

2019 English IV Honors Summer Reading Assignment



Rising 12th Grade Students Previously Enrolled in English III Honors

As English IV Honors should be a survey of World Literature concomitant with the English 102 course students will take in college, students should read texts that both illustrate the major literary movements in the canon of world literature and provide historic and cultural insight to the countries and important historic events that shaped the writers and the texts. Students will read from each group of texts and focus their reading on these aspects.

Time Periods and Works

Second Empire France: Realism and Naturalism

Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert (Realism)

What happens when an overly imaginative young girl marries a boring country doctor widower? She tries to alleviate her boredom by filling the void with material possessions and affairs. Flaubert illustrates the Second Empire fascination with early nineteenth-century Romanticism through a Realist account of Emma Bovary's antics to emphasize its negative narcissistic impact on the psyche.

Germinal by Emile Zola (Naturalism)

In this novel from Zola's Rougon Macquart Cycle, Etienne Macquart must leave a respectable middle-class job as a merchant, due to his socialist leanings, and take a job as a coal-miner in the bleak coal fields of France. The Naturalist Empirical question Zola posits explores the societal consequences of not only dehumanizing workers but also of placing them in absolutely terrifying circumstances. If this book were turned into a horror movie, the monsters would be the gaping maw of the mine shaft and the rising water at its depths.

Nineteenth-Century Russian Reform Movement: The Birth of Nihilism

Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy

A good subtitle for this novel might be trains, flames, and Nihilistic penury. The quintessential quotation from the text serves as litote for the depths of despair to which this family plunges: "All happy families are alike. Each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Tolstoy uses the cruel geometry of a love triangle to show what happens when one woman's narcissism destroys the sanity of all of those around her. Fate, like mathematics, has a definitive answer to this question.

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

In this Russian masterwork, Dostoyevsky's protagonist, Raskolnikov, finds out what happens when he tries to pawn both his watch and his moral consciousness to an old pawnbroker who is best described as a malicious Baba Yaga Usurer. Raskolnikov must decide between his nihilistic moral relativism and his hopes for eternal salvation. Dostoyevsky presents the moral struggle as a detective mystery of the soul.

The Lasting Impact of Colonialism and Imperialism in Africa and South America

***Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe**

As long as the Umuofia adhere to their archetypal tribal traditions, though the traditions and the interference from the gods do not always have a positive impact on the protagonist, Okonkwo, there is a cultural cohesion for the clan. When the Europeans come in with the objective of writing a book entitled, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, and begin spreading their European cultural ideologies around, things really do fall apart. If books could be rated according to how many machete attacks take place, this book would rate a ten out of ten machetes.

***Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Patton**

The main character in this novel is South Africa, which Patton prophetically predicts will suffer from depleted resources due to the flood of people leaving the villages and moving into the cities. Rev Kumalo and his family represent the struggles of Africans under apartheid rule while Arthur Jarvis and his family illustrate the white farmer's perspective. The seminal event connects the two families to illustrate how some events can bring people together whose views were once so disparate.

***One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

When Marquez published this book in 1967, he changed the place of Latin American literature in the world canon with a magic realist story about the Buendias family and its history. The surrealist landscape in which this family faces eventual conflict and colonization creates a fascinating, romantic backdrop against which the family members also find love. I have a theory that the magic moving rocks in Marquez's Macondo were the inspiration for the pet rock craze of the mid-seventies that allowed parents to give their kids rocks instead of real pets for Christmas.

Indian Caste Conflict and the War for Independence

***The God of Small Things* by Arundati Roy**

Roy's novel tells the story of a pair of twins who witness both the communist protests of the late 60's and their family's struggles with the caste system. Their grandfather, the entomologist, represents the danger of being obsessed over the rules, "the smallest things" and what happens when a person forsakes pathos for the rigidity of a static past. The twins discover the power of love and sacrifice when faced with a rapidly changing world.

***Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie**

Saleem Sinai, the narrator of this epic, is born at exactly 12 midnight on the day India gained independence from Great Britain. His auspicious birth coupled with a gigantic nose makes him think he not only can read minds but also has the power to control the fate of all India. Rushdie tells the story of three generations of Saleem's family in this story about the importance of generational wisdom. I am still waiting for Red Chillies entertainment to reunite Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone for the Bollywood film version of the book. The opening dance number could include today's biggest Bollywood stars as a tribute to India's independence.

Existential Crisis and World War I

All's Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

On 5 December 1930, at the film premier in Germany of Remarque's novel, Joseph Goebbels, famed propagandist for the Nazi party, led 150 Nazi youth into the theatre to release stink bombs, sneezing powder, and rats to protest the Nazi party's perception that the novel was anti-German. The story's narrator, Paul Baumer, is a German infantryman stuck in one of the infamous trenches on the front line. Through his narration, he shows that war is a hellish bouillabaisse of severed limbs, explosive diarrhea, gangrene and maggoty food. His description of the trenches is one of the most historically accurate accounts of the nightmare of trench warfare.

Birds without Wings by Louis de Bieneres

This novel chronicles Turkey's involvement in World War I and how it served as deadly catharsis for the centuries-long conflict between the Turks and the Greeks. It is essentially a series of love stories interlaced with the story of how Mustafa Kemal rose to power and became the father of Modern Turkey or "Ataturk." Ataturk did more to Modernize Turkey than any Turkish leader has done since. Under the current Erdogan regime, people are devolving as is evidence by the 2006 BBC documentary, "The Family that Walks on All Fours."

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

Hemingway's 1929 masterpiece is a semi-autobiographical account of his time spent in Italy as an ambulance driver. The protagonist, Frederic, falls in love with nurse, Catherine, and makes a herculean effort to reunite with her as the only thing he can fathom able to assuage the nihilism that results from his experience on the Italian front. The end of this novel is best read in a polydactyl cat café surrounded by the feline cuties Hemmingway devoted himself to at his Key West home.

August 1914 by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

After doing extensive research, Solzhenitsyn wrote the story about the first month of the war between the Russians, Austrians, and their allies. In the style of Tolstoy, he creates a host of characters around which he contrasts life on the battlefield with the pedantry of civilian life which becomes increasingly difficult for the soldiers to reconcile as the war becomes more bloody and violent. His accuracy of battlefield descriptions shows a scientific understanding of military strategy.

World War II and the Metafiction Narrative

Slaughter House Five by Kurt Vonnegut

Part of the metafiction rollercoaster Vonnegut creates in this book is the narrator (clearly Vonnegut) taking the reader on a time-travelling adventure with the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, an optometry student drafted to serve in World War II. Hapless and naïve, Billy accepts he has no gun on the Battlefield, cannot fight his German captors, and later, must be on display in a human zoo after being kidnapped by an alien race, the Tralfamadorians. The aliens' teach Billy that time, as a linear concept, is the mistaken view humanity has adopted as its blind faith in free will. Vonnegut challenges the reader in the same way-- forcing us to consider that our own perceptions of time and fate may be mere existential musings. The most popular tattoo inspired by this book is the phrase, "So it goes."

Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon

Though not as famous as the Elton John song it inspired, "Rocketman," this novel is the quintessential work of metafiction of the twentieth century. Pynchon divides the story into four parts, the first taking place during the last two years of World War II and the last two encompassing the post-war period up to 1970. To understand the narrative, one must follow the story of Slothrop who has been conditioned to respond in a physiological way to the sound of German V2 rockets. He becomes the rocketman of the story around whom conspiracies unfold and are revealed. The lyrics of the Elton John song, unfortunately, do not serve as some metaphysical key one can use to unlock the mysteries of this novel, but putting the pieces together is what makes reading this book fun.

Behind the Iron Curtain: Magic Realism and the Eastern European Imagination

Last Love in Constantinople by Milorad Pavic

Pavic is the King of Eastern European experimental fiction. His Dictionary of the Khazars completely changed the way novels were read and written. In *Last Love*, Pavic describes the Napoleonic Wars as they unfolded in Eastern Europe through a third-person metanarrative perspective. The story has all the glorious traits of the classic epic and—here is the real reason to read it and re-read—the reader can change the story using tarot cards representative of each chapter! The tarot cards are included at the back of the book and are based on the archetypal symbolism of each character. Ultimately, the tarot cards serve as a reminder to the reader of the whimsy of fate.

Blinding by Mircea Cartarescu

Cartarescu uses the buildings roman convention to show how "the growth of the poet's mind" occurs during the overly Baroque and sometimes terrifying rule of Romania of Ceausescu. Through the imaginative semi-autobiographical landscape of the protagonist's Bucharest, Cartarescu shows that the artist can achieve Wordsworth's "immortality of the soul." The beautiful descriptions of Romania and Bucharest, in particular the surrealists aspects, provide the reader with a view of Romania before 1989 that does not involve neglected orphans and aurelac-huffing runaways living in the sewers.

Melancholy of Resistance by Laszlo Krasznahorkai

If William Faulkner and Samuel Beckett gave their writing DNA to any postmodern avante garde writer, it would be to Hungary's Krasznahorkai. He uses Faulknerian sentences to substantiate a moment of great anticipation in a small Hungarian town when the circus arrives. But when the circus arrives, it is merely a sideshow created by a few enterprising rubes who have a dead whale carcass and a dream (also a hyperbolically-sized truck). The book is darkly humorous and endearing, especially as the townsfolk begin to fear that the miasmatic stench of the whale is a palpable curse upon them by the gods or their communist overlords.

Summer Reading Assignment

Students have the option of choosing from the **TWO** formats listed below. Students may elect to use the same format for the two selected novels from two different time periods or they may use one of each.

OPTION ONE: Chapter Summary and Personal Reaction

As students read their summer reading selections, they should complete the following:

1. Keep a chapter by chapter journal that includes a summary of the relevant plot information for **each** chapter. These journal entries should also include personal reactions to events.
2. Make notes of the characters and how they develop throughout the book.
3. Note significant quotes and page numbers that are relevant to them.

OPTION TWO: Double Entry Journal

Students are required to have **20** entries that represent their entire book. They may opt to type their journal entry or write it neatly in a composition book. Below is an example of the format that students will use from the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston.

Quote from the Text	My Response
1. "The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. She tore off the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair. The weight, the length, the glory was there" (87).	1. This is a symbolic moment for Janie. While Joe was alive, he never let her wear her hair down, which illustrated his power over her and the confined life she led because of him. Now that he is gone, she is free. Letting her hair down is a symbol of this freedom.
2. "You better sense her intuh things then 'cause Tea Cake can't do nothin' but help her spend whut she got. Ah reckon dat's whut he's after. Throwin'away whut Joe Starks worked hard tuh git together" (111).	2. People think that Tea Cake is just after Janie's inheritance from Joe. This shows how protective Janie's friends are, as well as their suspicious nature. It helps develop the relationships among the characters.

When completing their double entry assignment students are to include the following:

- Copy a quotation with a page number directly from the text that you think is important.
- Respond to the quote in the **My Response** section. **You should describe why you think it is relevant. Do not summarize what the quote says.**

Types of Responses: Use each of these items at least once.

- Describe why you agree or disagree with an observation made by the narrator or a character's action.
- Examine how certain events or details give insight into a character's actions, thoughts, feelings, or motivations.
- Discuss how the order of events creates a particular effect for the reader.
- Examine how a specific character is introduced and developed throughout the text.
- Discuss how ideas and events are connected and developed throughout the text.
- Explain a question you have about ideas, events, characters, or a particular passage.
- Make a prediction and explain why you think this will happen.