

Dr. Kenneth Kidd  
LIT 4331, Section 13FF  
TUR 1101, T 9-11  
Fall 2018

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Office: TUR 4370  
Hours: W 6-8  
& by appointment

## *Children's Literature*

Our syllabus will also be posted in Canvas and at [kbkidd.org](http://kbkidd.org).

### **Texts**

Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty* (1877)  
Eric P. Kelley, *The Trumpeter of Krakow* (1928)  
Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking* (1948)  
John Bellairs, *The House with a Clock in Its Walls* (1973)  
Russell Freedman, *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (1987)  
Virginia Hamilton, *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971)  
Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992)  
Joseph Bruchac, *Skeleton Man* (2001)  
Janne Teller, *Nothing* (2012)  
Cece Bell, *El Deafo* (2014)  
Alex Gino, *George* (2015)  
Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2016)  
M. T. Anderson, *Landscape with Invisible Hand* (2017)

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

There are also a few readings on e-reserves, under LIT 4331/Kidd. Go to <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/> and follow the prompts. Have these readings accessible on the day we're discussing them.

We will use Canvas for essay/project submission and return: <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

### **Overview**

This course considers Anglophone and mostly American children's literature from its beginnings to its current forms. We will use literary theory and criticism to illuminate children's literature (and vice versa) and to think about how texts are circulated and institutionalized. We will sample from a number of periods and genres, including picture books and graphic novels. Requirements include response papers, regular participation, and several longer essays. The course will be conducted as a seminar and active involvement is crucial.

### **Attendance**

Your participation is vital, and attendance is mandatory. You may miss one class session (i.e. one week) without explanation. 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 late, you will be marked absent.

## 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. For more information about Student Disability Services, see:

<http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

## Electronic Media

You may bring a laptop, eBook reader, or tablet to class for the purpose of note-taking and reviewing assigned articles. Please do not surf the web, check email, check Facebook, etc. When you do these things, you are not giving the class your full attention. Phones on silent. NO TEXTING.

## Assignments and Grading

No late work accepted.

4 memos, 1 précis, 2 essays.

**Memos.** Compose four reading responses of 1-2 s-s., typed pages each. The memo is a short meditation on the assigned reading for that day – so your memo is always dealing with work we are about to discuss together. You should offer a response to the material as a whole; don't turn in a memo if you haven't finished the assignment. This assignment is designed to help you think about the material and stimulate class discussion, and perhaps to generate paper ideas. You may choose which texts to write about, but may only turn in one memo per class session.

At least two must be narrative memos – old-fashioned narrative things. 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 or thoughtful reflection. In other words, it should be more than simply random or unconnected thoughts about the work. Try to focus some 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 do all the memos this way.

If you like, you may also create up to two **alternative memos**, in the form of a meme-o or short work of fanfiction. If a **meme-o**: create a meme that captures/reflects the text in question, perhaps a central relationship or theme or dynamic. The meme should feature the image, adapted as necessary, along with an appropriate caption. You must also include at least one paragraph of explanation or analysis. If **fanfiction**: rewrite a key scene, or write a new short chapter to be included in the work. Don't forget the appropriate classification tags (genre, pairings, etc.)! Here again, a paragraph of explanation should accompany the creative work.

Memos will be submitted electronically to Canvas and are due by midnight (ahead) of the class day in question – so, “Monday at midnight” which is really 12 am of the Tuesday session. I want time to skim these before class.

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.** Write a 5 double-spaced pp. analysis of your past and current reading practices. 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? This is an exercise in reconstruction and speculation; you are both the ethnographer and the subject. You might 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.

**Précis.** Compose a 1-2 s-s pp. précis of a scholarly article or book chapter addressing some aspect of children's literature or its studies. I would recommend writing your précis on the article (or one of the articles) you plan to use for Essay 2. There are a number of journals you can consult, among them *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Children's Literature*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. If a book chapter, the book should be an academic or scholarly book; ask me if unsure. This assignment requires to you not only to summarize, but also to analyze method and rhetorical strategy. Refer to specific page numbers (even when paraphrasing) so that we can locate the ideas you're summarizing and discussing. Provide a link to your article or chapter, or a photocopy if it's not available electronically.

Your précis should have four sections:

- 1) First *summarize* the article or book chapter in 4-8 sentences. Explain the author's overall focus and the main claims of the piece.
- 2) Describe that author's critical *methodology*: Is the essay informed by a feminist sensibility? Does the writer emphasize psychological themes, or provide useful historical contextualizations? Is there any attention to socioeconomic issues? Or is it a more traditional "close reading" of a text's language and plot? Often writers rely on a variety of methodologies: if so, what approach seems dominant, and does that primary approach effectively organize secondary ones? If the writer's method doesn't seem easy to categorize, just describe that method -- how does s/he approach the topic?

- 3) Offer an analysis of the essay's *rhetorical strategy* - the way it's designed to affect the audience: how is it organized, and why? Is it effective; who is the audience? Describe the style.
- 4) Speculate about the *implications* of the information, both for our understanding of the text and beyond. What's useful about the essay? How could you expand it? What questions does it raise about the story, author, reader, the state of adolescent literature/publishing, etc.? What, in other words, is the piece good for? You may also want to comment on what's ignored or devalued in the analysis: is the writer overlooking something which complicates (or even undermines) her argument? Does his or her commitment to a particular critical methodology rule out other interpretations?

**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, play space, or theme park ride/attraction. 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.** Open topic. Write a 5-7 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. It's up to you to choose a manageable topic, and to develop a thesis that organizes your discussion. You must use at least one refereed source; please provide a Works Cited page (MLA style).

Active Participation. 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. *You must do all of these things in order to receive an A for participation.* If you are habitually late, or over attend your electronic devices, you will not receive an A for participation.

Essay 1	20%
Précis	20%
Essay 2	30%
Memos and quizzes	20%
Active Participation	10%

## Schedule

### August

28 Introductions. History of children's literature mini-lecture.

### September

- 4 Sewell, *Black Beauty*. Fraustino, "The Rights and Wrongs of Anthropomorphism in Picture Books."  
 11 Kelley, *The Trumpeter of Krakow*. Kidd, "Prizing Children's Literature: The Case of Newbery Gold."  
 18 Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking*. Nikolajeva, "A Misunderstood Tragedy: Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* Books." Recommended: O'Sullivan, "World Literature and Children's Classics."  
 25 Hamilton, *The Planet of Junior Brown*. **Essay 1 (Autoethnography) due.**

### October

- 2 Bellairs, *The House with a Clock in Its Walls*.  
 9 Freedman, *Lincoln: A Photobiography*.  
 16 Scieszka and Smith, *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. Sanders, "'Blatantly Coming Back': The Arbitrary Line Between Child/Adult and Fantasy/Real in *Un London*."  
 23 Bruchac, *Skeleton Man*.  
 30 Teller, *Nothing*. Wannamaker, "A 'Heap of Meaning': Objects, Aesthetics and the Posthuman Child in Janne Teller's Y.A. Novel *Nothing*."

### November

- 6 Bell, *El Deafo*. McRuer, excerpt from intro to *Crip Theory*.  
 13 Gino, *George*. **Précis due.**  
 20 No class.  
 27 Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming*.

### December

- 4 Anderson, *Landscape with Invisible Hand*. Fitzsimmons, "The Harry Potter Effect." **Essay 2 due.**