

TLS 480, Children's Literature in the Classroom

Key Learning Goals

- Students will gain a better understanding of themselves as readers, their cultural identities, and how to engage in personal and critical response to literature.
- Students will develop a broad knowledge of the various genres and types of books for children, including the major authors and illustrators of these books, with an emphasis on books and authors that reflect cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Students will be able to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of specific children's books, including books that connect to children's own cultural identities and open their minds to cultures that differ from their own.
- Students will be familiar with the literary and artistic elements and how they interact to create an effective book for children.
- Students will be familiar with the reference sources for information on children's literature.
- Students will examine the role of literature in the lives of children.
- Students will explore ways to engage children with literature for personal, cultural, and academic purposes.
- Students will develop an awareness of social, multicultural and global issues as they connect to literature for children.

The five major areas for the course that these learning goals relate to are

- Responding as a reader
- Knowledge of children's literature
- Reference sources and resources
- Literature engagements with children
- Social and cultural issues in children's literature

Main Concepts

- Understanding literature as a discipline, as a literary field of study with theories, research, and content (e.g. literary elements, visual elements, genre, literary theories, reader response.)
- Conceptual understanding of story as a mode of thinking and way of making sense of experiences
- Knowledge of the critical issues surrounding literature (authenticity, censorship, representations of marginalized groups, language, translation, etc.)
- Knowledge of authors, illustrators, poets, awards, evaluation criteria, reference tools, and books, with a particular focus on global, multicultural and bilingual books and authors
- Strategies to encourage response to literature and for reading aloud to children
- Engage as readers themselves, develop an interest and enjoyment of literature as a teacher
- Develop multicultural and global perspectives through a critical lens
- Immerse themselves into the lives of characters from a wide range of cultural experiences to develop empathy and knowledge for experiences outside their own lives, especially those of children from marginalized groups that differ from the white dominant majority
- Literature as a way to understand self and world, not just as a tool to teach a content area

Key Learning Experiences

Learning by children's literature: Reading widely to be immersed in story

- **Reading Records and inventory**
 - Students are expected to read a minimum of 80 books (65 picturebooks and 15 novels)
 - Students develop a format for recording the reading (data base, journal, index cards, online data base, etc.) with bibliographic info, short plot summary, response to book.
 - Inventory sheet is completed 4 times a semester when the reading records are handed in and include an analysis based on genre, culture, gender, etc.
- **Personal literacy memoir**
 - Describe key literacy experiences with story (books, oral, film), both inside and outside of school that shaped attitudes and abilities as a reader
 - Written reflection, memory bag of artifacts, timeline, or collage
 - Identify own cultural identities
 - Analysis of old favorites (book/stories) through lens of windows and doors
- **Browsing books in class**
 - Weekly browsing of books related to the class focus, organized around genre, authors/illustrators, cultures, themes, etc.
 - Note books want to read for reading record or locate books for class discussions and analysis based on genre criteria for evaluation or to share with classmates.
- **Read alouds in class**
 - Read alouds by instructor or class members to set the context for the focus of that class period.
- **Choral reading and storytelling**
 - Storytelling by instructor to set the context for the class session
 - Storytelling of traditional literature by class members in small groups
 - Choral reading of poetry
- **Book Share**
 - Students select books from their reading records to share with classmates in a small group – books they recommend to others

Learning through children's literature: Reading deeply to think critically

- **Literature circles and book reflections**
 - Weekly small group literature discussions of novels or picturebooks around a genre or theme with each small group reading a different book within that focus. Occasional whole class novel discussed in a small group. Selection of books highlights the experiences of children from marginalized groups and emphasizes cultural and linguistic diversity, both locally and globally

- Students complete a reflection on the book before coming to class or post a response on their group's d2l page
- **Responses to literature**
 - Use of different response strategies in the small group discussions – e.g. Graffiti board, consensus board, sketch to stretch, save the last word for me, etc.
- **Inquiries into social and cultural issues**
 - Highlighting issues of availability, access, authenticity, language, and representation in multicultural and global literature
 - Critiquing representations of underrepresented and marginalized groups within children's books including ability/disability, LGBTQ, ethnicity, cultural communities, language, etc.
 - Exploring depictions of difficult social and global issues in books
 - Exploring ways of responding to book challenges and censorship
 - Exploring these Issues through presentations, class experiences, literature circles, articles, and written reflections.
- **Text Sets around a Big Idea**
 - Selecting a Big Idea to organize the semester around (Borders, Journey, etc.)
 - Reading novels and picturebooks to encourage multiple connections to the Big Idea
 - Engaging students in conceptual thinking by brainstorming themes and issues related to the big idea
 - Organizing students into small groups based on a theme related to the Big Idea
 - Each group of students creates a text set and invitation presented to classmates and students in other 480 sections at the Mini-Conference
- **Mini-Conference**
 - Opportunity to hear an author or illustrator talk about their life and work after reading their books and exploring their work through invitations
 - Students present their text sets through a visual display and invitation
- **Choice Inquiries**
 - Proposing a final inquiry among a wide set of options that reflect an inquiry related to children's literature they want to investigate.
- **Reflections and self-assessments**
 - Engaging in extensive self-assessments across the semester, writing a reflection/self-assessment for each major assignment as well as setting learning goals early in the semester, a mid-term reflection and a final reflection.
 - Writing reflections on readings to prepare for class discussions

Learning about Children's Literature: Reading strategically to learn about children's literature

- **Genre Studies**
 - Exploring the major genres of children's literature through literature circles, book browsing, and professional reading

- Using the evaluation criteria for a genre in class experiences, particularly as related to literary and visual elements
- **Professional reading/expert guest speakers**
 - Reading of book chapters on genre and articles on critical issues in children’s literature
 - Responses to the professional readings (reflection response or Ah-has)
 - Discussions of readings or engagements related to readings in class
 - Guest speakers related to class focus
- **Reading records and evaluation engagements**
 - Using the reading records to identify books around a literary element, visual element, or cultural representation and evaluating those books
 - Evaluating literature circle books or books located during class browsing around literary or visual elements or issues of authenticity and representation
- **Library exercises**
 - Developing a knowledge of resources for locating books around a specific theme or topic or information on specific authors, illustrators or poets.
 - Completing several modules developed in collaboration with the library to use these resources.
- **Author and illustrator studies**
 - Early in the semester, do a brief author/illustrator study of an “old favorite,” an author or illustrator who is well known from own childhood or in the general public. Locate biographic info, books, and other resources.
 - Create a display to share that author through browsing and talk with classmates in small groups about the author
 - Later in the semester, do an in-depth author/illustrator study of an author who creates books reflecting the lives of underrepresented/marginalized groups.
 - Create a display and handout for class members and present to classmates
- **Read aloud experiences with children**
 - Read aloud to a small group of children twice, once early in the semester and once later in the semester. Reflection on selection of book, ways in which invited children to respond and how children engaged or did not engage with the book.
- **Portfolio and final exam**
 - Organize class handouts, assignments, reflections, etc. around the five major objectives of the class. Includes the full range of materials and class assignments generated during the class. Write a reflection for each section of what is in that section and how it reflects the student’s learning and growth across the semester.
 - Use the portfolio as a resource to respond to the in-class exam with questions that relate to those 5 major objectives.
 - Goal is that this portfolio will serve as a resource across other methods classes.

Readings

Professional Readings:

- Short, K. Lynch-Brown, C., Tomlinson, C (2017). *Essentials of Children's Literature*, 9th ed.
- Articles on d2l
- Mem Fox, *Reading Magic*, or her website videos and info on read aloud experiences

Children's Books:

- 80 or more children's books (at least 15 of which are chapter books)
- Whole Class Novels (2-3 each semester)
- Children's books for weekly literature circles from the multiple copy collection