

# Summer Reading 2018

## Overview

Below you will find the reading assignments required for each of the English courses offered in the 2018-2019 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 on 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

*The Odyssey* by Homer

Homer's classic epic tells the story of Odysseus and his return home. After the 10-year Trojan War, Odysseus begins his journey back to his homeland, his wife Penelope, and his son Telemachus. *The Odyssey* tells the story of the challenges Odysseus faces on his journey and those that await him when he returns home. Students in **World Literature and Composition** will need to read books 1, 4, 5, 9, and 10. Students in **Honors World Literature and Composition** will need to read books 1-8. All students should expect to read additional books of *The Odyssey* when the semester begins. As you read, consider the following:

1. What are the gods like? Why are they introduced before Odysseus? How is divine intervention portrayed in the opening books?
2. Pay particular attention to the concept of justice. How is it defined for the various sets of characters? How is justice put into practice?
3. Additionally, pay close attention to the concept of hospitality. How is it defined? How is the concept of hospitality put into practice?

## 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

*Futureface* by Alex Wagner

The publishers of *Futureface* describe it as a biography in which, "An acclaimed journalist travels the globe to solve the mystery of her ancestry, confronting the question at the heart of the American experience of immigration, race, and identity: Who are my people?" Before school begins, you will need to read the first seven chapters of the book. As you read, consider the following questions:

1. What is your answer to the question posed above: Who are my people? Has reading Wagner's biography in any way complicated your answer to the question?
2. Wes Moore describes Wagner's book as "an important contribution to the American conversation...[it] is insightful, moving, informative, and searing." Have the first seven chapters of the biography provided you with a more nuanced understanding of America? If so, how?
3. *The New York Times* describes *Futureface* as "A rich and revealing memoir." Do you find the book both rich and revealing? Are you eager to read the rest of it?

## 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: Post-Apocalyptic Literature

*Lucifer's Hammer* by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

Lucifer's Hammer is set in a time after a giant comet smashes into the earth and de-stroys most of civilization. Some humans survive and are left to pick up the pieces. Over the summer read parts I and II of the novel. As you read, consider the following ques-tions:

1. What, if anything, could have been done to prevent this apocalypse?
2. What steps will humans have to take to reorganize and to rebuild?
3. What does this experience teach us about humanity?

## 12th Grade: Contemporary Issues in Literature

*Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy* by Emily Bazelon

Bazelon's study of bullying tells the stories of Monique, Jacob, and Flannery. Over the summer, you will need to read Parts I and II (Trouble and Escalation). We will finish the book with the first couple of weeks of the semester. As you read, consider the following questions:

1. *New York* magazine argues that while the book is filled with psychological case studies, it "never feels dense...it's immersive storytelling with a sturdy base of sci-ence underneath, and draws its authority and power from both." Do you agree with the reviewer, does Bazelon mix storytelling with science to create a powerful un-derstanding of the topic?
2. As the *Wall Street Journal* points out, Bazelon focuses her storytelling on public schools. Do the case studies and lessons she presents apply to a Catholic, high school setting?
3. *The Boston Globe* notes that, "Bullying is misunderstood. Not all conflict between kids is bullying. It isn't always clear who is the bully and who is the victim. Not all—or even most—kids are involved in bullying." Do adults make too much of bullying? Does Bazelon address that concern? Does she provide us with a reason for caring about the issue?

## 12th Grade: Analysis of Literature and Modern Media

*The Graduate* by Charles Webb

The Graduate tells the story of Benjamin Braddock, a recent college graduate with the

world at his fingertips. Ben has always followed the direction set forth by his parents and other authority figures, but now his futures up to him. Ben faces an existential crisis, un-sure of his place and purpose in the world, and for the first time in his life decides to re-ject the straight-and-narrow. Forgoing graduate school and an illustrious career in “plas-tics,” he instead opts to fall into an affair with the older Mrs. Robinson. Ben grapples with the realities of life as an adult that he soon learns he’s ill-equipped to handle. While reading the novel, consider the following questions:

1. At the start of the novel, why is Ben so disillusioned by his present reality? How do others in his life, particularly his parents react to his crisis? Explain to your best abil-ity what Ben is going through.

2. Why does Ben choose to have an affair with Mrs. Robinson? Does it fulfill what he saw was lacking in his life? Conversely, why does Mrs. Robinson have an affair with Ben? What are the driving forces that led to the two of them to make such a deci-sion?

3. Are Ben’s feelings for Elaine genuine? If so, what’s changed in Ben? If not, what’s going on? Why is Ben willing to sacrifice everything for another fleeting moment?

## AP/ACC Lit: Faith, Doubt and Literature

*The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

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 at [jrenaud@duchesne-hs.org](mailto:jrenaud@duchesne-hs.org) and I can arrange for you to pick up another.