

Children's Literature

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Course Description

This course surveys the field of children's literature and examines the role of storytelling in the development of personhood. By reading folk and fairy tales, novels and non-fictional texts, we will understand how stories both teach and delight—emphasizing challenges depicted and lessons intended to be learned. We will approach a wide range of traditions, learning how the construction of childhood is inextricably bound up with particular cultural contexts. At the same time, we will analyze symbolic and mythical patterns common to the folk tale and myth and found in contemporary children's literature. We will study diverse representations of children and consider utopian, dystopian, fantastic, realist, anthropomorphic, and mythical worlds. Requirements for this class include short papers, a final research project, and active class participation.

Learning Goals

1. Define children's literature as a special category of literary study partly defined by its proposed audience
2. Identify characteristics of the various "genres" of children's literature
3. Identify and discuss the tension between literature as entertainment and instruction
4. Become proficient in identifying critical issues and trends in children's literature
5. Learn different critical approaches to evaluating children's literature

Required Readings

- Maria Tatar (ed.), *The Classic Fairy Tales*
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*
- Salmon Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*
- Louise Erdrich, *The Birchbark House*
- Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, *Popo and Fifina*
- Julius Lester, *To Be a Slave*

Course Requirements

10%	Attendance and participation
30%	Three short papers (750 words)
60%	Six-page research project (1250-1400 words)

Attendance & Participation

I take attendance promptly at the beginning of class. Each student will begin the semester with 115% credit for attendance. This means that if



you attend every session of the semester, the extra 15% will boost your overall attendance grade. Each absence after that will continue to reduce your raw attendance score in 15% increments. Lateness will also reduce your attendance score. If you arrive less than 10 minutes late, I will deduct 5%; if you arrive more than 15 minutes late, I will mark you absent. Six absences will result in immediate failure.

0 absences:	115%
1 absence:	100%
2 absences:	85%
3 absences:	70%
4 absences:	55%
5 absences:	40%
6 absences:	Immediate failure

It is essential that you read (and watch) the assigned material before class so that you are able to participate in our discussions. Participation demonstrate that you are an attentive and interested reader of the assignments; that you have read and taken notes; and are actively developing your oral skills.

Course Policies

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

- No electronic devices, please. This includes tablets, laptops, e-readers, cell phones, or music players. Use an old-fashioned pen and pad for taking notes.
- No eating in class, please. You may bring non-alcoholic drinks to class.
- Be thoughtful and courteous to your colleagues during class discussions.
- Always bring the assigned reading/s to class.

LATE WORK

I do not accept late assignments of any kind, nor will I accept papers over email.

EXCUSED ABSENCES & ATHLETES

In order for an absence to be excused for participating in an athletic event, I must hear from your coach and you must write a 300-word response paper on the readings assigned for the missed session. You must give me a printed copy at the beginning of the following class session.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Montana Tech regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. Moreover, I am committed to enforcing academic integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to Montana Tech Integrity Procedures. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, come speak with me.

DISABILITY

All persons with disabilities have the right to participate fully and equally in the programs and services of Montana Tech. Montana Tech is committed to ensuring full and equal participation by eliminating barriers and making the appropriate accommodations that allow persons with disabilities to have equal opportunity in all aspects of campus life.

Student Life Counselors are the Montana Tech Disability Service Coordinators. For further information about Disability Services, please refer to the Disability Services Website—http://www.mtech.edu/student_life/disability/

Course Plan

T= The Norton Anthology, edited by Maria Tatar

BB= Blackboard

Week 1 – What is Children’s Literature? (What are Children? What is Literature?)

- Introduction to Course
- Student Questionnaire
- Discussion of genre: What is children’s literature?
- The construction of childhood; the child soldier; the colonized child; the abolition of childhood.

Week 2 – Fairy Tale and the Construction of Childhood

- Introduction to the fairy tale
- C.S. Lewis, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children”
- Shavit, “The Concept of Childhood and Children’s Folktales...” (T)

Week 3 – Civilization and Wilderness in Fairy Tales

- Little Red Riding Hood – Introduction; Perrault; Brothers Grimm; Italo Calvino; Roald Dahl (T)
- Tatar’s introduction to “The Classic Fairy Tales”
- Jack Zipes, “Setting Standards for Civilization Through Fairy Tales” (BB)

Week 4 – Feminism and Fairy Tales

- Beauty and the Beast – Introduction; de Beaumont; Grimm; Angela Carter; Urashima the Fisherman
- Rowe, “To Spin a Yarn: The Female Voice In Folklore and Fairy Tale” (T)
- Ovid, “The Story of Philomela” (BB)
- Snow White – Introduction; Grimm; Giambattista Basile; Sexton (T)
- Gilbert and Gubar, “Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother” (T)

Week 5 – Psychoanalysis and Fairy Tales

- Hansel and Gretel – Introduction; Grimm (2); Perrault; Joseph Jacobs “The Rose Tree” (T)
- Bruno Bettelheim, “Hansel and Gretel” (T)
- Maria Tatar, “Sex and Violence: The Hard Core of Fairy Tales” (T)
- Sigmund Freud, excerpt from *Interpretation of Dreams* (BB)

Week 6 – Modernism and Fairy Tales

- Hans Christian Andersen
- Introduction; The Little Mermaid; The Little Match Girl; The Red Shoes (T)
- Jack Zipes, “Hans Anderson and the Discourse of the Dominated”

Week 7 - The Golden Age of Children's Literature: Imperial Children

- *Alice in Wonderland*

Week 8 – The Golden Age of Children's Literature: Imperial Children

- *Alice in Wonderland*
- M. Daphne Kutzer, "Setting Sail," in *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books* (BB)

Week 9 – The Golden Age of Children's Literature: Imperial Children

- *Treasure Island*

Week 10 – Children, Power, and Politics: African-American Children's Literature

- *Popo and Fifina*
- W.E.B. Dubois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (BB)
- Langston Hughes, "People Without Shoes" (BB)
- Violet J. Harris, "African American Children's Literature: The First One Hundred Years" (BB)

Week 11 – Children, Power, and Politics: African-American Children's Literature

- *To Be a Slave*

Week 12 – Intertextuality in Children's Literature

- *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*
- Excerpt from Farid ud-Din Attar's *Conference of Birds* (BB)

Week 13 – Intertextuality in Children's Literature

- *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

Week 14 – Rewriting Trauma

- *The Birchbark House*
- Excerpts from *Black Elk Speaks* (BB)

Week 15 – Rewriting Trauma

- *The Birchbark House*