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Children's Book Reflection

My children's book is a science-related piece of writing catered to older children. To approach this assignment, my group began with analyzing models, comparing interests, and collecting research before putting pen to paper. To make our writing appeal to our 7- to 12-year-old audience, we used elements of classic fairytales whilst maintaining relatability in order to execute our purpose, that children should value sleep. Illustrations were my part of the project, and they were sparse in order for us to keep the interest of our wide audience. In the end, writing a children's book was a rewarding, albeit challenging, experience.

I worked on a children's book with Chen and Jessica, both of whom were in my group for the previous One Paper, Three Audiences assignment. Beginning with models to refer to, the books that inspired me were The Giving Tree and The Lorax, related to environmental conservation with strong themes. The former I loved for the feelings it invoked, and the latter for the message it left readers with.

When the group came together, however, we found it best to stick to our previous topic, sleep, as we all had done research on it beforehand. We did not completely throw conservation to the wayside, though. After each of us wrote our relevant research down, our plan of action was to each focus on one aspect of the process that best suited our own interests. Jessica, who chose to be in charge of the storyline and first draft, made sure that deforestation was the method the villain used to cause terror, as an ode to conservation.

The topic of sleep is particularly relevant to our audience, 7- to 12-year-old children. Sleeping less is a want that tends to stay constant through all of adolescence, especially as it may seem like adults do not rest as much, so it worked well for us to write about it. Additionally, our research was particularly helpful in constructing the story, as we included realistic facts on sleep and irritability, obesity, and energy.

There are many aspects of our story that give it a fairy-tale vibe, which we feel was beneficial to keeping our young audience interested, especially as past studies have shown that younger audiences are more interested in stories that are made-up and let them use their imaginations. To name a few, in our story there was a group of child heroes, which other children can relate to and imagine themselves as, against an adult villain; there were “elders” that spoke in wise tones, and magical tools that they were given to help them on their journey; and their friendship contributed to stopping the enemy. These features are commonly used in popular tales, and I think they work well in our piece.

Speaking more to the idea of relatability of child heroes, it helps that the readers can see themselves as one of the characters in the story. Both the fictional children and the real ones want to be with their friends, go on a journey, and save the day. The more the reader can visualize themselves in the story, the bigger impact the ending has on them, as the main character is able to choose sleep over fun after she has learned of the consequences.

Two other features we included that were tailored to our young audience were repetition in relation to the structure of the story, and sparse illustrations. Regarding repetition, it can be seen in fairy tales such as *The Three Little Pigs*. Repeating tends to drive the point home, and allows the reader to learn from the mistakes of the characters within the story. For our book in specific, each iteration points back to our science-related purpose that children should value rest.

It takes a few lost nights of sleep before the friends realize that a lack of sleep is what was holding them back from catching Mr. Dromedary.

Speaking to illustrations, while initially we were planning to make the book a classic picture book, we ended up agreeing that images might deter older children from reading, as most novels for 12-year-olds do not include pictures. Yet, one exception is The Little Prince, a classic book that actually does include sparse illustrations but is still meant for an older-child audience. My share of the book was mostly in creating the drawings, and like in The Little Prince, the few I made were simplistic and mostly served as breaks between sections, almost like chapters many of the times. The result is a book that does not immediately lose the interest of older children, therefore appealing to a wider audience.

I chose to do the illustrations of the story as graphic design is something I have done before and am interested in. I am no pro, but I know how to put images together to create new ones, and that is exactly what I did for this story. However, I will admit that some parts did prove to be a challenge because I am not an artist. I had to work with what my internet searches provided me with.

Overall, I realize that creating a children's book is a lot harder than one would think. Having a smaller word count may make it seem like this kind of book will be easy, but it just means you have less space to get your message through. Moreover, while writing the plotline may not be such a struggle, writing in the other details that make the plot possible is, and editing takes a long time. For example, the conch shell that the heroes use to extinguish fires was not in the original story, and even before submitting we almost forgot to write the sentence that gives the heroes the conch. That is to say, it is easy for something to go unnoticed in dozens of pages of writing.

Despite the challenges, working on a children's book was a rewarding experience, and I am glad we were able to do it. I guess now I can appreciate the good books in my life a little more.