

ENG 4953 (6170)  
Turlington B310

Instructor: John Cech (√)  
T 7 + Th 7/8

## Writing for Children

This course offers an opportunity to explore a number of the familiar genres of writing for young people -- poetry, the picture book, realistic and fantasy fiction, biography, and non-fiction - as well as more experimental and innovative forms, like moveable and artist's books and the graphic novel. Readings will be drawn from key children's books and criticism and will make use of holdings in UF's Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature. The emphasis in the course will be on rigorous, weekly writing assignments and critiques. Participants will need to bring to the course an open, creative spirit, an energized work ethic, and a commitment to producing exceptional writing.

### Readings

In the interests of cost, many of the works that we will read in the course will be available online and/or at local public and university libraries. Feel free to share your books (and their costs) with others in the class.

William Zinsser, ed. *The Worlds of Childhood*.

Recommended:

Lynda Barry, *What It Is*.

Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way*.

Maira Kalman, *The Principles of Uncertainty*.

### Requirements

Active, engaged, enthusiastic participation and attendance in the course. (10 points)

You will lose a point for every absence more than three. Please let me know immediately if an illness or other emergency is keeping you from the class.

Weekly writing projects (choose 6 out of 10 assignments, 10 points each)

A presentation for the class. (5 points)

A final writing project (25 points)

Writing assignments will be discussed the week before they are due. You are responsible for being present for these discussions. You will have a 24-hour grace period after each assignment is due; after that you will not receive credit for the assignment. Be sure that you have an active email address that you check regularly to receive any assignment updates and other information during the semester. A listserv will be set up for the course during the first week of classes.

### Office hours and contact information

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 -1:45 p.m., and by appointment in 4364 Turlington.

Phone: (352) 294-2861

email: [jcech@ufl.edu](mailto:jcech@ufl.edu)

## SCHEDULE

- August 22 Introductions.
- 27 Sparking the Creative: Readings: Hilda Conkling and others. A Snapshot.
- 29 Writings: A mini-autobiography.
- are due  
assignments on Thursdays.
- Thursdays will be a workshop to discuss your weekly projects, which that day. We will also discuss the next writing
- September 3 The Rhythms of Life: Readings: Mother Goose and other Nursery Rhymes.
- 5 William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Writing: Book of poetry.
- 10 Wishes, Lies, and Dreams. Nazim Hikmet: "Things I Didn't Know I Loved."
- 12 Memory, Image, Experiment. Writing: Poem based on childhood memories.
- 17 First Books, Board Books, and other Fabulosities. Read: Rosemary Wells.
- 19 Good Enough to Chew On. Writing: A Board Book.
- 24 Concept Books and the Good Dr. S. Readings: Seuss, Steig, Sendak, Gorey.
- 26 First Fictions and the Seven Basic Plots. Writing: Creating a Concept Book.
- October 1 First Fictions: A First, A Last, A Least. Readings: Kalman.
- 3 Streaming Consciousness. Writing: Following a Story.
- 8 ImageText: The "New" Conversation. Readings: tba.
- 10 Wild Things and Harris Burdick. Writing: A picture book dummy.
- 15 Freezing the Moment. Documentary Impulses. Readings: tba.
- 17 Writing: A Real (and/or Imagined) Family Photo Album.
- 22 Fall into Wonderland. Readings: *The Golden Key*.
- 24 Out of the Shadows. Writing: A Fantasy.
- 29 Listening to the Animals. Readings: *Charlotte's Web*.
- 31 Openings and Implications. Writing: The First Chapter.
- November 5 Watching the World. Readings: Because of Winn Dixie. Listening to the
- 7 The Stories Around Us. Writing: The Overheard.
- 12 Portrait of the Child as a Young Artist. Yani, Hilda, and Wolfi.
- 14 Writing: A Child's Artist's Book.
- 19 Now, The Questions. Final Projects Workshop.
- 21 Final Projects Workshop.
- 26 Final Projects Workshop.

28 Thanksgiving

December 3 FINAL PROJECTS. Wrapping Up.

### Grading Rubric

This is a 100-point course based on the total scores of your quizzes and exams. There will be a one-point deduction for each unexcused absence after the three allowed for the course. Each absence after three will be a one-point deduction.

A = 92 - 100	B+ = 88 - 89	C+ = 78 - 79	D + = 68 - 69	E = 59 and below
A- = 90 - 91	B = 82 - 87	C = 72 - 77	D = 62 - 67	
	B - = 80 - 81	C- = 70 - 71	D - = 60 - 61	

### Final Grade appeals.

1000- and 2000- level courses: students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the English Department

### Composition and Humanities credit

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

### Disability Services

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

### Statement on Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

### Academic Honesty

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see:

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education->

[requirement.aspx#learning."](#)

## **A Note on Story**

*by James Hillman*

From my perspective as depth psychologist, I see that those who have a connection with story are in better shape and have a better prognosis than those to whom story must be introduced. This is a large statement and I would like to take it apart in several ways. But I do not want to diminish its apodictic claim: to have “story-awareness” is *per se* psychologically therapeutic. It is good for soul.

To have had stories of any sort in childhood—and here I mean oral stories, those told or read (for reading has an oral aspect even if one reads to oneself) rather than watching them on a screen—puts a person into a basic recognition of and familiarity with the legitimate reality of story *per se*. It is something given with life, with speech and communication, and not something later that comes with learning and literature. Coming early with life it is already a perspective on life. One integrates life as story because one has stories in the back of the mind (unconscious) as containers for organizing events into meaningful experiences. The stories are means of finding oneself in events that might not otherwise make psychological sense at all. (Economic, scientific, and historical explanations are sorts of “stories” that often fail to give the soul the kind of imaginative meaning it seeks for understanding its psychological life.)

Having had story built in with childhood, a person is usually in a better relation with the pathologized material of obscene, grotesque, or cruel images which appear spontaneously in dream and fantasy. Those who hold to the rationalist and associationist theory of mind, who put reason against and superior to imagination, argue that if we do not introduce such grim tales in early impressionable years, we should have less pathology and more rationality in later years. My practice shows me rather that the more attuned and experienced is the imaginative side of personality the less threatening the irrational, the less necessity for repression, and therefore the less actual pathology acted out in literal, daily events. In other words, through story the symbolic quality of pathological images and themes finds a place, so that these images and themes are less likely to be viewed naturalistically, with clinical literalism, as signs of sickness. These images find legitimate places in story. They *belong* to myths, legends, and fairy tales where, just as in dreams, all sorts of peculiar figures and twisted behaviors appear. After all, “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” as some are fond of calling Easter, is replete with gruesome imagery in great pathologized detail.

Story-awareness provides a better way than clinical-awareness for coming to terms with one’s own case history. Case history too is a fictional form written up by thousands of hands in thousands of clinics and consulting rooms, stored away in archives and rarely published. This fictional form called “case history” follows the genre of social realism; it believes in facts and events, and takes with excessive literalism all the tales it tells. In deep analysis, the analyst and the patient together re-write the case history into a new story, creating the “fiction” in the collaborative work of the analysis. Some of the healing that goes on, maybe even the essence of it, is this collaborative fiction, this putting all the chaotic and traumatic events of a life into a new story. Jung said that patients need “healing fictions,” but we have trouble coming to this perspective unless there is already a predilection for story-awareness.

Jungian therapy, at least as I practice it, brings about an awareness that fantasy is the dominant force in a life. One learns in therapy that fantasy is a creative activity which is continually telling a person into now this story, now that one. When we examine these fantasies we discover that they reflect the great impersonal theme of mankind as representing in tragedy, epic, folk tales, legend, and myth. Fantasy in our view is the attempt of the psyche itself to remythologize consciousness; we try to further this activity by encouraging familiarity with myth and folk tale. Soul-making goes hand in hand with deliteralizing consciousness and restoring its connection to mythic and metaphorical thought patterns. Rather than interpret the stories into concepts and rational explanations, we prefer to see conceptual explanations as secondary elaborations upon basic which are containers and givers of vitality. As Owen Barfield and Norman Brown have written: "Literalism is the enemy." I would add: "Literalism is sickness." Whenever we are caught in a literal view, a literal belief, a literal statement, we have lost the imaginative metaphorical perspective to ourselves and our world. Story is prophylactic in that it presents itself always as "once upon a time," "as an "as if," "make-believe" reality. It is the only mode of accounting or telling about that does not posit itself as real, true, factual, revealed, i.e., literal.

This brings us to the question of content. Which stories need to be told? Here I am orthodox, holding for the old, the traditional, the ones of our own culture: Greek, Roman, Celtic, and Nordic myths; the Bible; legends and folk tales. And these with the least modern marketing (updating, cleaning up, editing, etc.), i.e., with the least interference by contemporary rationalism which is subject to the very narrowing of consciousness which the stories themselves would expand. Even if we be not Celtic or Nordic or Greek in ancestry, these collections are the fundamental of our Western culture and they work in our psyches whether we like it or not. We may consider them distorted in their pro-Aryan or pro-male or pro-warrior slant, but unless we understand that these tales depict the basic motifs of the Western psyche, we remain unaware of the basic motives in our psychological dynamics. Our ego psychology still resounds with the motif and motivation of the hero, just as much of the psychology of what we call "the feminine" today reflects the patterns of the goddesses and nymphs in Greek myth. These thematic tales channel fantasy. Platonists long ago and Jung more recently pointed out the therapeutic value to the great myths for bringing order to the chaotic, fragmented aspect of fantasy. The main body of biblical and classical tales directs fantasy into organized, deeply life-giving psychological patterns; these stories present the archetypal modes of experiencing.

I think children need less convincing of the importance of story than do adults. To be adult has come to mean to be adulterated with rationalist explanations, and to shun such childishness as we find in fairy stories. I have tried to show in my work how adult and child have come to be set against each other: childhood tends to mean wonder, imagination, creative spontaneity, while adulthood, the loss of these perspectives.

So the first task, as I see it, is restorying the adult—the teacher and the parent and the grandparent—in order to restory the imagination to a primary place in consciousness in each of us, regardless of age.

I have come at this from a psychological viewpoint, partly because I wish to remove story from its too close association with both education and literature—something taught and something studied. My interest in story is as something lived in and lived through, a way in which the soul finds itself in life.

