

## English 470:01 Tween Literature and Culture

Fall 2011 Professor Jan Susina

Class Meeting: Wednesday 5:30--8:20 p.m.

Class Room: Stevenson 348

Office: Stevenson 402

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

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

### Tentative Syllabus:

Aug. 24 Introduction and Overview to the Course: The World of Middle School and Tweens

“Tweens and Middle School” Sharon Jayson’s “It’s Cooler Than Ever to be a Tween, But is Childhood Lost?” (handout)

Aug. 31 Jennifer Holm’s *Middle School is Worse than Meatloaf*

Jeff Kinney’s *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

*Website of Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (website)

Oral Report: Linda Perlstein’s *Not Much Just Chillin’: The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers*

Sept. 7 Raina Telgemier’s *Smile*

Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese*

Lan Dong’s “Reimagining the Monkey King in Comics: Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese*”

Oral Report 1: David Hajdu’s *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*

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

Sept. 14 Louise Fitzhugh’s *Harriet the Spy*

Robin Amelia Morris’s “The Secret Development of a Girl Writer: Louise Fitzhugh’s *Harriet the Spy*” (website)

Oral Report 2: Rachel Simmons’s *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*

**Deadline to select Book for Banned Book Reading.** Consult Robert P. Doyle’s *Banned Books Resource Guide* or the ALA (American Library Association) Website for appropriate book.

Sept. 21 E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*

Lucy Rollin’s “The Reproduction of Mothering in *Charlotte’s Web*” (on website)

**Banned Book Reading**, CVA 149 7-8:15

Sept. 28 Gail Carson Levine’s *Ella Enchanted*

*Justin Platt’s* “Breaking the Glass Slipper: Changing Cultural Norms and the

Cinderella Story” (website)  
 Oral Report 3: Donna Eder’s *School Talk: Gender and Adolescent Culture*  
**Tween Film/TV Program Paper Due**

Oct. 5 Rick Riordan’s *The Lightning Thief*  
 Sheila Murnaghan’s “Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children” (website)  
 Oral Report 4: Teri S. Lesesne’s *Naked Reading: Uncovering What Tweens Need to Become Lifelong Readers*

Oct. 12 Karen Hesse’s *Out of the Dust*  
 Alison Halliday’s “Place in Poetry, Poetry in Its Place” (website)  
 Oral Report 5: Elizabeth Patridge’s *Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorthea Lang*

Oct. 19 Christopher Paul Curtis’s *Bud Not Buddy*  
 Oral Report 6: Thomas Newkirk’s *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, Literacy, and Popular Culture*  
**Proposal for Critical Paper (1-2 pages) Working Title, Thesis Statement & Works Cited with four annotated secondary sources Due**

Oct. 26: Tweens and Popular Culture: Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez, Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus, Demi Lavato and Jonas Brothers.  
 Andrea Lampros’s “Why I Wish We Never had Gone to See Taylor Swift” (website), Rebecca Mead’s “The Gossip Mill: Alloy the Teen-Entertainment Factory (website), (website) Fred videos (website)  
**Tween CD Review & Analysis Due**  
 Oral Report 7: Susan Linn’s *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*

Nov. 2 Susie Morgenstern’s *Secret Letters from 0 to 10*  
 Oral Report 8: Barbara Feinberg’s *Welcome to the Lizard Motel: Children, Stories, and the Mystery of Making Things Up*

Nov. 9 Blue Balliet’s *Chasing Vermeer*  
 Oral Report 9: Kelly Gallagher’s *Readicide: How Schools are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It*

Nov. 16 Lemony Snicket’s *The Bad Beginning, or Orphans!*  
 Chris McGee’s “The Power of Secrets: Backwards Construction and the Children’s Detective Story” (website)  
 Oral Report 10: Lemony Snicket’s *Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography*  
**Critical Paper Due (Extension to Friday, Nov. 12, noon)**

Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Break: no class

Nov. 30 Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*

Laura Miller's "Fresh Hell: What's Behind the Boom in Dystopian Fiction for Young Readers" (website)

Oral Report 11: Gerad Jones's *Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence*

Dec. 7 Patrick Carman's *Skelton Creek*

Oral Report 12: Larry D. Rosen's *Rewired: Understanding the iGeneration and the Way They Learn*

Dec. 12-16: **Final Exam** TBA. Five-minute presentations on critical papers.

### **Goals of the course:**

This course will examine the often times confusing and contradictory world of middle school literature. We will attempt to explore the growth of tween literature and culture that has been produced in part with the development of middle schools in the United States since the 1960s, while looking at several influential examples from earlier time periods. Many of these texts attempt to provide younger readers with a transition from childhood to adolescence as they progress from the sixth to eighth grade. We will attempt to slip inside those overstuffed backpacks and lockers and try to understand some of the physical, social and emotional concerns and issues that tweens face in contemporary culture by reading some of the books that are either assigned in school or that they are reading on their own outside of class. Since this age group gains much of its information and entertainment from other sources, in addition to books we will also be examine other texts that tweens consume including magazines, television, films, music, and new media.

### **Required Texts:**

Jennifer Holm. *Middle School is Worse than Meatloaf* (Simon & Schuster).

Jeff Kinney. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Amulet Books).

Gene Luen Yang. *American Born Chinese* (First Second).

Raina Telgemeier. *Smile* (Graphix).

E.B. White. *Charlotte's Web* (HarperCollins).

Louise Fitzhugh. *Harriet the Spy* (Yearling).

Gail Carson Levin. *Ella Enchanted* (HarperCollins).

Rick Riordan. *The Lightning Thief* (HyperionMiramax).

Karen Hesse. *Out of the Dust* (Scholastic).

Christopher Paul Curtis. *Bud, No Buddy* (Yearling)

Blue Balliet. *Chasing Vermeer* (Scholastic).

Lemony Snicket. *The Bad Beginning, or Orphans!* (HarperCollins).

Susie Morgenstern. *Secret Letters from 0 to 10* (Puffin Books).

Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic).

Patrick Carman. *Skelton Creek: Book One* (Scholastic).

Joseph Gibaldi. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. MLA  
(This text is not required, but strongly recommended)

**Course Format:**

The class will be conducted as a seminar, which means that the students are expected to come to class and be prepared for active discussion of the reading assignments. All students will give an oral presentation on a prearranged topic and will create and distribute a handout (2-3 pages) on the topic for every member of the class. Students should include a Powerpoint presentation as part of their class presentation and turn in a printout of their Powerpoint presentation to the instructor the evening of the presentation. Students will also write an analysis (3-5 pages) of a film or TV program appropriate for tweens from the list provided by the instruction and an analysis of a CD of a popular music for tweens. The class will organize, promote, and present a Banned Book Reading on Sept. 27. Most of the students will select, prepare and read a five-minute presentation from a challenged or censored tween book. Each student will write a longer critical paper (14-18 pages) on a topic of tween literature or culture and construct a one-page abstract of their paper. For the final exam, students will prepare and present a five-minute oral presentation on their research project and distribute a one-page abstract of their paper to all the members of the class. During the semester, there will be short written assignments related to the primary texts and critical readings. Students are expected to attend class and contribute to class discussion.

**Class Attendance:**

Class attendance is important and is intended to be a valuable experience. You should diligently try to be on time for class. Since the class meets once a week, missing one class is missing a week's worth of class. Since you can't be two places at the same time, avoid scheduling other activities during class time. If you must miss class, you should have a compelling reason for your absence. Whenever possible, notify me by email before your absence. Since class participation will be evaluated as part of your responsibilities in this course, missing more than one class will lower your final grade one half a letter for each additional class session missed. Papers and assignments should be turned in 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.

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.

**Research Paper:**

Each student will write a research paper (14-18 pages, doubled spaced) on some aspect of tween culture or literature. Students are encouraged to write on one of the texts that the class is reading in common or another text written by one of the authors read in the class. Students will write a short (1-2 page) proposal for their research topic, which needs to be reviewed and approved by the instructor. For the final exam, each student will prepare a five-minute presentation on their research and provide a one-page abstract for all members of the class. 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. Please keep an extra copy of your papers for your records.

### **Film/TV Program Analysis Paper:**

Students will write a short analysis (three-four pages, 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 Works Cited section, as does your Research Paper, it is encouraged. These analysis papers need to conform to the format found in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

### **Class Presentation and Presentation Handout**

Each student will give a 15-minute class presentation selected from a list of prearranged topics. Students will introduce the topic to the class and then lead a class discussion on the subject. In addition to the presentation, each student will construct a handout (2-3 pages) to accompany their presentation to be distributed to each member of the class on the evening of the presentation. Presentation handouts should list at least three secondary sources as part of the handout's Works Cited section. Students should provide the instructor with a printout of their Power Point presentation.

### **Plagiarism/Cheating:**

Please review the Illinois State University policy in the *Graduate Catalog* under "Academic Integrity" (29-30) and chapter 2: "Plagiarism" (66-75) 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, 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:

Class presentation: 10%

Class Presentation handout: 5%

Banned Book Reading 5%

Critical Paper: 40%

Class Assignments/Short Papers: 30%

Class Participation: 10%

**Tween Films for Papers: (Check IMD-- Internet Movie Database-- for film information)**

Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids* (2001)  
 Richard Donner's *The Goonies* (1985)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Andrew Adamson's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005)  
 Brad Silberling's *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004)  
 Bronwen Hughes's *Harriet the Spy* (1996)  
 Elizabeth Allen's *Aquamarine* (1996)  
 Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (1986)  
 Richard Linklater's *School of Rock* (2003)  
 Clay Wiener's *Fred: The Movie* (2010)

**Children's TV Programs for Paper:**

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