**CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION**

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EECE 441  
Spring 2003

**Definition:**  
Realistic Fiction: Stories and novels that mimic the real world. Realistic fiction includes both historical fiction and contemporary realistic fiction. (Latrobe, Brodie, and White 144).

**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION**

1. **Everything in the story could happen** to real people living in our contemporary world. This does not mean the story is true, only that it could have happened. This allows child readers to have many experiences through their imagination in the safety and security of their own lives.

2. **Characters act and speak like real people.** Characters should be well developed so that readers feel like they really know them. The protagonist should change or develop during the story.

3. **The plot should develop naturally.** Conflicts develop as characters cope with problems.

4. **The content of the story should be presented honestly.** Capitalizing on the novelty of a subject to sensationalize it should be avoided. The author should present the motivations behind any negative behavior or violence and show the aftereffects.

5. **Themes help readers better understand life.** Themes should be subtle and permeate the book. A major theme should have universal implications and give children something to think about long after the book is read.

6. **The tone of the book should be hopeful.** Children need to feel that there is hope no matter how bleak a situation might be.

**VALUES OF CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION FOR CHILDREN**

1. The story helps children understand human problems and relationships and thus have a fuller understanding of themselves and their potential.

2. The story may reassure children that they are not the first person in the world who has faced a particular problem. Their problems are not unique.

3. The story is a way for children to experience a world or culture or lifestyle different from their own.

4. Stories may serve as a preparation for life. They illuminate experiences that children have not yet had.

5. The stories provide many possible models, both good and bad, for coping with the problems of being human. As children experience these stories, they may begin to filter out some meaning for their own lives.

