FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2nd SEMESTER 2019

ASSIGNMENT 2

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE
(CHL821S)
Dear Student

Allow me to give you feedback with regards to Assignment 2 for Semester 2, 2018. If all the truth be told, the work of many of us really leaves a lot to be desired. Most of you scored mediocre marks because you merely copied from the internet.

Let me emphasise from the onset that for the majority of you there still is a lot that needs to be done. There is nothing that is impossible in this course and there is also a lot of room for you to improve; what is called for is a determination and desire to do better. Otherwise for most, the assignments had mediocre marks ranging in the 50’s. Only a few assignments were above expectations and these students’ scores are in the 70’s. The lowest marks were 22, 36, 38 and 40. What is most striking about the assignments which scored low marks is that they were similar because they were copied from the same internet sources. In some cases, the answers followed no clear pattern or order and they were very skeletal. However, what was most worrying was the plagiarism from the internet. Chunks were lifted in verbatim and planted in the assignments in no specific order. The unfortunate thing is that the same passages were copied by different people. Under normal circumstances, such students should score a “0” mark for plagiarising.
The Study Guide was utilised but unfortunately, not to answer the set questions. My advice is that you must read the study guide and other sources, especially at Honours level. Also, read the questions carefully to identify their demands and then respond to these and no other. You must work hard from the onset. There is nothing that can substitute hard working and especially with regards to this course, Children’s Literature. You have to practise writing essays and read as widely as possible. Remember that even in the Examination that you will write in November, there will be essay questions, therefore if you have not mastered the skill of essay writing, it will be a challenging exam.

The presentation of work, grammar and depth of analysis was yet another area of weakness. At times I could not even follow what some answers were trying to communicate. It is not fair to education if someone doing an Honours Degree in English gets a pass mark when the person can hardly write a single sentence that is grammatical, especially if it is an assignment that was done at home, with all the time and resources at your disposal. It doesn’t do you any good if you hand in your rough draft that is scribbled over and is half-heartedly done.

One other area of concern is the lack of the required background knowledge about the subject and the texts studied in this course. Yet again true as it may be, you could have contacted me as your Marker Tutor and if you are within Windhoek I could invite you for a discussion and if not, we could communicate using e-mails. Only one student has done this so far. It was also unfortunate that some of you did not attend the vacation school; because it gives us a platform to analyse the topics in-depth and address any concerns raised about the course. Please do communicate if you need help on any topic, that is, in preparation for the exam.

Many of the mistakes you were making are highlighted in your assignment and you are free to come so that we can discuss this further if there is a need for you to do that. What you are encouraged to do particularly is to always research with regards to each individual question. The internet is full of information that can be used but I caution against simply copying information that is irrelevant form either the internet or Study Guide or Books. Once again
please do read what is on page 6 of the Tutorial Letter. It is not that good when I am marking and all I see is a flouting of all that is written on page 6.

Thus, this feedback letter serves to highlight some of the pleasing and unpleasing things I witnessed in your second Assignment. I would also like to give you more direction to be fully conversant with some of the aspects that will make you appreciate the course Children’s Literature. Worth noting first and foremost is that overall, the second assignment was just average and not up to standard, and the performance was not better from the first one.

For those who scored low marks, what was evident in the assignments was lack of planning and preparedness in the answers. There was no sense of originality and sadly no evidence of research. Some of you had a long reference list at the end of the assignment but sadly no evidence that the scholarly works had been referred to in the assignment. Hence, this was not indicative of wide research and most significantly, reading of the set texts leaves a lot to be desired.

Candidates can demonstrate detailed knowledge of a text in many ways: direct quotation or close paraphrase, however short. This requires broad reading and an understanding of the material read. Quotations are used for a purpose, that is, to support your ideas and authenticate them. You can also show your knowledge of the text by cross-referencing. You can use information from books, internet and any other sources. What is not rewarded, though, is the answer that consists of a series of generalisations, or the answer that merely mentions any and everything that the student knows about a text without any relevance to the question. Unless there is close reference supporting, amplifying or illustrating the generalisation, there is no proof that the student has read the text for himself or herself. Such answers are accordingly not rewarded. This was the case with some of the answers I got. They lacked concrete evidence in the form of examples to support the discussion, hence the discussion was merely generalised, and the marks scored were very low.
Let me again emphasise the fact that at this level, it is not enough to rely on the Study Guide only. The Study Guide is there to just give you directions – to guide you so that you can research more as guided by what is in the Study Guide. Hence, when you refer to other relevant books and also to the internet sources – I always reward broadly read students. With regards to the question you did, the Study Guide was therefore not adequate at all for what you were expected to come up with.

Layout

1. Familiarise yourselves with essay writing techniques. A good essay ought to have an introduction that briefly states your approach to the topic, body paragraphs that explore the topic and focus on your argument, and a brief concluding paragraph that winds up the presentation. Essay paragraphs must be well structured, with meaningful and relevant sentences.

2. Revise your work to ensure that it is free of errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Use capital letters only when you must. Write well-constructed sentences always. Desist from the use of symbols such as ‘&’ for ‘and’, and other sms writing styles. Revise your essay, edit it before submission.

3. In your marked assignments, you will notice that errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation have been underlined in red. Vague ideas or concepts are shown by a question mark in the margin. Bear in mind that numerous errors lower the quality of your assignment.

4. Take note of the word limit. If you have a lot to write, select only the key points. Essays that go beyond the word limit will be penalised.

5. You are advised to adhere to the British English spelling for words such as ‘behaviour’ and ‘programme’.

6. Always acknowledge the sources from which you draw the information that you present in your essay lest you will be accused of plagiarism. You are advised to use the APA referencing method. Do not restrict yourself to the contents of the Study Guide only. Take note of prescribed readings for each unit. Get one or two of the recommended texts and broaden your understanding of the topic at hand.
With this in mind, let me now address your performance in the assignment.

With regards to the individual questions, I will only comment briefly since I have also written some comments in the body of each assignment and these are the comments which apply specifically to you. I encourage you to seriously look at the comments; you might find them helpful. If you do not understand anything with regards to the comments, please contact me and get clarification.

**Question analysis**

Once again, I advise you to examine the question closely and underline the key words which you think that your answer needs to address. These are words which will guide you in interpreting the question.

Below are general comments on Assignment 2, followed by specific comments on individual questions. The comments are based on the overall performance of all the students and you need to use them so that you can learn from other people’s mistakes and achievements as well.

**QUESTION 1** 25 marks

Conflict between children and elders is a common motif in children’s literature. With close reference to at least **TWO** texts studied on this course, analyse the theme of conflict and evaluate the resolution(s).

You are expected to analyse conflicts in the following texts:

- *The Bundle of Firewood*: Tariro and her Grandmother
- *Chike and the River*: Chike and his uncle; Chike and the robbers
- *Robinson Crusoe*: Robinson and his parents

**Your discussion should be supported with specific examples from the texts.**

Most of you did not respond to the second part of the question, that is, evaluating the resolutions. In this case, you give your own opinion.

**QUESTION 2** 25 marks

With close reference to Dahl’s novel, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, analyse the symbolic significance of Mr. Wonka’s chocolate factory.
Significance of the chocolate factory

- Helps form the background for the morality of the story
- It is the physical embodiment of the difference between poverty and wealth; Charlie’s poverty-stricken home stands in the shadow of this factory filled with riches; Charlie is the only poor child who gets the golden ticket
- Represents the idea that things cannot be fairly judged from an outside perspective: Mr Wonga is small but very rich, Charlie is small but wins the factory; the factory looks small from the outside, but its true glories lie below the ground
- Linked to the Golden ticket which is also a physical representation of the difference between the rich and the poor. It represents hope for Charlie
- Punishment of the bad children in the factory, underscores the moral code
- Shows what goes around comes around: Veruca, Violet, Mike, and August, the bad children, are punished. Augustus is greedy, Veruca is bratty, Violet is an excessive gum chewer and Mike is obsessed with television
- Contrasts the greedy, cold unfair world in which Charlie and his family belongs

QUESTION 3

Contemporary children’s literary texts are often framed around social concerns affecting children and/or society.

Assess the validity of this statement with close reference to any TWO narratives studied on this course.

Include the following social concerns:

In *The Bundle of Firewood*:
- Poverty
- HIV/AIDS
- Orphans
- Education
- The girlchild
- Conserving the natural environment, etc.

In *Chike and the River*:
- Family
- Crime
- Peer pressure, etc.

Please do not retell the story or just narrate what the character does in the story, but use this information to describe their characters.
Suggestions for future assignments and examinations

I feel it is important to emphasise these again:

Firstly, buy the prescribed set books, and study them. These books are listed in the Tutorial Letter, and I don’t have to list them here again. When you are doing a course such as Children’s Literature, you cannot depend on notes in the Study Guide. As the name says, this is just a guide. You cannot say you are studying Literature when you have not read the texts. You need your own texts, because as you study them, you have to make notes on the text themselves. You cannot, and should never, do that on library copies, or on somebody’s books. Prescribed Literature books are your own possession and, like a toothbrush, you should not share them with anyone, not even your closest friend!

Secondly, learn the terms that are often used to discuss Literature. The Study Guide has good sections on this, but there are many other books that specialise in literary terms. If you want to write and speak with authority on Literature, and if you want to understand Literature better, you need to learn the vocabulary of Literature.

Having done this, when you go through your essay at the end you need to assess whether the aspects highlighted were adequately responded to or not. It is of the best as well if you first write a rough draft so that if you realise that there is any component that is missing you can then revisit it. For example in the assignment submitted, there were some students who did not show how to link the ideas to the text, yet still for others there was a failure to illustrate the ideas with clear examples.

The layout of the essay also needs to improve for some. The introduction which you write has to directly address the question and also show how you understand the question, as well as give an indication as to how you will present you answer.

Once again I will call upon you to read much more around the subject area and not restrict yourself to the Study Guide. When it comes to the Exam, this concept applies as well. You are
expected to have a thorough understanding of all the texts and for this you do not have to rely on the Study Guide alone. You will need to give adequate examples and arrange your ideas logically.

Have you ever wondered what examiners want. I can tell you this: there is no mystery about what examiners reward. It is:

i) detailed knowledge of the text,

ii) made relevant to the question set (NOT a recapitulation of general notes or a rehearsed answer to a different question)

iii) a personal response to the text that shows a depth in analysis.

A Literature in English examination is an attempt to assess the individual candidate’s engagement with the text, and the feelings – based on knowledge and slanted as the question dictates – of each individual candidate about and towards each set text.

Conclusion

Marking your assignments was such an enlightening experience. The overall performance was quite discouraging, especially in this course which most students find difficult. Try to improve in the examination; read the study guide and the recommended texts and study them. Remember that you cannot say you are studying literature when you have not read any texts on second language acquisition. Most of these are available in the library. Remember to make your own notes as you read.

I wish you all the best in the examination. Read the Study Guide thoroughly; make use of it exhaustively, as well as any other reading materials you can find.

I hope that these comments will be put into effect. I thank you very much for conscientiously working through your assignments.

I wish you all the best in your studies and I am looking forward to well-prepared and exhaustive responses in the exam.
Please check the e-platform for extra notes. I have already registered you so that you can have access to the notes.

Please do not hesitate to call or email us if you have any query concerning assignments.

Your Tutor

Dr Juliet Pasi