

Children's Book Reflection

The children's book assignment was like an amalgamation of what we learned from previous assignments. All though the task of writing a children's book may seem easy and straightforward it actually required me to have a good plan. I needed to really understand my audience profile, the word choices, the characters traits, the book format and art, how many pages, and much more.

For this children book assignment, we were asked to pick two children book that would act as a base for when we write our own book. Although not a book I picked "Spirited Away" and the fiction novel "A Wrinkle in Time" by Madeleine L'engle. The decision to use "Spirited Away" came from the fact that it's one of my favorite films since childhood. "Spirited Away" had all the assets that for me made it a great children's story. It had fantasy and magical elements. The characters were interesting and fun, and the animation stood out to me. The characters were original and had complex themes. All of this made "Spirited Away" great but how was I going to incorporate that into my children's book and was it necessary for a children book aimed at 7-year olds to include so many complex themes. I decided to take some elements from the film like the fact that there was a "blurred line" between good and evil characters, the importance of the environment and greed also the way the film had magical realism. To be frank my second book base "A Wrinkle in Time" had a lesser impact on how I wanted to write my children's book. What I decided to take from it was the main characters individuality and the value of individuality.

Because the children's book needed to be science focused was one of the reasons, I chose those two mediums as my base for my children book. "A Wrinkle in time" had many scientific themes and elements. For example, space traveling and the many dimensions of the universe. L'engles novel had incorporated those complex themes in her children's book in a way that was easy to understand and was fun. In "Spirited Away" all though it wasn't really science focused it also dealt with environmentalism. The film examined the consequences humans have on the natural world like rivers. It also showed instances of greed and over consumption. All of this was helpful in my children's book that focused on my own science theme of plastic pollution. Plastic pollution is a really easy topic for children to grasp. For my book I wanted to talk about how human greed and overconsumption leads to the detriment of marine environments and animals, greed is a theme that is presented in "Spirited Away". I also wanted the main character Milo to have some sort of "flaw" that was seen as a weakness but was actually important to the story. This focus of individuality is something I got from "A Wrinkle in Time".

The target for my children books were school aged children from around 5-10 years of age. Children in this age range are typically in elementary school. Choosing an audience age range took some time because Spirited Away is a film and so it really doesn't have a set age range people of all ages enjoy Spirited Away. In fact, its rated PG for everyone. A Wrinkle in Time is set for children 12 and up due to the fact that it had complex themes and such. So, I made sure not to make my book too complex but easy to understand for my age range. I also

put pictures through the book to help develop the story. My book didn't have many images like a picture book as it was more a short story that required the audience to make use of their mind and imagination. Because my topic is plastic pollution, I think my age range is optimal because I believe that you can make the most impact at that age range. I have read a lot about neuroplasticity and how its greatest during puberty that's why I chose this age range.

In my children book I wanted it to have a sense of magical realism somethings that's present in *Spirited Away*. Magical realism is when magic or the supernatural is present in an "otherwise real-world or mundane setting". So, I wanted the story to take place in Milo's home and then the story is taken to his room where his room is then filled with water coming out of the ocean. The story telling had a lot of magical realism and fantasy. Just in the beginning with the line "staring at the crashing waves and the jellyfishes that seem to sparkle under the moonlight." I think the audience will get this feeling of fantasy and magic. This is something that I got from the author of *A Wrinkle in Time*, Madeleine L'engle. This author in many of her books uses this rhetorical device to give readers a sense of fantasy ,magic and whimsicality. In *Spirited Away* the main character Chihiro's parents are turned into Pigs, only after she does her deed are, they turned back into their original human form. This is something I added into my story, Milo's dad is transformed into an albatross (a species of seabirds affected by plastic pollution). After saving the sea animals affected by pollution and helping the mermaid Milo's dad is transformed into his human self. The story telling in my book takes place mostly in Milos head in his dreams I think this is something the readers can appreciate. The decision to make my story fiction comes from the fact that I enjoy fantasy and I think it's more fun for my targeted age range to read something fiction instead of a book with too many information that they won't retain for long. I also made clear to give Milo some sort of "flaw" just to make this character more relatable and sincere for readers. Milos "flaw" isn't really a flaw but something he perceives as a flaw because he is bullied by his classmate for having an interest in animals especially sea animals and their well-being. In the end Milo realizes that there isn't anything wrong with having empathy for animals despite what others tell him. His empathy was important as it's what led him to help the mermaid and the animals. It's also important to note how the story had just three characters with dialogue. The point of this was to make the story simple for readers and not cause any confusion. That's another reason I didn't include a mother character for Milo.

What I learned from this children book assignment is that writing for children is harder than I realized. Children have a shorter attention span so a lengthy book probably wouldn't have kept their attention for long. There were some challenges when writing this book. One of the big challenges I had was just deciding how and where I was going to write the story, what program or app I was going to use or if I should create a physical book and then scan it. I decided to use an apple app that I had on my MacBook called Pages. This application allowed me to create a digital book and share it. In the beginning I wanted to create a physical book with drawings I was going to create using watercolor, but I realized that would take to long for the time I had. I did scan some drawings I made and then put it into the digital book. To be honest I really wanted to create a physical book with watercolor illustrations because I thought the watercolor, because it looks a bit washed out would help the readers make the connection

that the story was a dream and it didn't really occur. But with limited supplies and this quarantine there was really nothing I could do about that. I also think that just this quarantine had affected my drive to do work. The extra stress from final's week and the fact that I had a sinus infection (that I thought was something else) for around 2 months affected the quality of work a bit. Overall despite these challenges this assignment was fun, and I did enjoy fabricating a fantasy story for children. This assignment also made me appreciate the work authors have to put into creating a story something I will keep in mind when reading a book.