts for the other three in the *Course Readings.*
Your Question: In the book of your choice, which character would you like to be, and why?

- C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
- J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*
- Madeleine L’Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*
- Lloyd Alexander, *The Black Cauldron*

**Week 11 (July 21): Reader’s Choice**
The class chooses this week’s readings and decides on discussion topics.

**Week 12 (July 28): Walking the Web**
*Assignment 5 (Article & Justification) due.*
Your Question: What effect do you think web-sites will have on children’s reading?
Children’s web sites (to be announced).