

Sophister Module Description Template

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

Short Name: Environmental Picturebooks

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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 Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, to the wordless picturebooks of Jeannie Baker and Jorg Müller.

Assessment Details:

- Essay (3000 words) 70%, see handbook for submission details.
- Reader Ecoliteracy Pack (Group work) 30%

Preliminary Reading List if Available:

Week 1: Intro to ecocriticism

Week 2: Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901)

Week 3: Oliver Jeffers, *This Moose Belongs to Me* (2012)

Week 4: Emily Hughes, *Wild* (2013)

Week 5: Robert Macfarlane & Jackie Morris, *The Lost Words* – extracts will be available on blackboard

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

Week 7: READING WEEK

Week 8: Karma Wilson & Jane Chapman, *Where is Home, Little Pip?*

Week 9: Nicola Davies and Laura Carlin, *The Promise* (2013), Jen Cullerton Johnson, Sonia Lynn Sadler *Seeds of Change* (2010)

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

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

Week 12: Review Week & Essay Planning

Environmental Picturebooks – Assessment Details

1. Critical Essay. (70%)

Write a critical essay on 1-2 of the selected texts from the module. Essay questions to be provided by week 6 on Blackboard.

Word Limit: 3000 words.

Aims:

- To display an understanding of the primary texts explored in the module, drawing on quotations and specific examples from the text to support your arguments.
- To interrogate selected texts utilising the key theoretical frameworks introduced by the module.

2. Reader's Ecoliteracy Pack – Group Work (30%)

Details: Working in groups set by the module coordinator, create a 'reader's pack' to accompany one of the texts from the module. The pack should highlight environmental themes, should suggest activities for young readers that might embed the learning, and should be aimed at a lay child audience. As such it should demonstrate an ability to translate the academic research and work completed in the module for young lay readers. The pack should display an awareness of critical approaches to developing ecoliteracy for young readers, and should display a detailed knowledge of the primary text and a creative approach to utilising this text to support environmental education. The pack should be aimed at readers aged 10-12 years old. You can include images, links to external resources and other elements that you believe extends the pedagogical potential of the selected primary text.

Aims:

- To display a knowledge of theories of ecopedagogy and critical ecoliteracy
- To work together with classmates to create a practical tool for child readers to scaffold the learning initiated by the primary text.
- To create an engaging and creative resource for readers that demonstrates innovative ways in which the primary text can be a launching pad for further ecoliteracy education.

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.**