

English 272:02 Literature for the Middle Grades

Fall 2011 Professor Jan Susina

Class Meeting: Tuesday & Thursday 12:35-1:50 p.m.

Class Room: Stevenson 223

Office: Stevenson 402

Office Phone: 438-3739; Email: jcsusina@ilstu.edu.

(Email is the best way to contact me.)

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 11:00 - noon

Web site: <http://ghostofthetalkingcricket.squarespace.com/>

Tentative Syllabus:

Aug. 23 Introduction and Overview to the Course: The World of Middle School and Tweens

Aug. 25 Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Aug. 30 Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Deadline for Sign-up for Tween Film/TV Program for Paper

Sept. 1 Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Sept. 6 Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Sept. 8 Francis Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*

Tween Film/TV Program Paper Due

Sept. 13 Francis Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*

Sept. 15 Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*

Sept. 20 Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*

Sept. 22 Karen Cushman's *Catherine Called Birdy*

Sept. 27 Karen Cushman's *Catherine Called Birdy*

Sept. 29 Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*

Deadline for Sign-up for Book for Critical Paper

Oct. 4 Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*

Oct. 6 Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*

Oct. 11 Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*

Oct. 13 **First Exam**

Oct. 18 Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust*

Oct. 20 Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust*

Proposal for Critical Paper: Working Title, Thesis Statement & Works Cited with four annotated secondary sources Due

Oct. 25 Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy*

Oct. 27 Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy*

Nov. 1 Tweens & Music: Cute Boy & Girl Bands: Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez, Katy Perry, Jonas Brothers, Miley Cyrus, Willow Smith & Rebecca Black
Music Review Due

Nov. 3 Blue Balliett's *Chasing Vermeer*

Nov. 8 Blue Balliett's *Chasing Vermeer*

Nov. 10 Social Networks, Video Games, and Tweens: Fred Figgelhorn videos
Critical Paper Due (Extension to Friday, Nov. 11, 2 p.m.)

Nov. 15 Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Nov. 17 Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Nov. 22 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 24 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 29 Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*

Dec. 1 Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*

Dec. 6 E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*

Dec. 8 E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*
Trends in Middle School Literature

Dec. 12-16: **Final Exam** TBA according to the final exam schedule.

Goals of the course:

While this is a course in children's literature, it is also a university-level literature course. Students will be reading and analyzing a variety of texts that are intended for students in middle school. Since many of the students enrolled in this course are preparing to become middle school teachers or librarians, students will want to know much more about these books than your future students. The class will attempt to understand how

young readers make meaning from these texts and how these texts help to form ideologies and cultural beliefs concerning middle school children.

Required Texts:

Jeff Kinney. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Amulet Books).
 Mark Twain. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, ed. John Seelye (Penguin Classics).
 Frances Hodgson Burnett. *A Little Princess*, ed. U.C. Knoepfelmacher (Penguin Classics).
 Gail Carson Levine. *Ella Enchanted* (HarperCollins).
 Karen Cushman. *Catherine Called Birdy* (HarperCollins).
 Rick Riordan. *The Lightning Thief* (HyperionMiramax).
 Russell Freedman. *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (Houghton Mifflin).
 Christopher Paul Curtis. *Bud, No Buddy* (Yearling)
 Karen Hesse. *Out of the Dust* (Scholastic).
 Blue Balliett. *Chasing Vermeer* (Scholastic).
 Brian Selznick. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Scholastic).
 Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic).
 E.B. White. *Charlotte's Web* (HarperCollins).
 Joseph Gibaldi. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. MLA
 (This text is not required, but strongly recommended)

Course Format:

The class will be reading and discussing a variety of children's texts that are intended for children aged nine to thirteen, including multicultural novels and information books, children's media and culture. Students need to read the assignments prior to class and be prepared to discuss them in class. The class will involve lecture, discussion, and small group work. Throughout the semester, students will be assigned a series of short writing projects and pop quizzes that are intended to help you to think critically about middle school literature.

Class Attendance:

Class attendance is important and is intended to be a valuable experience. You should diligently try to be on time for class. If you must miss class, you should have a good reason for your absence. Whenever possible, notify me by email before your absence. Since you can't be two places at the same time, avoid scheduling other activities during class time. Students are expected to participate in class discussion and a portion of the final grade will be based on class discussion. If a student misses more than three classes, the final grade will be lowered a third of a letter grade for each additional class missed. Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before class starts. Students who miss a class or come in late will not be allowed to make up an in-class writing assignment and/or a pop quiz. Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion is required. If you need to withdraw from the course, please remember this is your responsibility and you should be aware of the deadlines for dropping a course. Papers and assignments should be turned at the stated deadlines. If an extension needs to be made, it should be worked out with the instructor prior to the deadline, otherwise late work will be penalized with a lower grade.

Exams:

There will be two exams given during the semester, one of which will be a cumulative final exam. The final exam is scheduled, according to the Fall 2011 Final Exam Schedule. The exams will include objective and short identification items as well as essay questions.

Critical Paper:

Each student will write a short (seven-ten page, typed, doubled spaced) analysis on a book appropriate for middle school readers selected from a list of titles provided by the instructor. Students will write a proposal for their research paper, which will include a minimum of *four* secondary sources in their Works Cited section. Only half of the secondary sources can be electronic sources. Critical papers need to conform to the format that is explained in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. *The MLA Handbook* shows how to cite material and how to create a Works Cited page. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase a copy of this handbook, if they do not already own it. The Work Cited section of the final paper must have a minimum of *seven* secondary sources. Once again, only half of those sources can be electronic. Please keep an extra copy of your papers for your records.

Film/TV Program Analysis Paper:

Students will write a short analysis (three-four page, typed, doubled spaced) on either a film or television program appropriate for middle school viewers selected from a list provided by the instructor. While these papers do not require a Work Cited section, as does your Critical Paper, it is encouraged. These analysis papers need to conform to the format found in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

Plagiarism/Cheating:

Please consult the Illinois State University policy in the *ISU Undergraduate Catalog* under "Academic Integrity" and chapter 2: "Plagiarism" in the *MLA Handbook*. Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses and may result in failure on an exam, paper, or project and in some cases failure in the course. All written work submitted for this course must be your own and produced for this specific course.

Students Needing Support Services

Students with a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), or 438-8620 (TDD) in order to make reasonable accommodations.

Grades:

Grades will be based on the following point scale: Grades for papers: A+=100, A=95, A-92, B+= 87, B=85, B-=82, C+=77, C=75, C-=72, D+=67, D=65, D-=62, F=50. For the course grade, the following scale will be used A=90 and above, B=80 and above, C= 70 and above, D=60 and above, F=50 and below. Students earn their grades by performance, not by negotiation. If you have a question concerning a grade on an assignment for exam, please come by my office during my office hours to discuss it. The

course grade will be based on the following assignments, which will be weighted as follows:

- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Middle School Book Critical Paper: 20%
- Middle School Film/TV Program Analysis Paper: 10%
- In-class Writing Assignments & Quizzes: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%
- Class Participation: 10%

Tween Books for Critical Paper:

- Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy*
- Robert McCloskey's *Homer Price*
- Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
- E.L. Konigsburg's *From The Mixed-up Files of Mr. Basil E. Frankweiler*
- Beverly Cleary's *Girl from Yamhill*
- Jean Fritz's *The Double Life of Pocahontas*
- Lynne Reid Banks's *The Indian in the Cupboard*
- Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*
- Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret*
- Daniel Pinkwater's *Lizard Music*
- Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries*
- James Patterson's *Middle School: The Worst Years of my Life*
- Scott O'Dell's *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*
- Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events: Book 1*
- Donna Gephart's *How to Survive Middle School*
- Eager Eager's *Half Magic*
- E. Nesbit's *The Treasure Seekers*
- Shelley Pearsal's *All Shook Up*
- Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*
- Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*
- Dave Barry & Ridley Peron's *Peter and the Starcatchers*
- Jeff Smith's *Bone*
- Raina Telgemeier's *Smile*
- Patrick Carman's *Skelton Creek: Ryan's Journal*

Tween Films for Papers:

(Check IMDb) Internet Movie Database for film information

- Richard Donner's *The Goonies* (1985)
- Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids* (2001)
- Roberta Rodriguez's *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl* (2006)
- Brad Bird's *The Iron Giant* (1999)
- Hayao Miyazaki's *My Friend Totoro* (1988)
- Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001)
- Chris Columbus's *Home Alone* (2001)
- Chris Columbus's *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* (2010)
- Rob Reiner's *Flipped* (2010)

Nancy Meyer's *The Parent Trap* (1998)
 Patricia Rozema's *Kit Kitredge: An American Girl* (2008)
 Niki Caro's *Whale Rider* (2002)
 Jeffery Blitz's *Spellbound* (2002)
 Andrew Davis's *Holes* (2003)
 Jay Russell's *Tuck Everlasting* (2002)
 Howard Zieff's *My Girl* (1991)
 Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005)
 Henry Selick's *Caroline* (2009)
 Thor Freudenthal's *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010)
 Doug Atchison's *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006)
 Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: Extra-Terrestrial* (1982)
 Brad Silberling's *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004)
 Andrew Adamson's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
 (2005)
 Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (1986)
 Richard Linklater's *School of Rock* (2003)
 Bronwen Hughes's *Harriet the Spy* (1996)
 Elizabeth Allen's *Aquamarine* (1996)
 Clay Wiener's *Fred: The Movie* (2010)
 John Chu's *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* (2011)

Tween TV Programs for Paper:

Ned's Declassified
The Wizards of Waverly Place
Hannah Montana
Sonny with a Chance
The Suite Life of Zack and Cody/ Suite Life on Deck
Every Hates Chris
iCarly
Phineas and Ferb