

INSIDERS & OUTSIDERS * AP Literature/English 12 * SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

Dear Class of 2021,

This summer I have a few things I'd like you to work on to prepare for your Senior Year! Please read through all of this and email me with any questions. I've compiled a list of contemporary books that I think you'll enjoy reading; while I'm sure everyone enjoys a good classic, this is a nice break from the dead white guy genre. No offense to dead white guys...

You are required to take notes on your readings; you decide if you want to do that in the book while you are reading (on sticky notes if it's not your book), and transfer them into a Google Doc, OR do it directly into a Google Doc with your laptop next to you while you read. There is no right or wrong way to do this, but some people prefer to just write in the book while they are reading and transfer their notes afterwards, and others would rather have the laptop with them while they are reading and skip the transferring step.

If any of this is confusing to you, you must email me – being confused is not an excuse to not do the work.

If you are in English 12 (not AP)

Please read *at least* (see note below) **one** of the six novels on the list below. For one of the novels, think about the opposition between insiders and outsiders in the story, and what the novel suggests about society and human nature through the portrayal of outsider(s) in each novel. Create a Google Doc that you title, "Summer Assignment" and add these notes to it throughout the summer (this is what you'll turn in to me). Then create a folder that you title "English 12" and keep it in there.

1. After the first 50 pages or so:
 - a) make a character list (just the important ones) with a few notes about each character
 - b) write a few notes about insiders and outsiders so far in the novel
 - c) write a few notes about any meaningful events
 - d) write a few notes about setting (where/when events are taking place)
 - e) write down two examples nice writing (can be a few sentences or just a phrase) that caught your attention while reading. Briefly explain why you chose each one.
2. Then, after every 100-125 pages (i.e. two or three more times): update the notes above "a-d" and provide new examples for "e."
3. You will turn these in for a GRADE on September 9

If you are in AP English Literature:

Please read *at least* (see note below) **three** of the six novels on the list below. For three of the novels, think about the opposition between insiders and outsiders in each story, and what each novel suggests about society and human nature through the portrayal of outsider(s) in each novel. Create a Google Doc that you title, "Summer Assignment" and add these notes to it throughout the summer (this is what you'll turn in to me). Then create a folder that you title "AP Literature" and keep it in there.

1. After the first 50 pages or so of each of the three you choose for the assignment below:
 - a) make a character list (just the important ones) with a few notes about each character
 - b) write a few notes about insiders and outsiders in the novel so far
 - c) write a few notes about any meaningful events
 - d) write a few notes about setting (where/when events are taking place)
 - e) write down two examples nice writing (can be a few sentences or just a phrase) that caught your attention while reading. Briefly explain why you chose each one.
2. Then, after every 100-125 pages (i.e. two or three more times): update the notes above "a-d" and provide new examples for "e."

3. You will turn these in for a GRADE on September 9

Note on “at least” – I LOVE ALL SIX OF THESE NOVELS. I encourage you read them all IF YOU HAVE TIME. Plus, note that during the school year we are going to focus more on classic works (e.g. Shakespeare, 19th century novels) so this summer is an excellent opportunity to read these contemporary works of high literary merit. Read on!

(Book descriptions taken from amazon.com)

Americanah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Ifemelu and Obinze are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria for the West. Beautiful, self-assured Ifemelu heads for America, where despite her academic success, she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. Quiet, thoughtful Obinze had hoped to join her, but with post-9/11 America closed to him, he instead plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria, and reignite their passion—for each other and for their homeland.

The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears, Dinaw Mengetsu

Seventeen years ago, Sepha Stephanos fled the Ethiopian Revolution for a new start in the United States. Now he finds himself running a failing grocery store in a poor African-American section of Washington, D.C., his only companions two fellow African immigrants who share his bitter nostalgia and longing for his home continent. Years ago and worlds away Sepha could never have imagined a life of such isolation. As his environment begins to change, hope comes in the form of a friendship with new neighbors Judith and Naomi, a white woman and her biracial daughter. But when a series of racial incidents disturbs the community, Sepha may lose everything all over again.

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Junot Díaz

Oscar is a sweet but disastrously overweight ghetto nerd who—from the New Jersey home he shares with his old world mother and rebellious sister—dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and, most of all, finding love. But Oscar may never get what he wants. Blame the fukú—a curse that has haunted Oscar’s family for generations, following them on their epic journey from Santo Domingo to the USA. Encapsulating Dominican-American history, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* opens our eyes to an astonishing vision of the contemporary American experience and explores the endless human capacity to persevere—and risk it all—in the name of love.

The Namesake, Jhumpa Lahiri

The Namesake takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name. Lahiri brings great empathy to Gogol as he stumbles along the first-generation path, strewn with conflicting loyalties, comic detours, and wrenching love affairs. With penetrating insight, she reveals not only the defining power of the names and expectations bestowed upon us by our parents, but also the means by which we slowly, sometimes painfully, come to define ourselves.

Native Speaker, Chang-Rae Lee

In *Native Speaker*, author Chang-rae Lee introduces readers to Henry Park. Park has spent his entire life trying to become a true American—a native speaker. But even as the essence of his adopted country continues to elude him, his Korean heritage seems to drift further and further away. Park’s harsh Korean upbringing has taught him to hide his emotions, to remember everything he learns, and most of all to feel an overwhelming sense of alienation. In other words, it has shaped him as a natural spy. But the very attributes that help him to excel in his profession put a strain on his marriage to his American wife and stand in the way of his coming to terms with his young son’s death. When he is assigned to spy on a rising Korean-American politician, his very identity is tested, and he must figure out who he is amid not only the conflicts within himself but also within the ethnic and political tensions of the New York City streets. *Native Speaker* is a story of cultural alienation. It is about fathers and sons, about the desire to connect with the world rather than stand apart from it, about loyalty and betrayal, about the alien in all of us and who we finally are.

The Yellow Birds, Kevin Powers

"The war tried to kill us in the spring." So begins this powerful account of friendship and loss. In Al Tifar, Iraq, twenty-one-year old Private Bartle and eighteen-year-old Private Murphy cling to life as their platoon launches a bloody battle for the city. Bound together since basic training when Bartle makes a promise to bring Murphy safely home, the two have been dropped into a war neither is prepared for. In the endless days that follow, the two young soldiers do everything to protect each other from the forces that press in on every side: the insurgents, physical fatigue, and the mental stress that comes from constant danger. As reality begins to blur into a hazy nightmare, Murphy becomes increasingly unmoored from the world around him and Bartle takes actions he could never have imagined. With profound emotional insight, especially into the effects of a hidden war on mothers and families at home, *The Yellow Birds* is a groundbreaking novel that is destined to become a classic.

I am looking forward to diving headfirst into some great books with you! Happy reading!

☺ Catherine