

Mini Conference Presentation

ENGL 3830

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Textual Focus

You'll answer the question you've developed by studying at least one piece of children's literature; **this/these books, movies, tv programs, etc are the focus of your study.** You must select at least one text you've read on your own (separate from class readings)—please see the list of suggested related texts or contact Dr. Meeusen for approval of another text. Remember, your analysis must be original, so while you may engage themes and ideas from class, you must share a new opinion/analysis instead of simply repeating what we have said in class.

Ideology Focus

Most students consider ideology (what the book(s) reveals to us about how the world works). This could include studying authorial choices, rhetorical strategies, ideologies, representations of culture, use of genre conventions, interaction with a particular theory, historical/cultural context, portrayals of gender, race, sexuality, disability, or class, etc.

Connection: This assignment builds on the writing development we've done so far, but gives you the freedom to select a topic of interest to you.

Developing a Guiding Question

First, write a guiding question that you will answer in your study. Remember, this is not simply a comprehension question, and even delves more deeply than a discussion question. Instead, think of it as a research question—something that requires you to study the book you've chosen to answer it.

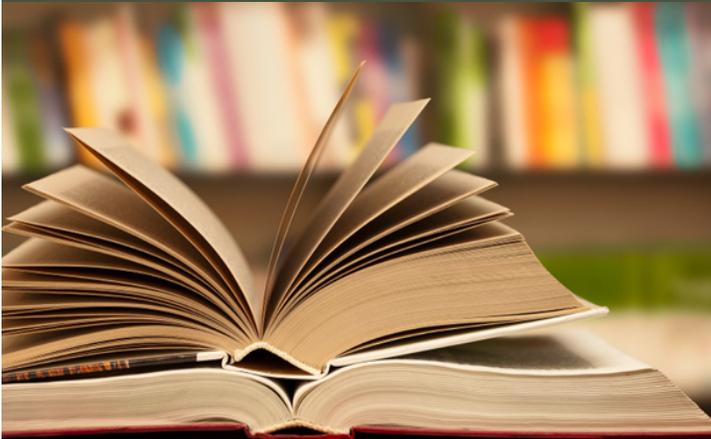
Conducting a book study is more than just casually reading it. You'll decide what **kind of study** you'd like to conduct in order to discover and share something others wouldn't notice in a more casual reading. For example, you can choose one of the following:

1. choose **one book** to focus on closely to examine a message, ideology, and/or authorial choice; if you choose a single book to study, your research question might follow this pattern: "how does XXX function in YYY" (we will discuss this in class)
2. compare **two related texts**, seeking to understand how they approach an idea in similar and different ways to compare and contrast the ways they approach a particular idea or utilize certain literary devices; *please note—those with little experience in formal analysis often have the most success with this option, focusing on why similarities and differences between two texts matter in terms of ideology, theory, or representation*
3. look for **patterns across a group of texts** in a certain genre or category, or a group of texts by a single author; most students who study picture books select this option

Thesis Based Study

Think of the guiding question as something similar to the kinds of prompts you've been writing about in the other writing assignments we've done in class. Only this time, you **decide what specific topic or idea you will examine closely** in the books you have chosen. While you may choose any topic for your focus, your analysis will require you to make an observation about the texts you are studying, develop a thesis (or statement of argument, often a conclusion you've drawn based on observations), and support your interpretation with specific examples from the book/film/etc. We will talk about possible kinds of guiding questions more during class, but feel free to alter these to fit your interests or explore a new concept or idea.

Audience Matters: Just like a real conference, your success as a presenter is evaluated by not only having a great idea to share, but sharing it in a way that is meaningful to your colleagues. Thus, it is important to organize your information in a clear and engaging way. Think about presentations are the most memorable and meaningful to you, and make purposeful choices to make your presentation like those you enjoy.



Technical Specifications:

Your presentation should be 3-4 minutes long, with one minute for Q & A. Usually, it takes about 2 minutes to read one double-spaced page (about 300 words or so), so those who write out their entire presentation and read it, usually start with an essay that is 750-1000 words in length. Many presenters also have something to show their listeners, even using PowerPoint slides or a handout to highlight important points.

Feedback: One of the biggest parts of a conference is peer feedback. Thus, you are required to ask at least one of your colleagues a question after his/her presentation.

Since we'll only have time for a question or two during class, you'll also choose a time to meet with Dr. Meeusen after class to talk about your idea in an informal meeting. We will talk about some of the strengths and weaknesses of your presentation, but this meeting is mostly to chat about your ideas, as well as any questions you have about the semester. While this meeting is part of your grade (10 points out of the 100), you earn credit for this meeting simply by attending.

Preparing to Present: Most people write out what they plan to say, either in essay form or in a detailed outline. Whatever you choose, a presentation is a lot like a formal essay, and many scholars even read their work when presenting at a conference.

An analysis offers YOUR interpretation—a specific **opinion-based** analysis or evaluation of some element of the text. Write a thesis statement that makes this opinion clear, then support it with specific examples and details as evidence. Your analysis is your opinion, but it is an opinion based on your careful study of the book(s) you are reading.

Goal/Focus—A Unique Idea:

A strong analysis presentation is one that explains an idea that has weight and significance to the scholarly community. It reveals something important you have discerned about a text—something that others would not notice without doing careful study like you have done. Strong critical questions can be answered with evidence from the texts, but they also do not have simple answers. Make sure your question could be used to open up discussion/debate.

Interpretation offers more than an observation, however, but also an analysis of **why what you have observed matters**. For example, you might focus on what particular details and authorial choices in the book(s) reveal about your topic, you might track patterns across texts, or you might discuss implicit ideologies or messages that a text or texts send about society. Your analysis should offer a unique insight, original idea, innovative approach, or new way of looking at the texts you are discussing. In short, you should point out something you've noticed in your study that would not be easily observed by everyone and explain why what you have noticed is important to a deeper understanding of literature for young people.