

Reflective Essay

I began my research for this project with only the general parameters given by Professor Phillips for ENGL 725: that the paper should address one of the text-to-film adaptations covered in the second half of “Film Adaptations of Children’s Classics”; and that the work should integrate the existing critical conversation by synthesizing it within an original argument. Despite being given a wide range of topics to choose from, I instantly decided to focus on *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. After some contemplation, I concluded that my focus should be on the White Witch character, being that she was the most vivid fictional female character of my childhood.

I began my research process by determining the subjects that I would cover in my paper. Among other topics, I would need to consider the evolution of the character from the original edition’s illustrations, to a late 1980s BBC television miniseries, to the 2005 feature film. Professor Phillips had already given assigned a few scholarly sources on adaptation and on visual analysis, but I expanded my study of pictorial theory beyond what I had studied in class. Additionally, I identified 4 specific subjects for which I needed additional information: background on female literary villains, context for interpreting the work of original illustrator Pauline Baynes, reviews and other evidence of reception of the BBC television miniseries, and materials about the making and reception of the 2005 feature film. Along the way, I came across other sources dealing with the world of Narnia and its representation of evil, which was relevant to my study of the White Witch and rounded out my knowledge. One of the very first sources that I found during this process that was a major guiding force on this paper was a *Vogue* interview with Tilda Swinton in which she explained some of the nuances of her performance as the White Witch in the film. The interview supported my position on the nature of the character’s power while also helping me to decide upon the structure of my essay.

A number of resources available through Hale Library enabled my research. The online databases were by far the most fruitful resource during my research period. While I explored most of the databases dedicated to the English literature field, the two that I gathered the most material from were Project Muse and Academic OneFile. Credit must be given to Dr. Melia Fritch and Dr. Joe Sutliff Sanders for teaching me how to efficiently navigate through a database. I specifically chose those two databases because of how easy it was to narrow the parameters of my search. The filter system helped me reach even more resources. When my search for information on Pauline Baynes came up dry using the databases and library search engine, I went to British newspaper websites to find some insightful obituaries about her. Beyond electronic material, I referenced the library's physical copies of Molly Bang's *Picture This: How Pictures Work* and the official movie companion to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by Perry Moore, along with various other materials that Professor Phillips had on reserve that dealt with book-to-film adaptations.

Since my research process included specific subjects and key words, the sources that I ended up taking the time to read were relevant in that they either furthered my understanding of the critical conversation or provided especially quotable material. When I was in the middle of writing the essay, I had accumulated a large pool of sources, and it became necessary to prioritize them. I eventually could rank my sources into three groups based on the effectiveness of their information to my thesis. The primary sources included the original stories from the Chronicles of Narnia series, along with the video of the BBC miniseries and the feature film. The secondary sources were the scholarly articles that expounded upon visual theories and female villains, as well as the movie companion book. My tertiary sources were the articles that informed me of general information about certain subjects but were not featured in the essay.

Research for the essay forced me to use several different library tools that I had never used before. Most of these instances came about because of deadlines and I had to problem solve how to make my

research process more efficient. One of my biggest difficulties was finding enough sources about Pauline Baynes. The databases and Library only had a few articles on file, and my examination of the newspaper websites only gave me one usable source. This situation led me to use the Interlibrary Loan system, which made available materials from Brigham Young University that rounded out my analysis of Baynes. Beyond the electronic tools that the Library offers, the staff was most helpful to me in writing this essay. When my class and work schedule wouldn't allow me the time to go the library to find a book, I was able to request that the staff email me a PDF of a specific chapter from *Vader, Voldemort and Other Villains: Essays on Evil in Popular Media*.

The research process for this essay stretched over nearly two months. During this time, I honed the skills I already had and learned new ways to research more competently. Despite being drawn out over a long period of time, I never found myself dreading the work I would have to put into the research because I was passionate about the subject, and the ease and efficiency that the Library put into their research tools allowed me to push the research even further. As a future educator, I will draw on my experiences and the skills enabled by the staff and resources of K-State Library and use them to teach my future students the importance and pleasure of research. I look forward to instilling in them the skills necessary to thrive in academics and an appreciation of the services and support that libraries provide for the public.