

Carol J. Singley
Department of English
Rutgers University, Camden
Spring 2006

Honors English: The American Child in Literature and Culture
50:525:109:06 (#74625)

Class Meeting: MW 1:20-2:40 Armitage 223

Office: Armitage 479, x6629

Office Hours: MW 2:40--3:30, F 12:15-12:45
and by appt.

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DESCRIPTION:

The United States has often defined itself in terms of childhood and youth, making the child an apt topic of study in American literature. How does American literature portray the child--as romantic innocent, wild entity, demon, or consumer? How have religious, psychological, and economic theories affected our notions of childhood in different periods? Views range, for example, from seeing childhood as a miniaturized adulthood to seeing childhood as a distinct culture of its own. In this course we read work by some of the best-known U.S. writers and examine representations of the child in order to understand how conceptions of childhood change over time and help to create individual, family, literary, and national identities.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Books are available at the campus bookstore.

Texts marked "e" are on electronic reserve, Robeson Library.

The New-England Primer, Wallbuilder, 0-925279-17-x

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, Penguin 0142437263

Louisa May Alcott, Little Women, Penguin 0140390693

Mark Twain, Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Signet
0451528646

Harriet Wilson, Our Nig, Vintage Random House, 0394715586

Edith Wharton, Summer, Bantam 0553214225

Henry James, The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories (including Daisy Miller), Bantam,
0-553-21059-9

Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye, Penguin, 0452282195

Don DeLillo, White Noise, Penguin, 0140274987

Maurice Sendak, Where the Wild Things Are

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Complete all assigned readings before coming to class. Read introductions, if available, as well as the texts themselves. To make the most of your readings, please annotate your texts and make notes as you read, bringing comments and questions with you when you come to class.

ATTENDANCE, CLASSWORK, AND PARTICIPATION:

Regular attendance is important and expected. More than three absences will lower your grade.

Although I will deliver lectures, I believe students learn best in interaction with one another, and I therefore encourage discussion. Please come to class ready to ask and answer questions about the material and to listen to others critically and respectfully.

At least twice during the semester you will be a respondent for other students' seminar papers. You will be expected to open and lead discussion, respond to points in the papers, and pose questions.

You will also be asked to conduct research on nineteenth- and twentieth-century childhood and present it in class.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Three seminar papers, each 2-3 pp.

Email copy to entire class and to me on date assigned

One literary analysis, based on a seminar paper, 8 pp.

Turn in hard copy no more than two weeks after paper is discussed in class

Final literary analysis, 8 pp.

MID-TERM EXAM:**FINAL EXAM:**

The exams will consist of short answer and short essay questions. Questions are based on readings and material discussed in class.

CONFERENCES:

Please feel free to come in to discuss any aspect of the course. I am happy to talk with you about the readings and your writing.

GRADING: All are given equal weight:

3 Seminar papers combined

1 Paper based on seminar paper

Mid Term Exam

Final Exam

Final Paper

Attendance & Classwork combined

Week	Date	Topic and Readings
1	W 1/18	Introduction
2	M 1/23	Saki, "The Open Window"
	W 1/25	Elements of Literature
3	M 1/30	History of Childhood History of Children's Literature <u>New England Primer</u> fr. Philippe Ariès, <u>Centuries of Childhood</u> (e)
	W 2/1	Nathaniel Hawthorne, <u>The Scarlet Letter</u>
4	M 2/6	<u>The Scarlet Letter</u> Walter T. Herbert, "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Una Hawthorne, and <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> " (e)
	W 2/8	<u>The Scarlet Letter</u>
5	M 2/13	Louisa May Alcott, <u>Little Women</u>
	W 2/15	<u>Little Women</u> Wishy, fr. <u>The Child and the Republic</u> (e) Melanie Dawson, "The Miniaturizing of Adulthood" (e) Gillian Brown, "Child's Play" (e)
6	M 2/20	Mark Twain, <u>Adventures of Tom Sawyer</u>
	W 2/22	<u>Adventures of Tom Sawyer</u>
7	M 2/27	Mark Twain, <u>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</u>
	W 3/1	<u>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</u>
8	M 3/6	<u>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</u>
	W 3/8	Mid-Term Exam
Spring Break		
	M 3/20	Harriet Wilson, <u>Our Nig</u>
	W 3/22	<u>Our Nig</u>

- 10 M 3/27 Henry James, Daisy Miller
 W 3/29 Daisy Miller
 fr. Carolyn Steedman, Strange Dislocations (e)
- 11 M 4/3 Edith Wharton, Summer
 W 4/5 Summer
- 12 M 4/10 Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye
 W 4/12 The Bluest Eye
 Maurice Sendak, Where the Wild Things Are
- 13 M 4/17 F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (e)
 Harlan Ellison, “Jeffy is Five” and “One Life Furnished in Early
 Poverty” (e)
 W 4/19 Fitzgerald and Ellison cont’d
- 14 M 4/24 Don DiLillo, White Noise
 W 4/26 White Noise
- 15 M 5/1 **Final Paper due**
 M 5/8 **Final Exam, 2-5**