

**English 305**  
**Children's Literature**  
**Dr. Susan Louise Stewart**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Department of Literature and Languages**  
**Fall, 2012**

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**Office Hours:**

Tues. 10-11 & 3-5, Thurs. 9-11, or by appointment. I will generally respond to e-mails within 24 hours of receiving them Monday-Thursday. If I receive your e-mail early enough on Friday, I'll try to respond that day. I sometimes (frequently!) forget I have a virtual office; thus, I would prefer that you contact me via e-mail.

**Catalog Description:**

A survey of children's literature. The course includes various authors and illustrators in such genres as the oral tradition, fantasy, realistic and historical fiction, poetry, and the picture book. Prerequisite Eng 1302.

**Course Description:**

During this course, we will be exploring a number of children's novels and texts through various genres. This includes contemporary, classic, historical, and realistic fiction, fantasy, picture books, and folk and fairy tales. Whew. That's a long list, but ultimately, this course has several goals. You will become familiar with the genres I've listed above, but together, we'll also be exploring various ideas conveyed in the texts, the historical development and context of children's fiction, how novels for young readers have changed and/or stayed the same, and the intersections among language, theory, politics, ideology, and children's fiction. Most important, however, we will be examining the ideologies embedded in the texts as well as the ideologies that guide our culture, particularly in terms of children and the literature they read. We'll also be tackling several questions throughout the semester. What IS children's literature anyway? What is its purpose, how does it function, and why? Is it successful in its function? What are adult expectations of children as set forth in these texts? What might these novels say about our culture? Why study children's literature in the first place? As far as I know, there aren't any definitive answers to the above questions, but that doesn't mean they aren't worthy of our attention. The fact is, I'm not here to answer the above questions; I'm here to ask them, identify problems, encourage you to ask questions and identify problems, and discuss them with you. Ultimately, I want you, in the time we have, to become as informed as possible regarding children's literature. This will hopefully allow you to come to an informed, aware, and sensitive approach to children's literature, and to understand the various concerns and assumptions surrounding literature for young readers.

### **A Few Items You Should Know about This Course:**

It will be tempting to turn discussions toward what children will or will not like or understand and what is appropriate and inappropriate. I ask that you refrain from those kinds of observations for a couple of reasons, which I've identified below. I've also included other items to keep in mind during the class.

1. The purpose of the class is to think about and discuss children's literature just as you would any other literature—Shakespeare, Woolf, Alcott, Steinbeck, and others. Children's literature deserves that kind of status, don't you think? If you have any doubts, I suspect I'll convince you by the end of the semester that children's literature is indeed complex. I doubt that you discuss whether or not high school students, who are assigned to read Shakespeare, Woolf, Alcott, and so on, will understand those texts or not in your American or Brit lit classes. That's not the point of those classes, even if you are seeking certification and thinking of how to teach those authors and their texts. Rather, the point is to study those texts as literature. The same goes for children's literature.
2. You already know how to talk about what is or is not appropriate. This class is intended to help you with concepts you don't know how to discuss or have never heard of.
3. We're reading these texts as adults, not how we think children read them. Don't forget who writes these novels: adults ☺.
4. Some of you might have children and will thus use them as the basis of what children will/won't understand or like. But remember, those are your children; we can't base observations on one or two children. Researchers spend a great deal of time studying children; they draw from pools of multiple children sometimes over multiple years. For instance, Robert Cole, author of *The Political Life of Children*, engaged in a longitudinal study of children (he followed the same children over several years) in multiple countries including the U.S., Ireland, South Africa, Brazil, and more. He discovered that children are very political. To base a conclusion on what a few children do or think is misleading and not really helpful. Additionally, for most instances you provide regarding what children will like, I can show you they won't like it; for most instances you show me what children won't like, I can provide evidence that they will like it. Remember, for the purposes of this class, there is no such thing as a universal child. They are all different, even though our school systems frequently try to treat them as though they are the same.
5. Try to avoid indicating that I or anyone else is "digging too deeply." If it's there, it's there. I would agree that one can go too far, and I can promise that I'll probably push some boundaries, but if I can support my claims . . .

6. For the most part, avoid authorial intent. Even when authors say what they're doing, they sometimes lie. Gasp. But they're fiction writers. They're paid to engage in literary lying. Also, if you've heard of Freud and the unconscious, you'll know that things go on in our heads that are difficult to explain and they come out in the oddest ways. You've heard of the Freudian slip, yes?

And never fear. You will indeed identify ways to teach texts. *Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* will be one such text in particular. And, you'll be learning about ways to discuss race. How to teach these books just won't be the focus of the class.

We will approach these texts in a multitude of ways, possibly including cultural and historical perspectives, which further includes approaches such as feminism, Marxism, whiteness and race studies, and cultural poetics. Ultimately, you will need to demonstrate your ability to read these texts closely, critically, creatively, intellectually, and theoretically.

### **Required Texts:**

Please note that the only requirement on any of the texts is that they be unabridged. Electronic (Kindle, Nook, etc.) and audible formats are also fine, though it will be nearly impossible to write an essay using an audible format.

Lowry, *The Giver*, 9780440237686

\*Bruchac, *Hidden Roots*, 0557711681

Curtis, *Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, 9780440414124

Almond, David, *Skellig*, 9780440416029

Yang, *American Born Chinese*

DiCamillo, *Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, 9780763647834

Spinelli, *Maniac Magee*, 9780316809061

\*The bookstore probably won't have *Hidden Roots*. You can order it from amazon.com

([http://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Roots-Joseph-Bruchac/dp/0557711681/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1345665698&sr=8-1&keywords=hidden+roots](http://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Roots-Joseph-Bruchac/dp/0557711681/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1345665698&sr=8-1&keywords=hidden+roots)), and you can get the electronic version for \$3. You don't have to

have an electronic device like a Kindle or Nook to read it. You can read it on your computer.

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### **Course Goals/Objectives**

1. By the end of the semester, students will be to analyze and clearly articulate interpretations of the various meanings of the texts we read, with particular reference to relevant contexts and subtexts. "Texts" include written and spoken language, visual, pictorial, kinetic, multimodal, and in general "semiotic" artifacts. (Just about everything is a text—even your professor! The most successful students can generally "read" their professors). Ultimately, I want you to be able to read the assigned texts closely, critically, creatively, intellectually, and theoretically, and articulate that ability

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

To be successful in this class, students will:

1. Demonstrate their familiarity with the terminology identified in the class. This outcome will be assessed by one or more of the following: quizzes, exams, discussion boards or written analyses.
2. Demonstrate their ability to recognize, identify and communicate the role of ideology in children's texts. This outcome will be assessed by one or more of the following: quizzes, exams, discussion boards or written analyses.

### Assignments:

**Please note that assignments will be graded as follows:**

- ✚ Discussion Boards, 10 pts. each
- ✚ Reading quizzes (up to 20 pts. each)
- ✚ 4 Response Papers, 20 pts. each (a 5<sup>th</sup> response paper will be part of your final exam, which will be:
- ✚ Final Exam, Part 1 (response paper/*The Giver*) 20 pts., Part 2, 20 pts. (objective and short answer over *The Giver* and other texts assigned through the semester)

### Grading Scale:

90-100%=A; 80-89%=B; 70-79%=C; 60-69%=D; 59 and below=F

### Discussion Boards

Discussion Boards consist of two parts:

Part 1 is a 300-word (minimum) response to a prompt I post. I'm looking for discussion board posts that are substantive in content, intellectual, thought provoking, sophisticated (both in content and stylistically), state more than the obvious, and meet the word requirement (or go beyond; meeting minimums can result in a minimum grade). Please write in complete sentences and proofread for errors.

Part 2 is a 200-word synthesis of what has been discussed on the discussion board. That is, what are some of the main ideas? Additionally, what did you think interesting? What had you not thought of before? What can you add?

**Response Papers:** Throughout the semester, you'll write analytical responses to four of the texts you read wherein you explore an idea or concept reflecting the nature of the course (a fifth response will be included in your final exam).

Responses are required of the following units:

Response 1, Picture Books or Folk and Fairy Tales

Response 2, *Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*.

You must write on **two** of the following for the remaining responses:

- *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*
- *American Born Chinese*
- *Maniac Magee*
- *Hidden Roots*

- *The Giver*

You will be writing a response paper to *Skellig* as part of your final exam. That will be your fifth response.

These responses are not exercises in personal responses (I hated this book; I loved this book); rather, I will give you a prompt to which you'll need to respond, or I will ask you to write a free response where you decide on an issue relative to the nature of the class. Unless otherwise specified, your responses should:

- Be a minimum of 700 words (that does not include the title, your name, the class and so on).
- Have an introduction wherein you state the idea, speculation, or question with which you're working; a body where you explore that idea, speculation, or question; a conclusion that gives your reader something to think about.
- Include quotations from the novel that advance/support your idea, speculation, or question (**please note that in order to receive full credit for response, quotations, page numbers where the quotations are found, and a works cited must be included**)
- Go beyond the obvious
- Avoid generalizations
- Be uploaded to eCollege dropbox.

The rubric for this assignment is located in eCollege document sharing.

### **Final Exam:**

The final exam will consist of 2 parts. The first part will be a response to *Skellig*. The response will be similar to those you have written throughout the semester. The second part will consist of a mixture of objective and short answers.

**Technology Requirements:** This is an on-line course and will be conducted through eCollege, which is available through myLeo: <https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu/login.aspx>. The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology in your web-enhanced course.

The following technology is required to be successful in this course.

- Internet connection – high speed recommended (not dial-up)
- Word Processor (Microsoft Office Word – 2003 or 2007)
- Access to University Library site
- Access to an Email

Additionally, the following hardware and software are necessary to use eCollege:

- Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, or 8.0).
- Courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

- It is strongly recommended that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the “myCourses” tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

**Communication and Support:** Texas A & M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you experience issues while taking your exams or at any other point, feel free to contact the support desk.

- ✚ Chat support: Click on “Live Support” on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.
- ✚ Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.
- ✚ Email: [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org) to initiate a support request with eCollege Technical Support Representative.
- ✚ Help: Click on the “Help” button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. How to submit to dropbox, How to post to discussions, etc...)

**Access, Navigation, and Log in Information:** This course will be utilizing eCollege to enhance the learning experience, eCollege is the Learning Management System used by Texas A & M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to <https://leo.tamuc-commerce.edu/login.aspx>. You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology services at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc-commerce.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc-commerce.edu).

### **Course Specific Policies:**

#### **Late Papers:**

Stick to the deadlines, for I don't accept late papers or discussion boards. It's an on-line course. You can work ahead of time. If you can't complete the required assignments, consider taking the course when you can.

#### **General Academic Honesty Policy:**

First, students should know that almost every semester, at least one student in my class will plagiarize. Please be careful. Students are responsible for indicating when they have used specific words, sentences, or paragraphs, which belong to other writers. These words, sentences, or paragraphs should be designated via quotation marks and in-text citations. Additionally, identify when using ideas from other sources. If using the exact wording of something read or if paraphrased, provide a specific citation indicating where the quoted material can be found. If in question, cite it, and indicate that you've cited it by using quotation marks and in-text citations. Think of it in these terms: knowledge is a commodity, especially in the academic community. If you had a brilliant idea, or a wonderful way with words, would you like it if someone used your idea or words without acknowledging you? In short, if I discover a paper (or any part of it) has been plagiarized, copied, or does not acknowledge sources, I will fail the paper, which will likely result in an F for the class. If you have questions, ask me, and I will help you. Further, according to the Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3], penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion.

## University-Specific Policies

### Virtual Etiquette:

“All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See current Student Guidebook)

Students are expected to be civil, polite, and accommodating to differences of opinion. University policy provides the means for dismissing students who do not meet these requirements, and I will take politeness very seriously. Be kind to each other and realize that because we can only read your words and emoticons and not your body language or facial expressions or hear the tone of your voice, misunderstandings can occur.

Also, please don't use weird fonts or use ALL CAPS unless you want to SHOUT (which is appropriate sometimes, but not very often).

### Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Gee Library, Room 132  
(903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 phone  
(903) 468-8148 fax

Email: [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)

## VERY TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Unit	To Do
1	Getting acquainted with class and each other
2	Writing Handbook
3	Ideology & Picture Books, Part 1
4	Ideology & Picture Books, Part 2
5	Folk and Fairy Tales, Part 1
6	Folk and Fairy Tales, Part 2
7	<i>Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>
8	Race Matters
9	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</i>
10	<i>Maniac Magee</i>
11	<i>American Born Chinese</i>
12	<i>Hidden Roots</i>
13	<i>The Giver</i>
14	<i>Skellig</i> . Finals Week Begins 5/7; Our final date TBA