

## English 3320: Literature for the Middle Grades

Fall 2015

MWF: Irby 304, 9 – 9:50 a.m.

***Instructor:*** Dr. Sonya Fritz

***E-mail:*** sfritz@uca.edu

***Office:*** Irby 317 C

***Office phone:*** 450-5127 (email is much more effective)

***Office Hours:*** M 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm, T 9:30-10:30 am and 3-4 pm, W 1-2 pm, R 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm, F 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm, and by appointment

### Course description

This class will be conducted as a survey of children's literature that is considered appropriate for grades 5-8, primarily in the English tradition. We will examine various types and genres of children's literature, including graphic novel, poetry, historical fiction, fantasy, adventure, and memoir.

Throughout the semester we will read a number of books together and analyze them in class, considering and discussing not only what pedagogical uses and socializing influences these books can have for children, but also analyzing them as rich works of literature. I challenge students to think of each book we read as a complex and sophisticated text so that they can learn to notice and understand the often-subtle differences between books that can shape their meanings and the impacts they have on children.

The goals of this course are to:

- improve our grasp of the complexities of literature for children in the middle grades by engaging in literary and cultural criticism as we read and analyze the texts selected
- consider how our chosen texts represent the child and the situation of childhood and how literature for children reflects the social or cultural contexts in which it was written
- develop critical thinking skills as we analyze the complex situations presented in literature and probe our texts for new meanings, both in class discussions and in writing assignments
- discuss issues of text selection for use in the middle-grades classroom, focusing primarily on the literature itself and its content rather than pedagogical methods. Students must keep in mind that this course, as an English rather than an Education course, is designed to benefit future teachers of children's literature by offering training **primarily** in literary analysis.

### Required texts and materials

- Holes*, Louis Sachar
- The Phantom Tollbooth*, Norton Juster
- The Graveyard Book*, Neil Gaiman

-*Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Patterson  
 -*Jane, the Fox, and Me*, Fanny Britt and Isabelle Arsenault  
 -*The Lions of Little Rock*, Kristin Levine  
 -*Brown Girl Dreaming*, Jacqueline Woodson,  
 - *Inside Out and Back Again*, Thannha Lai  
 -*Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, Jack Gantos  
 -*Trash*, Andy Mulligan

Our required reading for the course also includes online texts of which you will not have to purchase hard copies. I will post files of the texts on Blackboard for you to access.

You are also required to have:

- Access to a computer so that you can log on to our Blackboard shell and class blog for the course as necessary
- a UCA e-mail account that you check **daily** so that I can get in touch with you if necessary
- access to a good dictionary and a handbook with up-to-date information on MLA format to aid you in your writing assignments
- opinions and insights that you develop and voice in class. The success of this course depends in large part on its members' willingness to seriously and actively engage the material and participate in discussions.

## Policies

Attendance. Daily attendance will be taken in this class. You are allowed **three unexcused absences**. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the deduction of **five** percentage points from your final grade. Please use your three absences wisely—they are not intended for those days when you feel like sleeping in, but rather for days when you cannot come to class but your absence is not excused. Nine or more absences, excused or otherwise, provide grounds for the student to be dropped from the course.

You are responsible for providing evidence and/or appropriate documentation to substantiate excused absences. Excused absences can include illness requiring a doctor's visit, the serious illness of an immediate family member or illness of a dependent, the death of a relative, etc. Please direct any questions concerning what constitutes an excused absence to me. If you know in advance that you will miss a class due to an excused absence, you are responsible for informing me and making any necessary arrangements to make up class work.

Keep in mind that trips out of town for weddings or family vacations and children's school programs or ceremonies **are not** excused absences. Please also try to avoid scheduling routine medical check-ups, such as dental cleanings or yearly physicals, during class time—I will not excuse these absences.

It is important for all of us to respect one another's time and arrive promptly for class. Students who arrive to class after half of the class period (calculated by the duration of the class period in minutes) or more has passed will be counted absent. Students who arrive to class after attendance has been taken are responsible for checking with me after class to make sure their attendance has been recorded. Chronic tardiness will be penalized by counting each third tardy as an unexcused absence. Students should also come to class planning to stay for the duration of the period. An early departure from class will be recorded as a tardy and is subject to the same penalties.

If you are absent on the day of an exam, you are responsible for contacting me **as soon as possible** to schedule the make-up exam. If your absence is excusable, you are responsible for providing documentation to substantiate

this at the time of the make-up exam. Ten late points will be deducted from the exam grade if the absence is not excused (i.e., you overslept); I also reserve the right to refuse to allow a student with an unexcused absence to make up an exam. Five late points may also be deducted if your absence is excused but you do not contact me in a timely manner to schedule the make-up exam. Unless other arrangements have been made with me, any exam that is not made up within three weeks of the original exam date will receive a grade of zero (0).

Students who miss class are responsible for obtaining information regarding missed class notes, material, and assignments. It is my policy to email students information regarding missed class material **only** for excused absences and **only** when the student has sent a request via email specifying student name, course number and section, and class date(s) missed. I strongly recommend that students also talk with their classmates about what they have missed, as all I can offer students are any Power Point slides and/or handouts used during the class period.

Class preparedness. Students need to complete the assigned reading before class and bring assigned reading materials to class in order to better engage in discussion and class-work. Failure to bring the appropriate assigned reading materials to class and/or failure to demonstrate completion of the assigned reading through class discussion will result in an unexcused absence for that day's class. Unexcused absences accrued in this way are subject to all the penalties and consequences outlined in the attendance policy.

Classroom Behavior. Disruptive classroom behavior is defined as anything that would interfere with an instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program. All individuals and the opinions they express in class are to be treated with respect during class discussions. Students who are asked to leave class for disruptive behavior will be counted absent for that day.

Paper Format. Unless otherwise specified, **all** assignments, including homework, should be typed (letter-quality printing required) in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins and double-spaced on white bond paper, according to MLA guidelines. Documentation must be provided in MLA format.

Late Papers. Formal papers that are turned in late without an excused absence/absences are subject to a deduction of 5 points per day that they are late.

Other late work. In-class assignments are not accepted late except in the case of an excused absence.

Appropriate Attribution. Any assignment that fails to include clear and appropriate attribution of sources will receive a grade of zero ("0"). **Do not consult secondary sources for your work unless explicitly instructed to do so. Public-access internet sources such as SparkNotes and Answers.com are not appropriate to use in this course at any time.** Any assignments that reflect unauthorized aid will receive a grade of zero ("0").

Bringing visitors to class. Students **must receive permission** from me in advance in order to bring any visitors to class. If you have a child-care emergency and need to bring a child with you to class, I am willing to work with you as best I can; however, little ones must be able to be expected to remain reasonably still and quiet for the duration of the class. Please see me if you have any questions about this.

E-mail, phone, and fax. I will not discuss grades via e-mail or over the phone and, unless otherwise specified, I will not accept assignments attached to e-mail messages. I am happy to answer via email any student questions—including questions about assignments—that will take me less than 5 minutes to answer. Any questions that require a longer and more involved answer will be deferred to a face-to-face meeting. The English department will not accept papers or excuses for absences faxed to me.

Feedback on student work. I want all students to meet their full potential in this course this semester. I encourage students to ask for clarification if they are confused about an assignment and to feel free to come to me for help on their work. However, I will not pre-grade, edit, or proofread students' work for them; I will offer feedback, but only when students formulate and articulate specific questions about their work that they want me to address. I do this because I want all students to function as active thinkers and learners throughout the semester; this is not happening if I am doing the work of cataloging every aspect of a paper that a student needs to change or improve. Likewise, students should understand that getting feedback on their work does not guarantee that they will earn a certain grade on the assignment.

Electronic devices. Students who use electronic devices in an inappropriate way during class will be asked to leave and will lose the privilege of using electronic devices in class. Cell phones must remain **off** (not simply on vibrate) and out of sight in one's pocket or bag for the duration of the class.

Evaluations. Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

Scholastic Dishonesty Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty. The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Title IX disclosure. If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *\*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

Other University Policies. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the policies outlined in the UCA Student Handbook.

### **Students needing support service**

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

### **Building Emergency Plan**

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at

<http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

### **The University Writing Center**

The UCA Writing Center, located in Thompson 109, offers students one-on-one tutoring and online assistance with their writing. For more information, see the web site: [www.uca.edu/writingcenter](http://www.uca.edu/writingcenter).

### **Statements of the Professional Education Unit**

Conceptual Framework. Faculty members involved in the preparation of professional educators, as well as professional education candidates, public school representatives, and members of the community share a vision for the Professional Education Unit at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). This vision is one of Enhancing Educator Efficacy through Reflective Decision-Making. The vision encompasses the development of candidates' abilities to examine problems, formulate options, consider decisions, and evaluate outcomes while embracing an awareness of and sensitivity to human diversity. The vision is achieved by candidates' acquisition of reflective decision-making skills through self-understanding, course work, and field and internship experiences.

Use of Technology. Candidates will demonstrate the basic academic skills of computer applications through the use of Microsoft Office and through accessing the Internet and email through class assignments.

Diversity. The entire course focuses on meeting the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of diverse learners. In addition to examining the influence of societal factors on learning, candidates will investigate elements of effective multicultural education and practices appropriate for students with varying learning styles, English language learners, and students with exceptionalities. (See course objectives)

Professional and Ethical Conduct Policy. Because the standards of the education profession exceed those addressed in other university or college polices, the COE Professional Education Unit has adopted a Professional and Ethical Conduct Policy to address those professional and ethical behaviors. In essence, this policy states that students must adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession for which they are preparing. The policy document provides a definition of professional and ethical misconduct, guidelines for reporting misconduct, and an appeal process. It is located on the "policies" link of the College of Education website.

### **Course Requirements and Grade Determination:**

Generally speaking, no extra credit is offered in the class. Grades—including final averages—**will not** be rounded up except in the case of 69.5, 79.5, 89.5, etc.

Final grade values:

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

Mere completion of a written assignment will not earn students an A on that assignment. Work is evaluated based on its quality and demonstrated effort. Here is a basic description of grade evaluation for written assignments:

- A **Outstanding**—excels in every way
- B **Superior**—meets expectations for the assignment and reflects strong effort, significant thoughtfulness, and sufficient development, but is not as polished in its ideas or as well-written as an A paper
- C **Adequate**—meets all basic requirements but in a shallow way: does not sufficiently develop ideas, lacks careful and thoughtful engagement with the assignment, or does not demonstrate strong effort
- D **Inadequate**—does not meet all basic requirements for the assignment
- F **Failing**—entirely unsuccessful in fulfilling the assignment’s expectations

More detailed rubrics for assignments will be provided.

Throughout the semester, you will take two exams and complete two response papers, a blog post assignment, and a final paper. ***All papers except for the blog post must be typed and submitted as a hard copy unless I instruct you otherwise.*** More detailed descriptions of the assignments will be given in class as the semester progresses. The exams will be objective, covering the material that we have discussed in class. They will include multiple choice, passage identification/explication, and paragraph-answer questions.

Exam #1	15%
Exam #2	20%
Response papers (two 4-page papers)	28%
Final paper (6-8 page researched literary analysis)	25%
Book award blog post assignment	12%

### Schedule of Reading, Assignments, and Paper Due Dates

*This schedule is subject to change at the professor’s discretion.* The readings and assignments listed under each date are those that you will be expected to have completed ***by that date.***

**Friday, August 21:** Introduction to the course.

**Monday, August 24:** *Holes*, chs. 1-17.

**Wednesday, August 26:** *Holes*, chs. 18-34.

**Friday, August 28:** *Holes*, chs. 35-end of novel.

**Monday, August 31:** *The Phantom Tollboth*, chs. 1-8.

**Wednesday, September 2:** *The Phantom Tollboth*, chs. 9-12.

**Friday, September 4:** *The Phantom Tollboth*, 13-end of novel.

**Monday, September 7:** Labor Day, no class.

**Wednesday, September 9:** *The Graveyard Book*, chs. 1-3.

**Friday, September 11:** *The Graveyard Book*, chs. 4-6.

**Monday, September 14:** *The Graveyard Book*, chs. 7- end of novel.

**Wednesday, September 16:** *Bridge to Terabithia*, chs. 1-4.

**Friday, September 18:** *Bridge to Terabithia*, chs. 5-8.

**Monday, September 21:** *Bridge to Terabithia*, chs. 9-end of novel.

**Wednesday, September 23:** Introduction to graphic novels and sequential art. Reading posted on Blackboard.

**Friday, September 25:** *Jane, the Fox, and Me*—read the entire book (it's short, I promise!).

**Monday, September 28:** *Jane, the Fox, and Me*, discussion continued.

**Wednesday, September 30:** Exam #1.

**Friday, October 2:** Introduction to multiculturalism in children's literature. Reading posted on Blackboard.

**Monday, October 5:** *The Lions of Little Rock*, chs. 1-15.

**Wednesday, October 7:** *The Lions of Little Rock*, chs. 16-29.

**Friday, October 9:** *The Lions of Little Rock*, chs. 30-43. Response Paper #1 due.

**Monday, October 12:** *The Lions of Little Rock*, chs. 44-end of novel.

**Wednesday, October 14:** *Brown Girl Dreaming*, pp. 1-81 (through "miss bell and the marchers").

**Friday, October 16:** *Brown Girl Dreaming*, pp. 82-163 (through "flag").

**Monday, October 19:** *Brown Girl Dreaming*, pp. 164-244 (through "p.s. 106 haiku").

**Wednesday, October 21:** *Brown Girl Dreaming*, pp. 245-end of book—be sure to read the author's note and check out the family photos at the end of the book.

**Friday, October 23:** Fall break, no class.

**Monday, October 26:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, pp. 1-88.

**Wednesday, October 28:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, pp. 89-176.

**Friday, October 30:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, pp. 177-end of novel. Be sure to read the author's note.

**Monday, November 2:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, discussion continued.

**Wednesday, November 4:** Response paper #2 workshop—bring two hard copies of your complete rough draft to class.

**Friday, November 6:** Introduction to social diversity in children's literature. Reading posted on Blackboard. Response Paper #2 due.

**Monday, November 9:** *Joey Pigzka Swallowed the Key*, chs. 1-5.

**Wednesday, November 11:** *Joey Pigzka Swallowed the Key*, chs. 6-10.

**Friday, November 13:** *Joey Pigzka Swallowed the Key*, ch. 11-end of novel.

**Monday, November 16:** *Trash*, pp. 1-59 (all of Part One, chapter 1 of Part Two).

**Wednesday, November 18:** *Trash*, pp. 60-119 (the rest of Part Two, chs. 1-7 of Part Three).

**Friday, November 20:** *Trash*, pp. 120-78 (the rest of Part Three, chs. 1-5 of Part Four).

**Monday, November 23:** *Trash*, read the rest of the novel.

**Wednesday, November 25:** Thanksgiving break, no class.

**Friday, November 27:** Thanksgiving break, no class.

**Monday, November 30:** Final paper workshop—bring two hard copies of your complete rough draft to class.

**Wednesday, December 2:** Final paper due.

**Wednesday, December 9:** Exam #2, 2-4 pm.