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English 403 - Children's Literature

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Final Project Topic

For my final project, I would like my topic to be "The Works of Neil Gaiman and the movement of Children's Literature away from the 'Disney Template'".

I read to my kids on a regular basis, and my daughter, who is now 11 is constantly fascinated with books that involve supernatural items or books that are far less 'saccharine' than the majority of the popular books of the previous generation. More and more popular children's books are a bit scarier and have more "harsh realities" than previously. Children today are 'growing up' at a much faster rate than ever, and I see this in my kids. Children's literature is adapting and where 20 or 30 years ago a book like Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone or Coraline might have only been considered appropriate for children who are 10 or 12 years old, they are frequently being read and enjoyed by much younger children - my daughter was 7 when she started reading the Harry Potter series.

Disney has long been considered to be the premiere entertainer of children, and they do things very formulaically - a clear good protagonist, a clearly evil antagonist, a struggle, and everyone lives happily ever after, with no ill effects. In more and more children's literature, both the protagonist and antagonist are more complicated characters, and the lines between 'good' and

‘evil’ are often blurred. This is the kind of reality that children live in, and react to more and more. Neil Gaiman, aside from being one of my favorite authors, is one whose works are considered to have a ‘darker edge’ than most works from previous generations. This topic is one that I find fascinating and I think will be very interesting to read and write about.