Summer Reading Guide 2016

Here are the supplies you will need in class for the fall semester:

- 2 composition notebooks (1 for fall, 1 for spring)
- black ink pens for writing and responding
- colored pens for editing, revising and adding to your notes
- highlighters and colored pencils (you need both)
- small sticky notes
- loose leaf paper
- paper copy of the text we will study
- access to the internet and to a working printer
- you will be asked to contribute one of the following items for the class supply closet: tissue, loose leaf, black pens, hand sanitizer (Wait until school starts, and I’ll let you know which item is needed.)

Selected texts:  *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver-OR-
*Life of Pi* by Yann Martel-OR-
The Good Earth by Pearl S.Buck

You may read any of the books on this list to fulfill the summer reading requirement for this course. You are invited to read all of them, and you are strongly encouraged to read as many books of your own choice that you can possibly cram into the short summer vacation.

We will spend some time in class discussing, reading passages closely and otherwise engaging with these novels before we dive into the selections on our IB syllabus.

Speaking of the IB syllabus, here are a few things I’d like to share with you concerning our time together:

- At the beginning of the school year, you will receive the titles of texts we will read in the fall semester. Please arrange to acquire these on your own. You may purchase them or borrow them from a friend or the school/public library. You will need your own copy, though, for the duration of the semester. Sharing with a peer who is currently in the course is not acceptable. Reading the text online is not a viable option, either. You must have a paper copy of all texts.
- Please e-mail me if you would like the full syllabus of all the titles we will read. I should have this finalized early in the summer, and I am happy to share it with you and your parents. It might seem overwhelming, but relax. We’ll go over everything as we need to.
- You are in for a challenging, fast-paced school year. I’m delighted that you have chosen this class, and I hope that you push yourself to do your best work. You will be very proud of yourself if you do!
- If you have trouble acquiring a copy of the book(s), if you are stuck and mired in confusion as you are reading them, and/or you have any questions about what we’re reading and what we’ll be doing with what we’re reading, let me know! The sooner the better!

Back to your Summer Reading Assignments:

- Please acquire your own copy of whichever book you have chosen. It does not matter to me if you have bought or borrowed your copy, but please make sure that the copy you have can stay with you for the summer and for about the first 2-3 weeks of school.
- On the following page, you will find some guiding questions and suggestions to help you along with your reading. You will be assigned particular tasks for the book you are reading, and following my advice on the reading guide will only help you. (Think about it: I wrote the reading guide, I wrote the activities we will do in class, and I wrote the assessment on which you will be graded at the end of the unit. Trust me; I know what you need to know!)
- Please, please, please finish reading the book BEFORE the first day of school.
- Please, please, please finish reading the book BEFORE the first day of school. (Yeah, I know I repeated myself; it’s that important.)
When you come to our first class meeting, please bring your summer reading novel and any notes/questions/stuff you have collected in your reading.

A word or two about these novels from your teacher who often talks too much:

- If you don’t know which book to choose, try them all. Read 20-30 pages of each and see what you think. They are all wonderful novels, but they are great in very different ways. I think each of them will challenge you as a reader and as a thinker. At least, that’s the point anyway.
- If you have read or started one or both of these in the past with disappointing results, try again. I hope that my suggestions below will help you to make sense of two kind of challenging reads.
- DO NOT CHEAT YOURSELF OUT OF READING THE NOVEL!! Seriously. Read it. Yourself. And for the record, I know all about sparknotes.com, pinkmonkey.com, etc. etc. Don’t insult my intelligence, and don’t make both of us work harder once I bust you for cheating/plagiarism. Thanks. 😊

Below are some significant motifs and devices employed in both of these novels. I want you to think about how each of them is relevant in the novel you read.

- significance of the title of the novel
- role of religion and God
- tension between freedom/captivity
- how society is defined (especially who or what is “good,” and who or what is “evil”)
- power of story (not just the narrative that the author has written, but also the ways in which stories are told by the character and the ways in which telling stories becomes important in the novel)

Here are some literary devices to consider. Of course you should be able to define each, but also think about the ways in which these devices help you make sense of the novel. Think about what is going on in these novels beyond just the plot that you are reading (especially helpful for Life of Pi)

- Allegory
- Symbolism
- Motif
- Theme
- Narrative voice  
  o Who is telling the story? From what point of view does the narrator speak? Are there shifts in point of view? Where? For what purpose?
  o How does the story unfold? Is it chronological? Cyclical? Something else?
- Setting (consider the ways in which setting is defined: geographical, political, historical)

Now what?

I strongly suggest that you develop a system for marking the text, especially in consideration of the above items I have asked you to find. Sticky notes are particularly helpful here. Mark the important places in the novel, and also write ON THE STICKY NOTE so that you remember why you marked what you marked.

For some of you, a running vocabulary list is helpful. Record unfamiliar words and their definitions in a notebook or folder.

I also encourage you to mark passages (could be 1 or 2 sentences or up to a whole page) that seem particularly meaningful, puzzling, revealing, poetic, whatever. Again, mark them and write yourself a note so that you can remember why you marked them.

You will be tested on your reading of your choice of novel. Your test will include both answers to questions and responses to passages. My intention is not to trick you, but to ensure that you have adequately read and understood the text before we undertake discussing and writing.