

Dr. Kenneth Kidd  
LIT 4331 Children's Literature  
Spring 2011, MWF 6

Office: TUR 4103  
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Hours: MF 7&8

## *Children's Literature*

This syllabus also posted here: <http://grove.ufl.edu/~kbkidd/> and on the eLearning portal.

### **Required Texts**

John Bellairs, *The House with a Clock in Its Walls*  
Edward Bloor, *Tangerine*  
Joseph Bruchac, *Skeleton Man*  
Christopher Paul Curtis, *Elijah of Buxton*  
Sharon Draper, *Out of My Mind*  
Russell Freedman, *Lincoln: A Photobiography*  
Helen Frost, *Diamond Willow*  
Mordicai Gerstein, *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*  
Karen Hesse, *Out of the Dust*  
Emily Jenkins, *Toys Go Out*  
David Levithan and John Green, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*  
Julia Mickenberg and Phil Nel, *Tales for Little Rebels*  
Sarah Pennypacker and Marla Frazee, *Clementine*  
David Small, *Stitches*  
Rebecca Stead, *When You Reach Me*  
Gene Yang, *Prime Baby*

Where possible, I'd like for you to use the editions I ordered so that we'll be referring to the same pages, but if you already own other editions, or if you can find them cheaper elsewhere, that's fine.

All books have been ordered by the university bookstore (Follett) in the Union.

There are also a few readings on e-reserves, under LIT 4331/Kidd. Go to <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/> and follow the prompts. \*\*Please bring these readings to class on the day we're discussing them (paper or electronic form), or be able to recall in detail.

You may use eLearning in Sakai for long essay (not memo) submission and return (optional). Go to <https://elearning2courses.ufl.edu/>

### **Overview**

This course surveys children's literature from its inception as a genre (or set of genres) to its present interdisciplinary forms. It has two major objectives: 1) to review the rich history and changing incarnations of children's literature; 2) to explore the ideologies of childhood and children's literary culture from a variety of critical/theoretical perspectives. Do not assume that "childhood" and "children's literature" are consistent or self-explanatory terms – quite the contrary.

We will be interdisciplinary and eclectic in our approach. Because of other classes running concurrently, I've opted to emphasize twentieth-century material. You are welcome to cover other material in your written work where applicable. Class format will emphasize discussion, so arrive ready to participate. Because of the class size we have the opportunity to get to know one another and discuss the readings in detail. I will lecture when appropriate, and you are responsible for that information. You are always responsible for the reading material, even if we do not discuss it in class. Sometimes I will discuss the readings in detail, but sometimes I will assume you've read and remembered it, and will provide you with additional information, so be prepared.

### **Attendance Policy**

Your participation is vital, and attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss three class sessions without excuse. For each subsequent missed class without a doctor's note I reserve the right to reduce your final course grade one-half of a letter grade. If you are not here when I take attendance -- usually at the beginning of class, but sometimes at the end -- you will be counted absent. If you are late, you will be marked absent. If you have attendance challenges, or are often late, please do not sign up for this class.

### **Academic Honesty**

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1\_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate classroom accommodations. The professional employees at the Disability Resource Program serve as full-time advocates for students with disabilities ensuring students have physical and programmatic access to all college programs. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

### **Harassment**

It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/> and <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/harassment.htm>

## Electronic Media

You may bring a laptop, ebook reader, or tablet to class for the purpose of note-taking and reviewing texts and assigned articles. If you plan to use a laptop regularly, you must sit near the front of the classroom. Please do not surf the web, check email, check Facebook, etc. If I discover such activity happening you will be forced back into the dark ages of traditional print. Please put your cell phones on silent. NO TEXTING. Refraining from such will build character.

## Assignments and Grading

No late work accepted.

Memos. You will write 5 reading responses or memos of 1-2 s-s., typed pages each. The memo is a short meditation on the assigned reading. You should offer a response to the book as a whole; don't turn in a memo if you haven't finished the assignment for that day. You may address a number of issues or focus more in-depth on one or two; just be as specific as you can, and support your responses with examples and details from the text.

I do not expect you to have a thorough interpretation, but your memo should offer some kind of evaluation or analysis. In other words, it should be more than simply random or unconnected thoughts about the work. Focus on the text as a text, and on the author's writing or plot strategies – in other words, get beyond your personal reactions, and try also to get beyond responses to characters as people. If you like, you may make use of outside readings (biographical sketches, scholarly articles, websites, etc.). This assignment is designed to stimulate class discussion, and to help you remember the texts and generate paper ideas.

You may choose which texts to write about, but you must turn in your memo in class on the first day we discuss the text about which you are writing. No exceptions. No electronic submissions.

You may also write memos on any or all Parts of *Tales for Little Rebels*. If you choose to do this, you need to reflect on the whole section, but you can concentrate on a few texts.

I will grade each memo and average the grades with any quizzes that might be given.

Quizzes. There may be unannounced quizzes which you may not make up unless you can provide documentation of illness or emergency. These quizzes will usually consist of a few short questions about the reading that you can answer in sentence or so.

Essay 1. Reading Autoethnography. Why, what, when, and how do you read? Did reading play a formative role in your development as a child or teenager? Have reading and writing been therapeutic, helping you address personal and/or social issues? To what genres are you typically drawn -- science fiction, comic books, mystery, romance -- and why? Do you prefer fiction or

non-fiction? Have your tastes changed? What might account for such shifts? Do you read for pleasure, knowledge, or distraction?

I don't usually ask students to write personal essays, and I do not expect this essay to be confessional in the modern talk-show sense. This is an exercise in reconstruction and speculation; you are both the ethnographer and the subject. Write a 5 double-spaced pp. analysis of your past and current reading practices. Attempt to organize your observations around themes or periods of your life. I'm particularly interested in your childhood reading habits, but if they don't seem that crucial, that's fine. Obviously you can't address all of the above questions, so just answer the ones that seem useful. You are welcome to experiment with format, as long as you chronicle your history as a reader in some accessible way. Try to emphasize one or two particularly significant experiences -- I call these literacy anecdotes. Be prepared to discuss this history in class (I will NOT ask you to reveal personal information).

Essay 2. Option 1. Write a 5-7 double-spaced pp. analysis of a children's culture "form," a product or production that isn't traditionally literary/textual -- such as a film, tv show, musical album or video, video game, toy, or playspace. The only stipulation is that the form you choose should be intended or designed for children. Treat that "text" as you would a traditional narrative; evaluate its structure, emphases, themes, ideological assumptions and effects. Use any methodology that's helpful. Be sure to organize your analysis around a central thesis. You should use at least one refereed scholarly source; provide a Works Cited page (MLA style).

Option 2. Write a 5-7 double-spaced pp. analysis of a children's or young adult book that has won a major book award such as the Newbery Medal or the Coretta Scott King Award. There are many awards from which to choose -- there are categories for nonfiction, for social justice writing, for fantasy and science fiction, etc. Consult the website for the American Library Association for book lists and information about criteria and the selection process. Your paper must discuss the text *in relation to the award category*, perhaps in terms of how it does or doesn't fit with the criteria, or in terms of the book's general alignment with preferred sorts of topics and styles. You must choose something we are not reading in class.

Essay 3. Open Topic. Write a 7-10 double-spaced pp. analysis of any aspect of children's literature or literary culture. You may return to materials we've worked with in class, but if you do, you must go beyond what we talked about collectively to offer a different line of inquiry. Ask me if you're not sure. It's up to you to choose a manageable topic, and to develop a thesis that organizes your discussion. You must use at least two literary works, and two refereed scholarly sources; please provide a Works Cited page (MLA style). Don't forget about the Baldwin, which is a great resource for historical projects!

Finally, you will receive a grade for active participation, which means coming to class regularly and on time, paying attention, asking questions, and contributing to discussion.

Essay 1	15%
Essay 2	20%
Essay 3	30%
Memos and quizzes	25%
Active Participation	10%

## Schedule

### January

- 5 Introductions, K. Kidd.  
 7 Introducing The Center for Children’s Literature and Culture. Megan Leroy.  
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 10 Introducing the Baldwin Library. Lisa Dusenberry.  
 12 History of Children’s Literature (lecture). “Outline of the History.”  
 14 History of Children’s Literature (lecture). Kidd, “Prizing Children’s Literature.”  
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 17 MLK Day; no class.  
 19 Mickenberg and Nel, *Tales for Little Rebels*: Zipes, “Forword”; M&N, “Introduction”;  
 Part 1.  
 21 *Tales*, Part 2.  
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 24 *Tales*, Part 3.  
 26 *Tales*, Part 4.  
 28 *Tales*, Part 5. Essay 1 due.  
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 31 *Tales*, Part 6.

### February

- 2 *Tales*, Part 7.  
 4 *Tales*, Part 8.  
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 7 **The Ghosts of History.** Curtis, *Elijah of Buxton*. Fleming, review of two books on the  
 gothic and children’s literature.  
 9 Curtis continued.  
 11 Hesse, *Out of the Dust*.  
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 14 Hesse continued.  
 16 Freedman, *Lincoln: A Photobiography*.  
 18 Freedman continued. Nel, “Obamafiction for Children.”  
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 21 Bellairs, *The House with a Clock in Its Walls*.  
 23 Bellairs continued; Bruchac, *Skeleton Man*.  
 25 Bellairs and Bruchac continued.  
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 28 **Realism.** Jenkins, *Toys Go Out*. Kuznets, “Toys: Their First Ten Thousand Years.”

### March

- 2 Jenkins continued; Pennypacker and Frazee, *Clementine*.  
 4 Jenkins and P/F continued. Martin, ““He’s So Sweet”: *Bon-Bon Buddy*, Literary Child of  
 Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes.” Essay 2 due.  
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7-11 *Spring Break.*

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14 Bloor, *Tangerine*.

16 Bloor continued; Frost, *Diamond Willow*.

18 No class. ICFA.

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21 Stead, *When You Reach Me*.

23 Stead continued.

25 Draper, *Out of My Mind*.

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28 Draper continued. McRuer, "Introduction: Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence."

30 Levithan and Green, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*.

## April

1 Levithan and Green continued.

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4 Gordicai, *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*.

6 Yang, *Prime Baby*.

8 Yang continued.

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11 Small, *Stitches*.

13 Small continued.

15 Lecture on picturebooks for beginners, dummies, and other adults.

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18 course summary; evaluations.

20 reports on final projects. Essay 3 due.