

Starting with the first week of class and looking at *Charlotte's Web*, it took me awhile to teach myself to look at and read books in more depth. I am very familiar with elements of a story but the initial activities forced me to think in more detail. When I reread the book I looked at these elements for deeper understanding. By getting to know how the author developed the characters, how their writing style contributes to the overall book and how the setting can affect the story, I was given more insight into reading books.

It was very interesting form me to learn how to 'read' films. This was my first time on looking at different aspects of filmmaking and how they can tie into the overall effect of the film. I found that I kept going back to the articles and rereading them in order to gain a more firm perspective on what to look at. This week really forced me to become more proficient with critical thinking. What really surprised me most in this first week was how every detail in a film can contribute to what the audience thinks, feels, and responds. Camera, editing, sound, and special effects all help connect the film to the audience. What helped me most throughout this course was learning each subtext in these areas. Such as with camera, the zoom, direction of the camera, focus, and size of the lens can all help to portray different perspectives and feelings to the audience. With editing, the way the whole film is put together and moved from scene to scene can create a peaceful flow of the movie or help create suspense. Sound and music within a film can help the audience feel emotion and different music associated with different characters also helps the audience get a feel for their characteristics. By having the chance to look at this through the two *Charlotte's Web* movies, I felt I was more prepared for the rest of the course. I did continually look back at these articles throughout the course and I found it extremely beneficial to read books and films in different contexts.

I would have to say the Module 2: Fidelity to the Original was probably my favorite part of the course. Although I am a huge fan of *Harry Potter*, I felt I learned the most and gained the most insight through these 3 weeks in fidelity to the original. I found it extremely beneficial that we looked at different forms of books. I thought that the way the unit was laid out was perfect because it made me think and rethink about what my position to fidelity to the original was.

Through this unit I learned that there are more important aspects to look at when reading a book and film than making sure that the film is faithful to the book. What surprised me most is that my thoughts and opinions kept changing. When we first started out with the picture books, I thought that overall the film *Jumanji* did a great job representing the illustrations of the book but that the plot was changed. I was satisfied because some of the plot was represented in the film. With regards to *The Polar Express*, I thought the film did an amazing job recreating the illustrations and staying true to the plot, with the exception of making the plot more circular in the film. My opinion and position to fidelity to the original at this point was that films should remain faithful to the illustrations in the book and represent most if not all of the plot. I felt that the representation of characters should also reflect those in the story and should be believable. What was so interesting to me was that my opinion I had just formed changed drastically when I read *The Wizard of Oz*! I was happy that the film's characters resembled (for the most part) those found in the book, but in this case there was not much of the plot from the book that I would have wanted to see in the film! *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was a huge shock for me, knowing that I had grown up watching the older version of the film, and not realizing that it had almost nothing in common with the book. I had no interest in watching the newer film until this course, and was so glad I did. This activity actually was a very culminating experience and lesson in regards to fidelity to the original. Again, I found myself rethinking my thoughts and

opinions in regards to fidelity when reading the book and film of *The Little Mermaid*. My thoughts surrounding *The Wizard of Oz* were quite similar when doing this lesson, except for the characters, I was happy to see the mermaids wearing shells! Overall these activities made me think more about what makes a good children's book and how to read those books. In addition I had to think about what makes a good children's movie and how to read films. It is easier to think about different qualities, such as target audience, authors writing style, the many roles of the elements of the story and the different elements going into making a movie to help decide how faithful a movie can be to a book or story.

Within the last week and looking at books and films as popular culture I learned more features of popular culture and what cultural phenomenon entails. One thing that was really interesting for me with this unit was that I didn't feel the need to look over the articles from the beginning of the course. Throughout the numerous units we did regarding fidelity to the original, I found that I was better able to look at these aspects within *Harry Potter*.

What really surprised me with doing this unit was exactly how much phenomenon was surrounding *Harry Potter*! As I mentioned in my previous *Harry Potter* reflection, when books are written, when children, adults, and students read these books, and even when these books are turned into films there are different factors that influence how each is interpreted. The author, illustrator, reader, and everyone included with representing the book on film are interpreting the book according to their own opinions, religions, cultures, and ideologies. No two people are going to interpret the book exactly the same because everyone instills their own beliefs into their interpretations. Regardless of the positive or negative effects that *Harry Potter* has had overall, the fact remains that the idea of the book and the results of the book have gotten the attention of so many different people, that is has become a part of our global culture and a part of who we are

as a society that thrives on popular culture and as a nation who is looking to achieve from a literary and educational standpoint. The text and images of *Harry Potter* is reflective of the books and quite possibly the literary fundamentals while the images represent the movies, websites, toys and other merchandise surrounding *Harry Potter*.

Upon looking at the role of *Harry Potter* it was interesting to see the many forms of cultural phenomenon that presented itself. From the articles that we read to the millions of websites surrounding *Harry Potter*, it was amazing to see the impact that the book made on ideas, opinions, behaviors, questions, controversies, merchandise, and political opinions around the world. From the publication of the first book in the UK, *Harry Potter* became an answer to some people for revolutionizing the literary world, and became an opportunity for others to rip it apart and infuse their own ideologies.

I can carry forward many things from this course into my teaching. One of the main things I learned from this class is that everything is not black and white. There are many different shades of grey in there. As a Kindergarten teacher, through this course I learned to look at books and films in different ways. This has helped me to see that in my teaching, my students perceive what I teach in different ways. The main question is, are we doing enough in our classrooms to garner understanding? Are we asking our students if they understood the lesson or objective given? More than that, are we challenging their thinking by possibly asking a few to repeat what *they* think they're supposed to do? What I say and what my students hear within the lesson and objectives could be different. This course has helped me to understand those shades of grey.

From this course I have learned that I need to look at my lessons and objectives in more detail and make sure that the message is clear for my students. I have learned that even if it is

clear for me, all 25 of my students might be thinking about it or grasping it in a different way, and I need to make sure they understand what is being asked of them. Through this course, my thoughts on 'no wrong answer' have been strengthened. It's important to foster children's creativity and allow them to think different and outside of the box. What helps them to become even more critical thinkers is to challenge them, so to speak, to explain *why* they view things the way they do.

In thinking about children and literature and film, I have thought more and understood more that not only do adults perceive the same thing differently, but that children do as well. If I am reading a book to my students, chances are my students are going to be getting different things from the story. The way I read a book, based off of my intonation, speed, and location in the classroom is going to factor into how the student understands the story. If I want them to understand a certain lesson, or element of the story, I need to make sure I'm very clear about it. This is the same for when children read stories. When my students are in their guided reading groups, each one is going to understand the book a bit differently than the other. The comprehension questions I ask them based on the story will help me to know if they understood, but I can take it a step further by giving them more open ended questions to give them the chance to show me exactly what they took from the book.

This is the same for the few occasions that we do watch the movie version of a book in class. Often times, the movie can help clarify some points of the book that the children did not understand. It's imperative thought that the teacher views the film first to analyze it and see if it's relative to the lesson. Ultimately, what do you want your students to learn by watching the film? What insights do you want them to gain? Are they watching the movie just for pleasure? Is it to compare/contrast the movie to the book? Through this course I have understood the

importance of visual learning and repetition learning. Most students learn this way and they are both equally important. As a teacher, I need to remember to challenge them on their own level and provide many different forms of teaching.

A lot of my teaching ideas come from my own perspective, other teachers, the internet, magazines, professional development courses, and other inspirational factors. It could be something I dreamed or something I thought of while looking out the window or flying on a plane.

I feel very lucky in my job right now that I have flexibility in how and what I can teach. Based off the course I have thought of many activities I could do. When learning about elements of a story it might be too difficult to do some of the exact lessons as we did in this course. It did make me think though of how I could take the lessons we do on learning about elements of a story and challenging my students into more critical thinking. When learning about the setting of a story and discussing the importance, in order to help my students understand how integral the setting is to the story, we can discuss if the story would look the same in different settings. Would *The Little Mermaid* work in a forest? Would *The Three Little Pigs* work in the ocean? Why or why not and what characteristics would need to change in order for the story to work?

When doing a unit on fairy tales, for example, there are many Venn diagrams that can be used to compare/contrast different versions of the same book. This can also be extended then to do a Venn diagram from the film version to one or more versions of the book. The most important thing to remember is to challenge the students on their own developmentally appropriate level. By letting children learn on their own level, it will be more meaningful to them and will help to challenge them in a way that doesn't overwhelm them.

Based on the activities and insights of the course, everything is relative and important because critical analysis can be incorporated into daily learning, not just literacy. Critical analysis taken from learning to dig deeper into reading and understanding films and literature can be used to think critically on other aspects of daily education. In art, students can think about different ways to achieve the same outcome. Can painting only take place with a paint brush? How about your hands or fingers? How about Popsicle sticks? How about sponges or potatoes or apples? In Mathematics, can adding and subtracting only take place on paper? How about when using blocks or pencils or cookies for that matter? It's important to know that students learn differently and they perceive things differently and when you can take visual learning and repetitive learning and put them together, it is going to make the learning more meaningful and help the students build their critical analysis skills.

Teaching functions as a form of interpretation in many ways. It eventually affects how you teach and what you teach. First and foremost, a teacher brings in their own philosophy of education. The philosophy of education is personal for each teacher and really helps to show what aspects of teaching and learning are important to the individual teacher. In saying that, each teacher is an individual so they have individual teaching styles and beliefs. For me personally, the way I was raised, my own education experiences, and my life experiences have all contributed to my personal beliefs in life. These have also made an impact on my educational beliefs. My beliefs, ideologies and personality all contribute to how I interpret a lesson or an objective, which is going to impact how I teach.

I believe that my personality and level of teaching experience also helps to show how I teach. The students in my classroom definitely have a huge impact on how I teach. At the end of the day, my lessons and my style of teaching is a reflection or interpretation of how they show

their own personalities. I notice that I can do the same lesson differently each year as a result of how my students are responding to the material. Teaching is also reflective of the age of students in your classroom. It's imperative that you know the developmental age of your students and know what they can and can't handle. I think being a teacher means knowing your students and knowing the needs of your students and adapting to their needs as well as understanding how they learn. This in itself is a huge aspect of teaching and ultimately where interpretation plays a major role.

Interpretation greatly effects what you decide to teach as well. Depending on whether the school provides the teacher with well developed lesson plans or if the teacher is just given objectives and told to come up with their own lessons, there is still room for interpretation. If there are well developed lesson plans, sometimes there are many lessons given in a unit and it is the teacher's role to assess how their students are doing and decide which lessons to teach. In saying that, unfortunately sometimes the teacher doesn't think about the needs of their students and still interprets what lessons they think are important or relative. This can be said as well for the schools that just provide the overall objectives and require the teacher to come up with the lesson plan. This is all interpretation here because the teacher is then taking their own individual opinions, beliefs, ideologies, personality and level of teaching experience and putting that together to decide how they can teach this lesson best and what materials and content they will use to teach it. Perception is a huge aspect of teaching and no two people will perceive a lesson or unit in exactly the same way and no two students will perceive or understand the lesson in the same way. At the end of the day, teaching is interpretation and it's our job as teachers to take into consideration all the shades of grey that contribute to the way a child learns.