

Sophister Module Description Template

Full Name: Environmental Picturebooks, Ecocriticism and Visual texts for children

Short Name: Environmental Picturebooks

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Sinéad Moriarty, morians1@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of theories of ecocriticism and their application to children's literature
- Demonstrate skills in reading and analyzing visual texts
- Display an understanding of ecopedagogy
- Identify and examine key themes across a range of environmental texts for children
- Perform close readings of the set picturebooks with a focus on depictions of animals, landscape, the child as an agent of change
- Compare environmental texts from a range of periods with attention to their contexts and their formal qualities.

Content:

There is widespread acknowledgement that the world is facing environmental crisis and governments and the organizations like the UN have committed to changes aimed at creating a more sustainable future. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 includes a commitment to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainable management of natural resources and urgent action on climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals further include ensuring quality education for all. Taken together these goals represent an international acknowledgement of the urgency of climate crisis, and a desire to work collectively to ensure a sustainable future. The goals of quality education and sustainability can be understood as cohesive because collective action will be required to achieve the goals outlined in the Agenda.

Ireland's National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2014-2020) is intended to ensure that the education system contributes to sustainable development through "equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future" (DES, 2014, p.3). Children's literature has been cited as playing a

key role in children's environmental education and there are increasing numbers of environmentally themed texts being published for child readers. This module examines the growing area of environmental literature for children, with a specific focus on picturebooks produced for younger readers. The module provides an introduction to ecocritical theory and key concepts of ecopedagogy. Throughout the twelve weeks we will also engage with the areas of animal studies and posthumanism. Ecocriticism is a relatively new area of literary criticism which continues to attract significant scholarship. Ecocriticism is a branch of theory that draws a clear link with praxis – seeking to stimulate students and readers to reconsider their relationship to the wider world and to take practical steps to reduce our own impact on the environment and to support wider movements towards sustainability. This focus on praxis and pedagogy means that ecocriticism has a particular relevance for children's literature which has long been connected with pedagogy and didacticism. Throughout the module we will explore a range of different kinds of visual texts, from Dr Seuss's classic book *The Lorax*, to the wordless picturebooks of Jeannie Baker and Jorg Müller.

Assessment Details:

- Short written piece (1,000 words) analysing one of the texts covered to date in the module using ecocritical theory. Due end of Week 6. (20%)
- Essay (4,000-5,000 words). Week 13. (80%)

Preliminary Reading List if Available:

Week 1: Intro to ecocriticism

Week 2: Dr Seuss, *The Lorax* (1971)

Week 3: Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901)

Week 4: Oliver Jeffers, *This Moose Belongs to Me* (2012)

Week 5: Rob Maguire and Aga Grandowicz *Dr Hibernica Finch's Compelling Compendium of Irish Animals* (2018) – extracts will be available on blackboard and a copy will be available in the class for close reading

Week 6: Jeannie Baker, *Belonging* (2004), Jorg Müller, *The Changing Countryside* (1977) – extracts will be available online with the texts available in class

Week 7: READING WEEK

Week 8: Isabella Bunnell, *Disappearing Acts*, and Martin Jenkins's *The Emperor's Egg*

Week 9: Emily Hughes, *Wild* (2013)

Week 10: Oliver Jeffers, *The Fate of Fausto* (2019)

Week 11: Zoe Tucker, *Greta and the Giants* (2019)

Week 12: Nicola Davies and Laura Carlin, *The Promise* (2013), Jen Cullerton Johnson, Sonia Lynn Sadler *Seeds of Change* (2010)

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**