

English 405

Cheryl Torsney, ENGL 405, Fall 2005

ENGL 405W, Fiction for Adolescents, Fall 2005

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This course will examine the range of fiction written for adolescents and consider the themes and rhetorical patterns available to adolescent readers. After taking this course students will be able to use contemporary literary theories to understand the works under consideration as well as other works written for an adolescent audience. Moreover, they will be able to write clearly, trenchantly, and insightfully about adolescent fiction; and to discuss current issues in adolescent fiction using the contexts of literary theory and cultural history.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. 1885; New York: Dover, 1994. 0486280616

Voigt, Cynthia. *Homecoming*. 1981; New York: Aladdin, 2003. 0689863616

Creech, Sharon. *Love that Dog*. New York: Scholastic, 2003. 0439569869

Hesse, Karen. *Out of the Dust*. New York: Scholastic, 1997. 0590371258

Paulsen, Gary. *Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered*. New York: Harcourt, 1993. 0 152928774

Ware, Cheryl. *Flea Circus Summer*. New York: Harper-Trophy, 1998. 03080729393

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. 1951; New York: Little Brown, 1991. 0316769487

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. 1982; New York: Pocket, 1985. 0671727796

Makler, Carolyn. *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Round Things*. New York: Candlewick, 2003. 0744590779

Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. New York: Random/Yearling, 1998. 0440414806

Sebold, Alice. *The Lovely Bones*. New York: Back Bay, 2003. 0316168815

Mark Haddon. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. New York: Vintage. 2004.
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SECONDARY SOURCES (recommended)

Clark, Beverly Lyon. *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2003.

Clark, Beverly Lyon, and Margaret Higonnet. *Girls, Boys, Books, Toys: Gender in Children's Literature and Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999.

Egoff, Sheila, et al. *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1996.

Hourihan, Margery. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Hunt, Peter, ed. *Understanding Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Inness, Sherrie A. *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

Jenkins, Henry. *The Children's Culture Reader*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

May, Jill P. *Children's Literature and Critical Theory*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995.

Smith, Joseph H., and William Kerrigan, ed. *Opening Texts: Psychoanalysis and the Culture of the Child*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985.

Journals (available on-line through Project Muse)

Children's Literature

The Lion and the Unicorn

Websites

Kay Vandergrift's special interest website: <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/>

Fairrosa's Cyberlibrary of Children's Literature: <http://www.fairrosa.info/cl.authors.html>

The Alan Review: <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/alan-review.html>

Children's Literature in Education: <http://www.kluweronline.com/issn/0045-6713>

The Horn Book and the Horn Book Guide: <http://www.hbook.com>

University Policy Statements:

Social Justice

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

WVU's Attendance Policy

If a student is absent from class for any reason, that student is responsible for all work that is missed. Absences may jeopardize the student's grade in that class or possibly the ability to continue in that class.

Torsney's Attendance Policy Statement:

I take attendance. This class meets only once a week, the equivalent of three class meetings for a MWF class or two class meetings for a TTh class; therefore, a student may miss only one class without repercussions. For each class a student misses after the first, I will lower the final grade by one letter grade.

REQUIREMENTS

This is a “W” course, which means that more than 20 pages of writing are required. You will have the opportunity to revise the Connections papers and the secondary source critique for a higher grade. To earn a higher grade, however, the writing will need to have been revised, not merely corrected and edited.

Five-page Connections paper on five of the six pairs of texts (10% each) 50%

Take-home final examination 20%

Group presentation (10% oral, 10% written) 20%

Secondary source critique 10%

CONNECTIONS PAPERS

These papers, due throughout the semester, should be thoughtful responses to the works under discussion. You may refer to other works, including cinematic ones; however, your papers should focus on a connection you have drawn between the paired texts. Essays should have a thesis and use textual evidence to support your conclusions.

TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION

The take-home final will require you to produce two short 3-5 page essays synthesizing the material from the course and from the presentations. You will be permitted to use any books and information available to you to respond, in analytic essay form, to the questions posed.

GROUP PRESENTATION

The group presentation should reflect a semester's work on a particular subject. It will be a collaborative effort and I will require progress updates throughout the semester. Group members will be responsible for investigating the topic at hand and dividing up duties appropriately. The group project will undoubtedly require additional reading, viewing, and research. Each group will have a complete class period reserved for its presentation. Each member of the group will receive the same grade for its oral presentation. Each group member will also hand in a 3-page report on his or her specific topic.

SECONDARY SOURCE CRITIQUE

Each student is required to turn in a three-five page secondary source review to demonstrate critical thinking and writing skills. The source may be a recent book on children's/adolescent

literature (no more than five years old) or a substantial essay in a reputable scholarly journal, e.g., *The Lion and the Unicorn* or *Children's Literature*.

GROUND RULES

1. I will not accept late papers.
2. There is no extra-credit work available.
3. Students will arrive on time, prepared to work, i.e., with text(s), paper, and pen in hand.
4. All out-of-class work will be double-spaced, using MLA style.
5. Students will show their classmates and the instructor the respect they demand for themselves.
6. Students who plagiarize, intentionally or not, will fail the class. I will take all action necessary for a formal reprimand and possible dismissal from the university.
7. Students will adhere to all policies.

Group presentation ideas:

- Adolescents and sci-fi: fiction and film (e.g., *Star Wars*, *RoboCop*, etc.)
- Series popularity: From the *Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* to the *Baby-Sitters Club*
- The serial world of adolescent readers: *YM*, *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, comic books, etc.
- Adolescent fiction on television: *The Wonder Years*, *My So Called Life*, *Saved by the Bell*, *Degrassi*, *It's So Raven*, *Buffy: Vampire Slayer*, etc.
- Marketing fiction to adolescents: writing for adolescents, awards, and publishing
- The serious stuff: AIDS, sexual abuse, etc. in adolescent fiction
- School: its history in adolescent fiction
- Ecological sensibility in adolescent fiction

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

August 25 Introduction; writing activity

September 1 Theory and "Patty's Patchwork"

September 8 *The Boy Book* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

September 15 *The Girl Book* and *Homecoming*

September 16 *First Connections* paper due

September 22 Fiction and Poetry: *Love that Dog* and *Out of the Dust*

September 23 Second Connections paper due

September 29 Fiction and Humor, *Harris and Me*

September 30 Third Connections paper due

October 6 *Flea Circus Summer*

October 7 Secondary source critique due

October 13 Guest lecture, Susan Jennings Lantz

October 20 Censorship, *The Catcher in the Rye*

October 27 *The Color Purple*

October 28 Fourth Connections paper due

November 3 Genre and the post-modern, *The Earth*

November 10 *Holes*

November 11 Fifth Connections paper due

November 17 The problem novel, *The Lovely Bones*

December 1 *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

December 2 Sixth Connections paper due

December 8 Presentations

Take-home exams due in 201 Stewart Hall, Tuesday, December 6, at 4:45 pm.