

English 272:03: Literature for the Middle Grades

Fall 2017 Professor Jan Susina

Class Meeting: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00—3:15 p.m.

Class Room: Stevenson 221-B

Office: Stevenson 402

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

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 12:30—1:30 p.m.

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

Tentative Syllabus :

Aug. 22 Introduction and Overview to the Course: The World of Middle School and Tweens

Aug. 24 Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Aug. 29 Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Aug. 31 Francis Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*

Deadline for Sign-up for Tween Film for Paper

Sept. 5 Francis Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*

Sept. 7 Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*

Sept. 12 Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*

Tween Film Paper Due

Sept. 14 Karen Cushman's *Catherine Called Birdy*

Sept. 19 Karen Cushman's *Catherine Called Birdy*

Sept. 21 Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*

Deadline for Sign-up for Book for Critical Paper

Sept. 26 Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*

Sept. 28 Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*

Oct. 3 Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photography*

Oct. 5 Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy*

Oct. 10 Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy*

Oct. 12 **Midterm Exam**

Oct. 17 Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust*

Oct. 19 Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy*

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

Oct. 24 Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy*

Oct. 26 Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*

Oct. 31 Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*

Nov. 2 Blue Balliet's *Chasing Vermeer*

Nov. 7 Blue Balliet's *Chasing Vermeer*

Nov. 14 Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Nov. 17 Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*
Critical Paper Due

Nov. 21 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 23 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 28 Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Nov. 30 Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Dec. 5 E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*

Dec. 7 E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*

Dec. 16: **Final Exam** Dec. 11--15. TBA

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:

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*. Trophy Newbery.
 Karen Cushman. *Catherine Called Birdy*. HMB Books
 Rick Riordan. *The Lightning Thief*. Disney/Hyperion.
 Russell Freedman. *Lincoln: A Photobiography*. Houghton Mifflin.
 Karen Hesse. *Out of the Dust*. Great Sources.
 Christopher Paul Curtis. *Bud, Not Buddy*. Yearling.
 Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*. Yearling.
 Blue Balliet. *Chasing Vermeer*. Scholastic.
 Neil Gaiman. *The Graveyard Book*. Harper Collins.
 Jeff Kinney. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Amulet Books.
 Brian Selznick. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Scholastic.
 E.B. White. *Charlotte's Web*. Harper Collins.
 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 will be scheduled according to the Fall 2017 Final Exam

Schedule. The exams will include objective and short identification items as well as essay questions. Students should purchase at least two blue books for the two exams.

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.

Proposal for Critical Paper:

In preparation for writing your critical paper on a middle school text students will write a proposal for their research project. The proposal should be 2 pages in length and should include a Works Cited section of at least 4 possible secondary sources. The proposal needs to conform to the format provide in the *MLA Handbook*. *The MLA Handbook* shows how to cite material and how to create a Works Cited section. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase a copy of the *MLA Handbook*, if they do not already own a copy.

Middle School Film 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. In addition to viewing the film, students should read the entry on the film in Wikipedia and read several film reviews. Recommended sources for film reviews include The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and Roger Ebert's website (rogerebert.com). The film should examine how the film represents tweens and their concerns. Identify the genre of the film and provide a historical and cultural context for the film. Evaluate if the film is a successful film for a middle school audience. The film analysis should cite the film and at least one of the secondary sources on the film. Papers need to conform to the format found in the *MLA Handbook*.

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 in some situations result in failure on an exam, paper, or project and in some cases failure in the course All written worked submitted for this course must be your own and produced for this specific course.

Students Needing Support Services

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, 9309) 438-5853, or visit the StudentAccess.Illinois State.edu.

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 Analysis Paper: 10%

In-class Writing Assignments & Reading Quizzes: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Class Participation: 10%

Given the unreliability of ReggieNet, I will not be using it for this course.

Books for Critical Paper (In addition to Required Texts for the Class):

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*

Jean Fritz's *The Double Life of Pocahontas*

Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*

Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret*

Daniel Pinkwater's *Lizard Music*

Scott O'Dell's *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*

Lemony Snickett's *A Series of Unfortunate Events: Book 1*

Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*

Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*

Raina Telgemeir's *Smile*

Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*

Children's Films for Papers: (Check IMDb) Internet Movie Database for film information

Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: Extra-Terrestrial* (1982)

Steven Lisbeger's *Tron* (1982)

Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (1986)

Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride* (1987)

Hayao Miyazaki's *My Friend Totoro* (1988)

Agieszka Holland's *The Secret Garden* (1993)

Bronwen Hughes's *Harriet the Spy* (1996)

Brad Bird's *The Iron Giant* (1999)
Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids* (2001)
Hayao Miyazaki 's *Spirited Away* (2001)
Chris Columbus's *Home Alone* (2001)
Niki Caro's *Whale Rider* (2002)
Andrew Davis's *Holes* (2003)
Brad Silberling's *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004)
Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005)
Andrew Adamson's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe*
(2005)
Doug Atchison's *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006)
Henry Selick's *Coraline* (2009)
Chris Columbus's *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* (2010)
Thor Freudenthal's *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010)
Shawn Levy's *Night at the Museum* (2007)
Richard Linklater's *School of Rock* (2003)
Spike Jonze's *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009)
Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* (2011)
Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012)
Jon Favreau's *The Jungle Book* (2016)