

Literature for Adolescents ENGLIT 1647 28874

Spring 2014

Dr. Ann Rea

MWF 2:00-2:50 Biddle 253

Syllabus and Course Description

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Office hours: MWF 12:00-1:00 and W 3:00-4:00

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Adolescence, the period that forms a bridge between childhood and adulthood, is a period of immense physical and psychological growth. While our society protects adolescents in many ways, by providing prolonged education, and by providing for their material needs in the home, it simultaneously exposes teenagers to pressures and stresses such as those experienced within families according to the part of society into which we are born, such as poverty, prejudice concerning class, gender or sexual orientation, and many adolescents experience neglect and emotional hardships.. In addition, teenagers experience the commercial pressures of advertising and consumerism, counter-cultural influences such as gangs, and drugs, and the stresses produced by sexual and gender influences which promote certain kinds of behavior and ways of presenting one's physical appearance, with the anxieties associated with all of this. Literature can play a huge role in helping adolescents to handle these conflicting issues and help adolescents to make a path through these difficulties. I have chosen books that represent a diversity of experience and a range of social backgrounds, so that we will go beyond the usual "classics," while also reading some of those traditional titles. Adolescent literature also provides us with an opportunity to read engaging books and think about them in the context of an English course, and therefore to interpret and analyze what we read. While we might find ourselves reacting to the literature as if we were adolescents, at times, we must also work to maintain a more sophisticated critical perspective. We are no longer adolescents, and can think about how culture shapes our ideas about what an adolescent is or does, and how reading can help adolescents negotiate the complex issues that they face. We will work to define what we mean by "adolescent literature" and how it differs from children's literature. We will examine the greater degree of responsibility and independence that the novels portray, and the passage from innocence to experience that the characters undergo.

We will spend a lot of class-time discussing the books that we read, so it is extremely important that everyone does the reading, spending enough time and care to be able to come to class ready to take part in an animated discussion. I will not be sympathetic to complaints about the amount of reading on the list: many of the books are short, and even the longer ones are intended for an adolescent audience, so they will not be challenging to read, even though we will think about them on a more analytical level. You will need to keep up with the reading and read every book on the list. The two examinations will test your reading and your thinking about all of the books. In addition there will be two four-page papers. These papers must be completed on time. Class participation will form part of your grade for this course.

This class requires your **active** participation in a way in which your other classes may not. You must prepare for class by reading the assigned literature thoughtfully. You

will need to give enough time to the reading. This will not be an “easy” class just because the texts were written for adolescents; you still need to read beyond the plot and think about the significance of what you are reading so you can come to class prepared to be involved in an active discussion. When you read poetry, you will need to spend time re-reading and thinking about what you read. A quick “run-through” will not allow you to engage closely enough with the reading to understand it. This is not a lecture class, but one where you will engage with ideas and conversation. This can be lots of fun, but for it to function we need everyone to make the effort to be reflective about his or her part in it. If you tend to want to talk a lot you might need to check that you do not dominate the discussion. If you are shy and tend to leave the talking to others you might need to push yourself to speak. It is extremely important that we behave respectfully towards others in the discussions.

Breakdown of Grading: each piece earns 20% of your grade

Quizzes and Class Participation

Paper One

Mid-term Examination

Paper Two

Final examination

The short papers and quizzes will give us a chance to work on both your writing and your interpretation and I will make suggestions to encourage you to think about them as writing exercises.

Required texts

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

S. E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*

Sharon Flake, *The Skin I'm In*

Joyce Lee Wong, *Seeing Emily*

Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Jack Gantos, *Desire Lines*

Orson Scott Card, *Enders Game*

Nick Hornby, *Slam*

Jerry Spinelli, *Stargirl*

Jandy Nelson, *The Sky is Everywhere*

Policies and Rules

Please ensure that your cell phone is turned OFF before class. That means that you will not check for “text” messages. I will ask you to leave if I see you “texting.”

Attendance is required. More than three absences and you risk having your grade lowered. If you need to schedule appointments make sure that they do not take place during class time. Be punctual at the beginning of class, and do not make plans to leave before class ends: to do otherwise will result in an absence being recorded.

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence and will not be excused. Be sure that you see the distinction between peer revision in which you help each other to revise your work, and the kind of help with writing which involves someone else doing work for you. To present the language or ideas of others as if they are your own is plagiarism.

If you have a disability for which need to request accommodation you should contact the Learning Resource Center, G16, Owen Library, (814)269-7109 as early as possible in the semester. The coordinator will verify your disability and define the necessary accommodation to be made.

Monday, 6th January

Introduction

Wednesday, 8th January

Give out Steven Mintz, “Inventing the Middle-Class Child,” from *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*. (2004) Handout

Friday, 10th January

Read Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, to the end of Chapter 5

Monday, 13^h January

Read Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, to the end of Chapter 15

Wednesday, 15th January

Read Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, to the end of Chapter 22

Friday 17th January

Read Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, to the end of Chapter 27

Monday, 20th January

Martin Luther King Day – NO CLASSES

Wednesday, 22nd January

Read Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, to the end of Chapter 37

Friday, 24th January

Read Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, to the end of Chapter 42

Monday. 27th January

Finish *Little Women*

Wednesday, 29th January

Mid-term Examination

Friday, 31st January

Read S. E. Hinton, *The Outsiders* to the end of Chapter 3

Monday, 3rd February

Finish *The Outsiders*

Wednesday, 5th February

Sharon Flake, *The Skin I'm In* to the end of Chapter 14

Friday, 7th February

Finish *The Skin I'm In*

Monday, 10th February

Read Joyce Lee Wong, *Seeing Emily* to page 80

Think about the images and metaphors and how they work

Wednesday, 12th February

Read Joyce Lee Wong, *Seeing Emily* to page 126

Friday, 14th February

Finish *Seeing Emily*

Monday, 17th February

Poetry – readings from a packet which I will distribute

Wednesday, 19th February

Poetry – readings from a packet which I will distribute

Friday 21st February

Poetry: students to find poems suitable for adolescent readers to bring to class

Monday, 24th February

Generate a list of activities for using poetry in teaching adolescents

Wednesday, 26th February

Read Katherine Paterson, *Bridge to Terabithia*

Friday, 28th February

Read Katherine Paterson, *Bridge to Terabithia*

Monday, 3rd March

Paper One due in class

Read Jerry Spinelli, *Stargirl*

Wednesday, 5th March

Read Jack Gantos, *Desire Lines*

Friday, 7th March

Read Jack Gantos, *Desire Lines*

Monday 10th March - 16th March

Spring Break - No Classes

Monday, 17th March

Read Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* to the end of Part 3

Wednesday, 19th March

Finish *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

Friday, 21st March

Orson Scott Card, *Enders Game*

Monday, 24th March

Orson Scott Card, *Enders Game*

Wednesday, 26th March

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Friday, 28th March

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Monday 31st March

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Wednesday, 2nd April

To be announced

Friday, 4th April

To be announced

Monday, 7th April

Read Nick Hornby, *Slam* to the end of Chapter 9

Wednesday, 9th April

Finish *Slam*

Friday, 11th April

Read Jandy Nelson, *The Sky is Everywhere* to the end of Chapter 9

Monday, 14th April

Read Jandy Nelson, *The Sky is Everywhere* to the end of Chapter 27

Wednesday, 16th April

Finish *The Sky is Everywhere*

Friday, 18th April

Review for Final examination

Final Examination during scheduled exam time

Paper Two due on day of exam.

