

SUMMER READING

Duchesne High School



The English Department
Required Reading
Summer 2016

Overview

Below you will find the reading assignments required for each of the English courses offered in the 2016-2017 school year. The initial discussions and first assignments of each course will be rooted in your summer reading. As you read, please consult the discussion questions included on this sheet. (Incoming seniors, please note that your reading assignments are dependent upon your first semester class. If you are unsure which English class you are taking first semester, consult your schedule, or read all of the assignments.)

9th Grade: Literature and Composition

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

Kamkwamba tells the story of his life in a small Malawi town and the efforts he made to secure his education. As you read, consider the following questions and ideas:

1. How does Kamkwamba stress the idea that life in Africa does not differ that drastically from life in the West?
2. Kamkwamba tells a story about science. Why does he focus so much of his attention of the role of magic in Malawi?
3. Kamkwamba also tells a story about curiosity. How does Kamkwamba's curiosity serve him? How is it connected to his education? How is it separate from his education?

10th Grade: World Literature and Composition

Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes by Edith Hamilton

Hamilton pulls from classical sources to retell the stories of Ancient Greece. All students need to read the introduction and parts two, three, and four of Hamilton's work. Use part one as a reference section, if needed. Students entering the honors World Literature and Composition class need to read the entire text. As you read, consider the following:

1. For the Greeks, what defines a hero as a hero?
2. In her introduction, Hamilton argues that the men who created the myths, "had a love for facts...Anyone who reads them with attention discovers that even the most nonsensical take place in a world which is essentially rational." As you read, keep an eye on the rational and factual within the fantastic.
3. Hamilton also writes in her introduction that a myth "has nothing to do with religion. It is an explanation of something in nature...The stories are early literature as well as early science." As you read, look for examples of science, religion and literature.

11th Grade: American Literature and Composition

A Lesson Before Dying by Ernest J. Gaines

In *A Lesson Before Dying*, Gaines tells the story of Grant Wiggins. In doing so, he explores ideas about individuality and responsibility. As you read, consider the following questions:

1. Do you agree, as Grant says, that he can never be a hero, but that Jefferson can?
2. When does Gaines give the reader Jefferson's take on the events of the novel? How does that chapter impact the way you view the characters and their actions?
3. How does the novel work as an American novel? What ideas or themes address what it means to be an American?

AP/ACC Comp: The Process of Composition

The Theater of War by Bryan Doerries

Bryan Doerries sees literature, especially ancient Greek literature, as a practical pursuit. He believes that it has a unique power to help us cope with our suffering. *The Theater of War* details the joys and obstacles he encountered bringing his visceral translations of classic literature to a variety of audiences. Please bring your copy of the text with you to class. It will serve as the focal point for our literary discussions for the first few weeks. As you read *The Theater of War*, consider the following:

1. Early in the memoir, Doerries writes, "Tragedies are designed not to teach us morals but rather to validate our moral distress at living in a universe in which many of our actions and choices are influenced by external powers far beyond our comprehension" (13). How does he develop that idea throughout the text? What examples from the literature you have previously read can you use to illustrate Doerries point about moral validation? How?
2. While addressing the impact tragedy can (should) have on an audience, Doerries claims that, "any tragedy worth the price of admission...does something to us—physically, spiritually, biochemically. It shocks us. It rearranges our molecules" (95). Have you had such physical reactions to literature? If so, where and when? What was the experience like and can you intentionally recapture it? If not, why not? Is the fault in the literature, the reader, the teacher? Is the question patently absurd?
3. In the epilogue, Doerries argues that, "if you want to have a discussion about a subject that divides us or makes us uncomfortable, always begin with a portrayal of human suffering. Through empathy, imagination, and shared discomfort, we often find a common language as well as common ground" (263). In a world that is often described as fractured, can literature serve as a bridge to develop communications between divided people?

12th Grade: Creative Writing

On Writing by Stephen King

The book is not a mechanical guide on how to be a better writer from a technical standpoint, though in the middle section King does discuss the fundamentals of the craft. Stylistically, it is similar to Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, in that it is a very personal book that discusses writing through the author's personal stories, experiences and anecdotes, all told with good grace and humor. You don't just learn about writing techniques in *On Writing* – you also get to learn a great deal about Stephen King, his family, the struggles he has endured, both pre-fame and post-fame, and what makes him tick as a popular horror novelist that has sold hundreds of millions of books worldwide.

There are essentially 3 parts to this book. Part I is all about King's life, and is autobiographical in a sense. Part II is all about the craft of writing from King's personal perspective. Part III talks about King's life after his tragic car accident that almost ended his life and writing career. All 3 parts are equally instructive and compelling.

1. Do you agree with Stephen King that the desire to write always starts with a love of reading?
2. King's wife Tabitha is his "Ideal Reader," the one-person audience he has in mind when writing a first draft. When you write, do you envision a particular Ideal Reader? Who is that person? Why? What characteristics do they have that makes he or she ideal?
3. While King delights in the nuts and bolts mechanics of the writing process, he concedes that good writing involves magic as well. Do you agree with King's assertion that "while it is impossible to make a competent writer out of a bad writer, and while it is equally impossible to make a great writer out of a good one, it is possible, with lots of hard work, dedication and timely help, to make a good writer out of a merely competent one."? To what degree can a writer be made? To what extent can writing be taught? What writerly skills do you come by naturally, and which have you had to work to acquire or improve?

12th Grade: The Holocaust in the Media

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. This will be the text used to discuss and analyze literature, movies and documentaries. When reading this weighty text, consider the following questions:

1. What were the "phase 1" reactions following entry into the concentration camp scene? What were the "phase 2" reactions to being well-entrenched in the concentration camp routine? What were the "phase 3" reactions to being released and liberated from a concentration camp? Explain your understanding of the gradual shift in reactions.
2. According to Frankl, "An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal." What does he mean by this paradox? How can you relate it to a time in your own life?
3. Explain how responsibility is a crucial component of logotherapy.

12th Grade: Contemporary Issues in Literature

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

Into the Wild tells the riveting tale of Christopher McCandless, a talented young man from an upstanding family who inexplicably turned his back on everything he seemed to have going for him. As you read, consider the following questions and ideas:

1. Search for Meaning/Self

Some people believe that Chris McCandless was on a suicide mission. In a letter to Wayne Westerberg he wrote, "It might be a very long time before I return south. If this adventure proves fatal and you don't ever hear from me again, I want you to know you're a great man. I now walk into the wild" (69). Krakauer believed that Chris was just seeking something greater than himself. Do you believe Chris ever intended to return from Alaska? Did Chris intend for his journey to end as it did?

2. Death/Personal Mortality

There have been many speculations as to what led to the demise of Chris McCandless. What do you believe actually "killed" Chris McCandless?

3. Relationship with Others

Chris marked the following passage in Tolstoy's *Family Happiness*, "He was right in saying that the only certain happiness in life is to live for others" (169) and then wrote, "Happiness only real when shared" (189). Why do you think McCandless marked this passage? What did he mean by his inscription?

AP/ACC Lit: Faith, Doubt and Literature

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

You have a couple of options for the first part of your summer reading assignment. I recommend doing all three.

1. Read Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
2. Watch a film adaptation of the play.
3. Attend a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at St. Louis's Shakespeare in the park. (Performances run from June 3 through June 26, at 8:00 except for Tuesdays. They will cancel performances for inclement weather. These performances are very popular and are consequently crowded. When I go, I try to arrive by 7:00 at the latest.)

Additionally, students will need to read the first four books of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. Use the book I provided you and the study guide. If you misplace the book or the study guide over the summer, email me and I can arrange for you to pick up another.