

**Course Number: English 470**

**Course Title: Studies in Children's Literature**

Topic: Tween Literature & Culture

Professor: Jan Susina

Credit Hours: 3

Meeting Time: Wednesday 5:30-8:20

Meeting Place: STV 347-B

This course will examine the often times confusing and contradictory world of middle school literature. We will attempt to explore the growth of tween literature that has been produced in part with the development of middle schools in the United States since the 1960s, while looking at several influential examples from earlier time periods. Many of these texts attempt to provide younger readers with a transition from childhood to adolescence as they progress from the sixth to eighth grade. We will attempt to slip inside those overstuffed backpacks and lockers and try to understand some of the physical, social, and emotional concerns and issues that tweens face in contemporary culture by reading some of the books they are either assigned in school or that they are reading on their own outside of class. Since this age group gains much of its information and entertainment from other sources, in addition to books we will also be examining other texts that tweens consume including magazines, television, films, music, and new media.

**Required Texts: (Tentative)**

Jennifer Holm. *Middle School is Worse than Meatloaf* (Simon & Schuster)

Jeff Kinney. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. (Amulet Books)

Raina Telgemeier. *Smile*. (Graphix).

Gene Luen Yang. *American Born Chinese*. (FirstSecond).

E.B. White. *Charlotte's Web*. (HarperCollins).

Louise Fitzhugh. *Harriet the Spy*. (Yearling).

Gail Carson Levine. *Ella Enchanted*. (HarperCollins).

Rick Riordan. *The Lightning Thief*. (HyperionMiramax)

Karen Hesse. *Out of the Dust*. (Scholastic).

Christopher Paul Curtis. *Bud, Not Buddy*. (Yearling).

Susie Morgenstern. *Secret Letters from 0 to 10*. (Puffin Books).

Lemony Snicket. *The Bad Beginning, or Orphans!* (HarperCollins).

Blue Balliet. *Chasing Vermeer*. (Scholastic).

Patrick Carman. *Skelton Creek*. (Scholastic).

Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games*. (Scholastic).

**Format:**

The course will be conducted as a seminar. Each student will give an oral presentation on a prearranged topic. Students will write two short critical papers: on non-print tween text (5 to 10 pages) and a longer critical paper on a tween book or series (14 to 18 pages). Throughout the semester, there will be short written assignments related to the primary and critical readings. Students are expected to engage in active class discussion.