

September 26, 2003

Elaine Hawker  
BYU-Idaho  
English Department  
SA 116  
Rexburg, ID 83460-0820

Dear Elaine:

Thanks for allowing me to visit your English 355 Children's Literature class yesterday. I think this is the first time I've seen you teach this class, and I understand now why it is such a popular course—and much of its success is because of you.

I'm impressed that you've created such a strong academic course while still engaging and stimulating students' multiple needs and levels. The focus of your teaching is critical thinking in which you get students to examine books, concepts, and theories through seamlessly integrating literary analysis, textual rhetoric, visual rhetoric, and cultural rhetoric.

Your teaching has purpose and direction. Your teaching and presentations are superbly organized. You effortlessly lead students through folk tales, fairy tales, legends, myths, and fables in such a clear, clean organization that I easily recognized a natural outline with main headings, headings, and subheadings without drawing specific attention to the outline—it's a comfortable part of your preparation and presentation. You have a definite starting point, you know where you want to end, and you march students along with you, and they're not overtly conscious they're moving in the direction you want them to go. A student even tried to distract you with a desire to describe her "fairy tale" engagement, but you smoothly directed her back to the class conversation before she could take the class down her memory lane.

You do an excellent job of providing textual evidence of the principles you're presenting. For nearly every point along your teaching outline, you present a visual/textual example from the great variety of children's books you display and share with the class—evidence of your personal need for a large children's library. For example, while individually discussing the folklorists Perault, Grimm, and Jacobs, you reach into your basket to hold up and pass around different cultural versions of one story, Cinderella. You briefly discuss differences in culture, literary approaches, and illustrations—all of this as a natural part of what you teach.

Yet with all the academic and scholarly emphasis that are the foundation of your teaching and course, you never lose sight of the significant value of literature, specifically children's literature, has in our and students' lives—you show the universality and uniqueness of the human experience.

Again, you're a strong, solid teacher who obviously enjoys what she does and does it well. Thanks for all you do. How can I help?

Take care,

Rodney D. Keller