

ENG 3830: LITERATURE FOR THE INTERMEDIATE READER

Class: Tuesday/Thursday 10:00-11:40am or 4:00-5:40pm

Instructor: Dr. Meghann Meeusen

Contact Information: meghann.meeusen@wmich.edu, 586-651-0289

I prefer email as the method to contact me with inquiries regarding class, and I check for messages regularly (typically responding in less than 24 hours). Please only use my private phone for dire emergencies, and keep in mind I am not usually available to answer.

Office Hours: 921 Sprau Tower

Tuesday 2pm-3:40pm and Thursday 12pm-3:40pm

I am also available outside of these times by appointment.

TEXT REQUIREMENTS

Required Book List

Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted*

Kate Applegate, *The One and Only Ivan*

Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*

Pam Munoz Ryan, *Becoming Naomi Leon*

Christopher Paul Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*

Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming*

Raina Telgemeier, *Smile*

Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*

Kadir Nelson, *Mandela*

Linda Sue Park, *A Long Walk to Water*

Students will also be required to read several critical articles, a picture book biography, as well as at least one additional children's text for the analysis/project.

Required Class Materials

- \$5 Copy Card (available at the WMU bookstore)
- Composition Notebook (hard cover, bound pages – not spiral/binder)
- Glue Sticks and Post-It Notes

Please bring a paper or digital copy of all books to class each day during the week they are assigned. This is an important element of actively participating in class discussion, and thus doing so is considered part of in-class participation grades.

In all cases, any unabridged edition of a text is acceptable, including digital texts.

Listening to books via audio is also encouraged, although a hard copy is necessary for

class (to look up quotes, etc). Finally, printing and copying is required for the submission of several assignments, so please make sure you consistently have the means by which to do so. If you would like something printed/copied by Dr. Meeusen, please email a digital version at least 48 hours before you need it.

OBJECTIVES

- **Identify Ideological and Social Messages:** Students will identify the social, cultural, and ideological messages presented in texts and identify what books and other media composed for children reflect about contemporary society.
- **Explore Cultural Context and Conceptions of Childhood:** Students will examine the social and historical context that defines and influences texts for children, considering how these texts both reflect and shape notions of childhood.
- **Read and Compose Literary Discourse:** Students will investigate how scholars and teachers think, write, and speak about literary texts, producing examples of this unique literary approach and articulating the defining characteristics of such literary discourse in its various forms.
- **Practice Analysis and Literary Interpretation:** Students will practice literary analysis and close reading by utilizing a variety of critical approaches, developing critical thinking and a language by which to describe ways of writing and thinking about literature.
- **Develop Familiarity with Theory-Driven Terminology:** Students will build knowledge about foundational topics, concepts, theories, and approaches to children's texts, developing a language with which to discuss children's texts built on contemporary theoretical perspectives.

ASSIGNMENTS & STUDENT WORK

Readings Engagement Opportunities – 50% of the final grade

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|-----------------------------------|------------|
| • Attendance/In-Class Assignments | 150 points |
| • Critical Discourse Responses | 150 points |
| • Daybook Portfolio / Final Exam | 200 points |

Individual Analysis Project – 50% of the final grade

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|--------------------------|------------|
| • Analysis Essay | 200 points |
| • Annotated Bibliography | 100 points |
| • Final Project | 200 points |

READINGS ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

ATTENDANCE / IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS- 150 total points

As the foundation of this course is the study of literature, students should complete all readings in their entirety by assigned due dates and prepare to discuss these texts fully in the classroom setting. To demonstrate their thoughtful reading, written engagement, active participation, and critical thinking, students will complete reading quizzes and exit tickets in class, each worth 10 points.

Reading Quizzes: Students will complete short unannounced quizzes at the beginning of class throughout the semester. Quizzes will ask students to recount main elements from primary text readings and make connections in short answer questions that rely upon careful reading. Occasionally, having the book in class will exempt a student from the reading quiz.

Exit Tickets: Participation in activities during class and short in-class writing assignments will also frequently be used as “exit tickets,” turned in on the way out of the classroom.

Note: No in-class participation assignments, including quizzes, exit tickets, or daybook checks, can be made up in the event of absence. Students can only earn these points by being present in class, as they rely heavily on class participation.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE RESPONSES- 150 total points

Students will have the opportunity to engage with critical scholarship in two key ways throughout the semester, *reading a minimum of four critical articles* related to class readings:

Critical Article Handout (50 points): Students will select a critical article related to the week’s reading and create a half page handout summarizing the main thesis and argument the writer makes with regards to children’s literature, then copy this handout to share with the rest of the class.

Online Discussion Board (100 points): Students will have the opportunity to delve into critical topics through scholarly articles available online. Students will engage these readings by posting in an online discussion forum **three** times during the semester, including once before Spring Break (20 points each), also selecting one additional critical reading forum to respond to by writing a **summary** of colleague’s discussion and preparing to share that summary during class discussion (40 points).

DAYBOOK PORTFOLIO- 50 total points

Kept in the form of a composition notebook, the daybook offers students the opportunity to write about course material on their own terms, exploring key concepts in order to respond to readings and share their ideas in class discussion. Each week, the weekly reading guide will include several suggestions for daybook activities, and after each class, an extension activity for the daybook is provided. Students are encouraged to write regularly about the readings and other ideas from class, and successful students typically fill the entire composition notebook by the end of the semester. As an incentive to utilize this opportunity for readings engagement

fully, students may **use the daybook on the final exam**. Students are also encouraged to paste (such as with a gluestick) any handouts or materials that may be useful into their daybooks.

Students share their daybook writing at the end of the semester by choosing a total of **three daybook entries** to photocopy and submit in daybook portfolio, due at the final exam. These entries should demonstrate how students have developed their ideas throughout the semester, and students should select entries that exhibit exceptional engagement and extension of class reading and content. Each entry should also be labeled with a post it-note that describes the approach to critical thinking explored.

FINAL EXAM- 150 total points

The final exam includes short answer and essay length questions related to class content, activities, lectures, and readings. Questions will ask students to draw connections between texts and apply various class ideas and critical approaches to children's literature.

INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS PROJECT- 50% of final grade

*Students will conduct a critical study of one or more pieces of children's literature **not included in the assigned reading**, seeking to demonstrate an in-depth analysis of a topic related to children's texts. While books/topics for the written analysis are student selected, they must reflect an understanding of an important or unique aspect of children's literature, with particular attention to connection-making, patterns, related critical theory, or social messages. The analysis project includes three parts:*

ANALYSIS ESSAY (200 points): This assignment asks students to compose a short piece of analytical writing explaining an interpretation supported by details and examples from one or more works of children's literature. Most importantly, students must present a conclusion that is not readily obvious or apparent; the analysis should recount something students have noticed in their study of the text(s) that would not be easily observed by everyone, explaining why what they have noticed is important to a deeper understanding of literature for children.

Students will have the choice to receive written or verbal feedback on this assignment, encouraged to schedule a conference outside of class with the instructor to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their written analysis essay.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (100 points): After presenting their own original ideas in the analysis essay, students will conduct research about their topic using academic databases and other credible sources. The annotated bibliography includes a list of three such sources in MLA format, each paired with a quote from the text that is relevant to student's overall study. Finally, students will include a short summary of key critical perspectives related to the topic based upon these sources.

FINAL PROJECT (200 points): Scholars and teachers who study literature write in a variety of ways, utilizing numerous approaches and multiple genres. The final project asks students to choose their own approach to writing about literature, purposefully and thoughtfully selecting and creating a project that will demonstrate their understanding of the unique ways that scholars and teachers think about literary texts. Suggested types of projects will be provided, and this project also includes a rationale, a written defense that explains how the project meets certain objectives.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

93%-100% A	exceptional, outstanding work
88-92% BA	
83%-87% B	strong, thoughtful work
78-82% CB	
73%-77% C	average, complete work
68-72% DC	
62%-67% D	problematic, sloppy work

ATTENDANCE AND LATE WORK

As active participants in an academic community, students must attend class every day. Furthermore, regular attendance is necessary for successful completion of all major assignments. As part of the attendance policy, **attendance / participation points (including quizzes and exit tickets) can ONLY be earned if a student is present in class**, as the opportunity to earn these points is based upon participation in the class itself. As such points are attendance based, they can only be earned via a student's attendance of the class period and active participation in class.

If a student must be absent, he/she is responsible for all missed content, including turning in assignments on their given due date. Please demonstrate professionalism by arriving to class on time. Additionally, it is a personal pet peeve of mine when students pack up their belongings before I have dismissed them, as it is extraordinarily distracting during a time when I typically announce important summary points or assignment requirements for the next class. Please do not begin preparations to leave the classroom until class has officially ended. Finally, any health conditions that prevent students from regular attendance should be discussed with me at the beginning of the semester.

I do not accept late work. Although I reserve the right to make exceptions to this policy, this is only possible after a discussion with me. If you foresee a problem completing an assignment on time, please contact me at least 48 hours in advance, at which time I am far more open to making arrangements.

OTHER PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the University policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. The academic policies addressing Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=974>.

If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will face academic penalty, including a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade for the course, and referral to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a

hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

In addition, students are encouraged to access the Code of Honor, as well as resources and general academic policies on such issues as diversity, religious observance, and student disabilities:

- Office of Student Conduct www.wmich.edu/conduct
- Division of Student Affairs www.wmich.edu/students/diversity
- Registrar's Office www.wmich.edu/registrar/
www.wmich.edu/registrar/policies/interfaith
- Disability Services for Students www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices

If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or a special accommodation in this class or any other class, please call Disability Services at (269) 387-2116 or visit them at Woodlawn Place at 2210 Wilbur Ave. Please don't hesitate to speak with me about ways to meet your needs or offering necessary accommodations.

Additionally, I am more than happy to discuss ways that this course could better meet any student's needs, and encourage anyone who is struggling for any reason to contact me. I will do my very best to accommodate all students who express their concern in a respectful way.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

ENGL 3830 is an exploration of human and literary values in the best of children's works for preadolescents. Emphasis is on critical sensitivity and techniques necessary for interpreting and evaluating works representative of the major forms of children's literature for the older reader. Discussion will focus on narrative forms and on how the more experienced reader comes to prose and poetry. Novels will be explored both in terms of literary structure and content and in terms of what makes a piece of literature work for children. Genres such as historical fiction, realistic fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, and survival literature will be considered. Ever growing complexity in structure and content will be evaluated as they relate to child's biological, psychological, and mental development, and in the context of cultural and historical change. How media influence literature will be explored as well as the changing population of child-readers and what that means for book production.