

9th Grade English Summer Reading 2019

Why do we read? Some of you might say that you read because it is a requirement for school. However, most of us read at the intersection of a variety of reasons -- entertainment, learning, communication, reflection, growth, connection. We are going to spend some time in class next year considering this question, so as you complete your assignment this summer, please begin thinking about what it is that you are actually doing: what is happening in your mind, your body, and your spirit as your eyes scan the words on the pages of your books, and in what ways might your life change as a result?

You will read two books for English this summer -- *A Lesson Before Dying* and a book of your choice from the list below. Please purchase **paper copies** of the books. Do not use e-books. You will use both books during the first few weeks of school for assignments, activities, and/or discussions.

In order to prepare for the work we will do with these texts, you should annotate as you read. In simple terms, you should process each text by writing strategically in your book, which will also help you locate specific elements of the text during future work. See the attached instructions if you need hints about the annotation process.

In addition to annotating both texts, you will complete the following assignment for the required book (*A Lesson Before Dying*):

- Select three passages (one from the first third of the book, one from the second third, and one from the final third) that seem especially meaningful to you.
- Write out each passage and include the page number.
- Write a thoughtful, well-developed paragraph reflecting on each passage, explaining why it is meaningful.
- Bring a typed hard copy of this assignment (three passages / three paragraphs) to class on the first day of school.

All Students:

Ernest Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying*

From the author of *A Gathering of Old Men* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* comes a deep and compassionate novel, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award. A young man who returns to 1940s Cajun country to teach visits a black youth on death row for a crime he didn't commit. Together they come to understand the heroism of resisting. (From Amazon.com)

Choose ONE:

Tracy Chevalier, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

Tracy Chevalier transports readers to a bygone time and place in this richly-imagined portrait of the young woman who inspired one of Vermeer's most celebrated paintings. History and fiction merge seamlessly in this luminous novel about artistic vision and sensual awakening. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* tells the story of sixteen-year-old Griet, whose life is transformed by her brief encounter with genius...even as she herself is immortalized in canvas and oil. (From Amazon.com)

Arthur Clarke, *2001: A Space Odyssey*

This allegory about humanity's exploration of the universe—and the universe's reaction to humanity—is a hallmark achievement in storytelling that follows the crew of the spacecraft *Discovery* as they embark on a mission to Saturn. Their vessel is controlled by HAL 9000, an artificially intelligent supercomputer capable of the highest level of cognitive functioning that rivals—and perhaps threatens—the human mind. (From Amazon.com)

Alexander Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*

Thrown in prison for a crime he has not committed, Edmond Dantes is confined to a grim fortress. There he learns of a great hoard of treasure hidden on the Isle of Monte Cristo and he becomes determined not only to escape, but also to unearth the treasure and use it to plot the destruction of the three men responsible for his incarceration.

NOTE: You may use the abridged version (over 500 pages) or the unabridged version (over 1,000 pages). (From Amazon.com)

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*

Four mothers, four daughters, four families whose histories shift with the four winds depending on who's "saying" the stories. In 1949, four Chinese women, recent immigrants to San Francisco, begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk. United in shared unspeakable loss and hope, they call themselves the Joy Luck Club. Rather than sink into tragedy, they choose to gather to raise their spirits and money. "To despair was to wish back for something already lost. Or to prolong what was already unbearable." Forty years later the stories and history continue. (From Amazon.com)

Tobias Wolff, *This Boy's Life*

This unforgettable memoir, by one of our most gifted writers, introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move, yet they develop an extraordinarily close, almost telepathic relationship. As Toby fights for identity and self-respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of re-creating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. (From Amazon.com)

****You are required to read both books this summer -- carefully, thoughtfully, and completely -- and you should have paper copies of your responses to *A Lesson Before Dying* when you come to class the first day of school. The work assigned for this class should be your honest and diligent response to the text(s). Plagiarism, whether from commercially prepared notes, the Internet, or another student's work, is cheating, and will result in a zero on the assignment.****

Hints for Annotating a Text

Annotating is a way of processing as you read. It helps you actively engage with the text, and it will allow you to find important passages quickly in the future.

Annotating a text involves two steps:

1. Marking (underlining, circling, bracketing, starring, etc.)
2. Writing marginal notes – commenting on what you have marked and why
 - o Some people prefer to keep notes (by page number) in a separate notebook, which is fine.

Potential Topics for Annotation [these are just examples--you do not have to include all of these items, but you should strive for some variety, based on what you notice as you read]:

- **Literary Elements:** Plot structure, Characters, Conflict, Setting, Point of View, Foreshadowing, Symbols, Themes, Irony
- **Signposts:** Motifs (recurring elements), Epiphanies (“AHA” moments for characters), Incongruity (inconsistencies / contradictions), Tough Questions (as characters struggle with issues), Memory Moments (the author reveals important memories), Words of the Wiser (mentor characters offer advice)
- **Writer’s Craft:** Diction, Sentence Structure, Details, Imagery
- **Your Response as a Reader:** What am I enjoying about the text? What is confusing me and why? What information do I still need in order to fully understand the text? What does a specific word mean? What do I think is going to happen next? What ideas are resonating with me or making me think? What connections am I making with experiences / events / stories outside the text?