

The Experience of Young Adult Literature --

Celebrating Multicultural Difference and Diversity

**JoAnne Isbey
English 391-W3
Term I 2001-2002**

**English 391:W3 The Experience of Young Adult Literature --
Celebrating Multicultural Difference and Diversity
Fall 2001-2002
Friday evenings, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Marian Hall Room 202
Outer Drive Campus**

Each second we live is a new and
unique moment of the universe, a moment
that will never be again. . . . And what do we teach
our children? We teach them that two and two
make four, and that Paris is the capital of France.
When will we also teach them what they are?
We should say to each of them: Do you know
what you are? You are marvel. You are unique.
In all the years that have passed, there has never
been another child like you. And look at your body--
what a wonder it is! Your legs, your arms, your
clever fingers, the way you move. You may become
a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven.
You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are
a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then
harm another who is, like you, a marvel?
You must cherish one another. You must
work--we must all work-- to make
the world worthy of its children.

Pablo Casals

“In the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of
identity.”

Erik H. Erikson
Identity, Youth, and Crisis

" . . . surely you would hope, as I would, for students who early on get captured by the
desire to learn, and who, by becoming and remaining engaged readers and listeners and talkers
and viewers, teach themselves far more than any school could ever teach."

Wayne C. Booth

"I'm afraid that if you tell students that they have to be able to read a blueprint before
they can take pleasure in the beauty of a building, they will probably think that it isn't worth the
trouble. Besides it's a lie."

Eric Haugaard

"I will tell you a story which was told to me when I was a little boy. Every time I thought of the story, it seemed to me to become more and more charming, for it is with stories as it is with many people--they become better as they grow older."

Hans Christian Anderson
What the Good Man Does Is Always Right

"In the beginning water covered the Earth and all creatures lived in the underworld below. People could talk, animals could talk, rocks could talk."

Jicarilla Apache Tradition

"For while objectively a social reality, the work of art is a projection of a deeply personal process, and any approach that ignores the personal at the expense of the social is necessarily incomplete."

Ralph Ellison
Shadow and Act, 1964

The first function of a mythology
--myths and mythic rituals,
sacred songs
and ceremonial dances--
is to waken in the individual
a sense of awe,
wonder, and participation
in the inscrutable mystery of being.

Joseph Campbell
Myths, 1976

"I have walked with people whose eyes are full of light but who see nothing in sea or sky, nothing in city streets, nothing in books. It were far better to sail forever in the night of blindness with sense, and feeling, and mind, than to be content with the mere act of seeing. The only lightless dark is the night of darkness in ignorance and insensibility."

Helen Keller

"The one thing is to stalk your calling . . . to locate the most tender and live spot and plug into that pulse . . . to grasp your one inner necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you."

Annie Dillard

"We must learn our common symbols . . . and share them with the world."

Ntozake Shange

"The essence of human mentality is . . . the power of seeing one thing in another."

Susanne K. Langer

"Literature is no one's private ground; literature is common ground. Let us trespass freely and fearlessly and find our way for ourselves. It is thus that English literature will survive if commoners and outsiders like ourselves make that country our own country, if we teach ourselves how to read and how to write, how to preserve, and how to create."

Virginia Woolf

COURSE GOAL

To deepen and broaden your experience of young adult literature and to enhance your ability to bridge the adolescent and literature. Our particular focus will be on our own enjoyment and appreciation of the difference and diversity that inheres in our rich multicultural heritage of literature.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

As a result of your active participation in the course and upon completion of in-class and outside activities, readings and assignments, you will:

- * broaden your experience of literature as the verbal expression of the human imagination.
- * regard literature as a primary means by which a culture transmits itself.
- * become more aware of how the study and experience of literature add a special dimension to young adults' lives by developing their unfolding insights, allowing them to experience vicariously places, people, and events otherwise unavailable to them; thus, adding delight and wonder to their daily lives.
- * acquire a rich theoretical and practical background in young adult literature; you will be able to help young people at the appropriate developmental phases to grow toward:
 - * realizing the importance of literature as a mirror of human experience, reflecting human motives, conflicts, and values.
 - * being able to identify with fictional characters in human situations as a means of relating to others; gaining insights from involvement with literature.
 - * developing effective ways of talking and writing about literature, appropriate to the youngsters' unfolding development.
 - * experiencing literature as a way to appreciate the rhythms and beauty of

the English language.

- * developing habits of reading that carry over into the young person's whole lifelong experience. [Every language experience moves their language toward formal acquisition of reading and writing skills.]
- * to demonstrate a broad knowledge of the best young adult literature--both traditional and contemporary--by identifying what is good and lasting in the vast array of material, and by evolving, describing, and using criteria to analyze and evaluate selections of young adult literature.
- * to go beyond the literary experience itself by integrating it into other aspects of the youngster's emerging creative, learning expression.
- * to develop skill in using literature in teaching critical thinking, in general, and critical reading, in particular.
- * to demonstrate creativity through creative work.
- * to become acquainted with research in the field.
- * to work as a co-researcher with one young adult.
- * to develop a habit of sharing insights, materials, and resources with one another.
- * to enjoy the experience of young adult literature more deeply by developing skill, strength, and confidence in inquiring how literature is understood, produced and assessed.
- * to increase your ability to ask questions that will illuminate the particular text under discussion: To define ways of knowing as well as objects of knowledge.
- * to become more familiar with important works of young adult literature, both past and present.
- * to foster student responses that inform feelings as well as thought.
- * to encourage students to make connections with their lives and the lives being lived in the story world.
- * to become more aware of your own **natural, spontaneous responses** as we give our studied attention to a story. To follow that response to a fuller context: BELS, brief entry leads, and extended journal amplifications are methods of exploring your own responses and opening out your meanings as we interact with a work and explore that art through which the work takes on its power. We will engage in reader response to surface our first images of work and then build on our own first words through listening and recording the meanings that our classmates bring to the work. **The reader response journal will be the mechanism we will use for this work. Please bring this with you to each class meeting.**

- * to interpret, analyze, and explain the works and to share your responses orally and in writing.
- * to develop habits of sharing insight and questions with colleagues.
- * to broaden and deepen your own initial responses to young adult literature by incorporating the responses of your peers, both in a small group process and in the whole class community response.
- * to experience learning and to develop habits of reading and reflection that will inspire you to pursue the study of literature in your maturing adult lives outside of school.
- * to build and experience a democratic classroom.
- * to explore many approaches to the works that we are studying together this semester, so that you will develop a multifaceted way of responding to the multiplicity of meanings that inhere in a text.
- * to engage in literary conversation that bridges and connects our primary life experience in the world of actuality with our secondary imaginative experiences in the world of ideality. We will work together to explore the possibilities that our readings open.
- * to learn as much as possible about adolescents: their concerns and pressures.

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

- * Understanding of the development of literature for young adults
- * Critical analysis of the many genres of literature for young adults
- * Principles of selection of literature for young adults
- * Contribution of outstanding authors and/or illustrators
- * Methods of using literature and sharing literature with youngsters
- * Co-research related to the field of young adult literature

REQUIRED TEXTS

Anaya, Rudolfo. Bless Me, Ultima. New York, Warner, 1994.

Berthoff, Ann E. "Paulo Freire's Liberation Pedagogy." Language Arts 67 (4): 362-369.

Brown, Lyn Mikel and Carol Gilligan. Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992. [Selections]

- Creech, Sharon. Walk Two Moons. New York: Harper Trophy, _____ .
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Barbara Schneider. Becoming Adult: How Teenagers Prepare for the World of Work. New York: Basic Books, 2000. [Selections]
- De La Luz Reyes, Maria, et al. "Emerging Biliteracy and Cross-Cultural Sensitivity in a Language Arts Classroom." Language Arts 70 (December 1993): 659-677.
- Fleischer, Cathy. Teacher Organizing for Change: Making Literacy Learning Everybody's Business. Urbana: NCTE, 2000.
- Fleischman, Paul. Seedfolks. New York: Harper Collins, _____ .
- Fox, Paula. The Slave Dancer. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1973.
- Freire, Paulo. Cultural Action for Freedom. Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review and Center for the Study of Development and Social Change, 1970.
- Gifford, Robert. Environmental Psychology: Principles and Practice. 2nd Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997.
- [Ch. 10: "Community Environmental Psychology," pp. 217-240.]
- [Ch. 11: "Educational Environmental Psychology," pp. 241-275.]
- Gilligan, Carol, Annie G. Rogers, and Deborah L. Tolman, Eds. Women, Girls, and Psychotherapy: Reframing Resistance. New York: Haworth Press, Inc., 1991. [Selections]
- Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. [Selections]
- Gurian, Michael. What Stories Does My Son Need?: A Guide to Books and Movies that Build Character in Boys. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000. [Selections]
- Gurian, Michael. A Fine Young Man: What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1999. [Selections]
- Gurian, Michael. The Wonder of Boys: What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape Boys into Exceptional Men. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1997. [Selections]
- Harding, Vincent. Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Inconvenient Hero. New York: Orvis Books.
- Harris, Violet, et al. "Bookalogues: Multicultural Literature" Language Arts 70 (March 1993): 215-224.
- Hazen, Mary Ann. "Learning How to Learn: An Experiment in Dialogue." The Organizational Behavior Teaching Review: Journal of the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society XII (2): 72-85.

Kindlon, Dan and Michael Thompson with Teresa Barker. Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000. [Selections]

Lehr, Suan. Battling Dragons: Issues and Controversy in Children's Literature. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995.

Reid, Louann, Ed. With Jamie Hayes Neufeld. Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature. Portland, Maine: Calendar Islands Publishers, 1999.

Rowling, J.K. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1997.

Sachar, Louis. Holes. New York: Dell Yearling, 1998.

Souljah, Sister. The Coldest Winter Ever. New York: Pocket Books, 1999.

Suggested:

Odean, Kathleen. Great Books for Boys: More Than 600 Books for Boys 2 to 14. New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.

Odean, Kathleen. Great Books for Girls: More Than 600 Books to Inspire Today's Girls and Tomorrow's Women. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.

Other selected folktales, stories, videos, and 22 articles on children's literature from NCTE journals that will be put on reserve on campus.

COURSE METHOD

The course requires a rigorous schedule of reading and is a writing intensive course, designed to enable students to experience a whole language way of working: students will use their own first words and readings to surface meanings in a text and follow and develop those words by listening, attending to, and recording the responses of their classmates. Together we will shape and articulate an inclusive, integrative communal response. Following initial positioning by the instructor, the classroom method will be interactive: in-class focused raw-writing to prime the pump for discussion, small group, pupil/team, and open conversation, ultimately seeking answers to the issues that each work itself raises in the mind and heart of each reader. Students are expected to be prepared for class: to have read the assigned material, to have studied it, to have recorded their initial responses and questions in their reading journals, and to have identified areas that need classroom exploration. Collaborative presentations of specific works will be assigned as the course of our work progresses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All assigned reading and writing are to be completed before the beginning of the class for which it is due. Occasionally, additional materials chosen by the instructor or students may be assigned as these become appropriate through the unfolding of the course. None of the works listed will be excluded from your course requirements. If a work is not discussed in class, it may

still appear on your midterm or final examination. It is a holy and wholesome idea to read and journal ahead of our class discussion. As you engage in the process of giving the texts your studied attention, make careful written note of questions that surface or that attract you. We will explore these seeded questions together in class. There is no question too stupid or too trivial to be asked.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

I will make every effort to attend each class and to be well prepared; I expect you to do the same. If you must miss more than a single class session, please make an appointment with me. Excessive absence may prevent your successful completion of the course. Thus, I expect you to attend every class session and to arrive on time unless there is serious reason for absence or lateness. If you are late, please join the group, but take a seat near the door so that you do not interrupt or disturb the work of your classmates.

It is a good idea, especially during inclement weather, to exchange telephone numbers with a classmate, so that you can stay apprised of changes in the schedule of readings or other items on the course calendar. Your learning partner will also pick up any material handed out in class and give it to you.

I will circulate an attendance sheet during each meeting. It is your responsibility to make sure that you personally sign the class attendance sheet.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Your course grade will be determined by:

- * Class participation: 15% > regular, punctual attendance is requisite for participation. And in-class written reflections may not be made up.
- * Journal entries/reflections/bibliography: 20%
- * Collaborative presentations: 20%
- * Co-research work: 25%
- * Interview: 20%

Why teach English language arts?

- * Language is power. The ability to express oneself is a fundamental human right. As an English language arts teacher, you can empower *all* of your students by teaching them how to use language effectively.
- * Teaching English language arts opens the mind to new perspectives and challenges. You can help others discover important books and think about what great writers are saying.
- * As an English teacher, you have the opportunity to increase students' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity. The topics you select and the approaches you take to teaching writing and reading can help your students appreciate the contributions of

people of color to American literature, culture and history.

"Teachers are movers and shakers. They inspire others to reclaim their lives. Teaching can bring us to a place where we can find compassion and strength, recognition of difference--a place to belong and not feel like an exile, a place to use 'power'."

Ricardo Cruz

The Power. Teaching is a powerful profession. Teachers have the power to touch lives, to nurture young people's growth. Teachers empower others to transform their hopes and dreams into realities. Teachers help students explore ideas and master skills. They enable students to recognize their own talents and abilities and help them to embrace what is unique and admirable in people of other cultures. Teachers shape the future.

"By choosing to teach English you'll be joining the profession that makes all other professions possible and you'll be sharing the greatest gift a person can give to another-knowledge."

Jesse Perry,
NCTE President, 1996