

Synthesis Questions

Fairy Tales: Cinderella

Consider the various retellings of the “Cinderella” story we’ve looked at in class: Perrault, Grimms, Jacobs, Disney’s Animated “Classic” (1950), Disney’s Rogers & Hammerstein TV movie, *Ella Enchanted*, and *The Paper Bag Princess*. Compare the differing ideologies of these texts. Consider both explicit and implicit ideologies: how do the texts reflect the dominant culture of their audiences?

Think about the binaries that are set up in the “Cinderella” stories we’ve looked at so far, both as they relate to gender and good v. evil. To what degree do different Cinderella variants utilize such binaries, and how does it affect the ideologies the texts put forth?

The Tale of Despereaux

Kate DiCamillo dedicates this book to Luke, “who asked for the story of an unlikely hero.” Consider three unlikely heroes we’ve studied this semester. What does it mean to be a hero for these characters, and what kinds of messages about heroism do their texts send?

In the *Tale of Despereaux*, the narrator directs the reader in very specific ways by addressing him/her directly. Consider what impact this has on the story in relation to at least one other book we’ve read this semester. What impact does this direct address of the reader have on the story? How does another story we’ve read produce a similar or contradictory effect by other means?

Identity is an important topic in many works of children’s literature. Using several examples from books we’ve read so far this semester, explore how characters develop, explore and/or establish their own identity in relation to those identities imposed upon them by others.

Alice in Wonderland

Consider the adaptations we looked at relating to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (with original Tenniel illustrations), and discuss how individual authors have used elements of Alice in Wonderland for their own purposes. How have some of these authors removed or changed the nonsense elements of the text and what results (both positive and problematic) emerge from these changes? How does this relate to other adaptations we’ve considered this semester?

The caterpillar asks Alice “who are you”, questioning her identity and prodding her to evaluate her own perspective and sense of self. Consider the answer to this question. How does Alice see herself, and how does the reader see her? How does she compare to one or more of the other children we’ve seen portrayed in works so far this semester?

Marvel’s *Wizard of Oz* Graphic Novel

Consider those ways of interpreting visual images discussed in class (via Molly Bang, Scott McCloud). Using this framework, choose one theme or message presented by the Marvel *Wizard*

of *Oz* graphic novel, and use visual interpretation to support it. How do visual aspects of the text reinforce or make evident a theme important to the story?

Coraline

In class, we discussed several motifs that are important to *Coraline*. Choosing another text we've considered this semester, identify an important motif and trace its development and significance in the text. What work does this motif do in establishing a theme or message of the story?

Consider the Other Mother as a villain in comparison to another villain we've encountered this semester. What similarities and differences can you identify and what ideologies do these put forth?

The Watsons Go to Birmingham

Curtis is a "detail" writer—he develops his story and characters through an incredible amount of specific details. What are some examples of this, what does it do for the story, and why does it work? How does this compare to another text we've read this semester?

Christopher Paul Curtis uses a specifically episodic or vignette style to tell his story... why is this technique effective? Compare how Curtis uses this style with other texts we've considered this semester. What benefits or limitations does such a technique offer?

The Arrival

Choose one of the principles addressed in Molly Bang's theories of visual interpretation and apply it to *The Arrival* as it compares to another visual text we've considered this semester. How does this principle help us to understand the text's message or ideology?

Both *The Arrival* and *The Watsons Go To Birmingham* offer a strong and unique message about issues of family and culture. Compare the way Curtis and Tan establish this theme and the ways that the visual versus written medium affects our understanding of it.

Caldecott

Choose two picture books that you think won the Caldecott for similar reasons and explain why you believe they were chosen for this award. Be specific in describing not only the reason, but how it is demonstrated by each book and why it is an important contribution to children's literature.

Poetry

Choose one of the Dr. Seuss books we studied in class and analyze the use of imagery and poetry in conjunction with the story's message. How do the specific poetic devices, language/word choices and style of illustration help Seuss to put forth a specific social commentary or explicit

ideology.

Choose an outside example of children's poetry and do a thorough analysis of its use of poetic devices, paying particular attention to symbolism, word choice, and literary devices. Include the poem in your response for instructor reference.

Mythology

Compare the use of mythology within Disney's *Hercules* with research you've done into mythology from traditional source texts (being careful to cite your sources). How do these changes work to put forth an ideology, and how does this fit with the Disney tradition?

Using *Hercules* and at least one other Disney animated film example, discuss a particular implicit ideology put forth by the Walt Disney corporation. Remember, an implicit ideology is not a message the movie sends intentionally (the theme or moral), but rather a cultural belief the text reinforces (usually unintentionally). Use specific examples from the films to support your interpretation and argument, proving what the implicit ideology is and how it is put forth in the films.

Dystopian Children's and YA Literature

Consider the topic of children/adolescents and power in the context of dystopia as compared to another text we've read this semester. How is children's power figured in dystopia in ways that are similar or different in comparison to other kinds of texts? Use specific textual examples to support your discussion.

Explore the reasons why dystopia like *City of Ember* and the *Hunger Games* are popular in contemporary children's and adolescent literature. What function do these texts serve in terms of ideology? Use specific examples from these texts to support your answers.