

12th Grade Honors Language Arts Summer Reading/Summer Work

Our Summer Reading program for students in 12th Grade Honors continues to be a tradition and a benefit to our Spotswood students. Summer is a perfect time for students to reap the rewards of independent reading. As educators, we realize the importance of reading throughout the school year and would like to encourage reading during the summer as a way for students to maintain the reading levels and skills they have acquired during the school year. More importantly, it is our desire that, by encouraging independent reading, students will experience the many joys of reading and become life-long readers and learners.

At Spotswood High School, in 12th Grade Honors Language Arts, students are required to read *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, *Othello* by William Shakespeare, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, and *Slaughterhouse 5* by Kurt Vonnegut, over the summer. These books are excellent examples of historical and contemporary college-level literature, and in addition to having major graded assignments associated with them, they will be frequently referenced and incorporated into our curriculum throughout the school year. They are also vital components to success on the AP English exam, should your son or daughter choose to take this test in May. You should certainly allow several weeks of reading time before school begins to complete this reading; in fact, we suggest that summer reading is best started soon after the July 4th holiday, schedule permitting. This permits an enjoyable, more leisurely reading pace and plenty of time to absorb the richness of the texts.

Copies of these books will be available to students now and throughout the summer at local bookstores and local municipal libraries. There are fairly inexpensive paperback editions available for each of the required titles, and owning personal copies allows the student to mark up the text in any way that might aid in comprehension of the material - in fact, we strongly encourage students to get used to highlighting and taking margin notes in their personal books; we will address effective note taking and comprehension strategies for college courses as part of our work in Honors 12, so practice and experimentation with these techniques now would be beneficial. Further, these texts are commonly used or referenced at many colleges and universities, so they may have utility for your son or daughter in future academic work.

Along with this reading assignment, we ask that each student keep a "reading journal" - a written record of the student's reading process and progress. This journal should be a single-subject notebook devoted exclusively to the reading done in Honors 12 throughout the year. As the student reads the assigned summer texts, s/he should keep written entries about the experience; the journal offers students the opportunity to keep track of important facts (in some circumstances students may be allowed to use their reading journals on major exams), list any questions or confusions that need clarification through class discussion, and most importantly, respond personally to the reading, keeping track of the thought process that occurs while s/he reads. Additionally, the journal serves as a tool for the teacher's evaluation of the student's reading experience - thus, the completed journal must be submitted to the teacher at the beginning of school for a **MAJOR GRADE**.

All journal writing should be organized for each of the texts; each entry should have a heading identifying it by chapter or scene, and the entries should be in chronological order corresponding to the text. Please have your son or daughter bring the completed journal and all texts to class for our first meeting.

In addition to these personal response entries, students should also address the following questions or follow the given guidelines for specific texts that are also appended to this letter.

If you have any questions regarding this assignment or the course in general, please feel free to contact us during the summer. We may be reached at jchaya@spsd.us or sfredricks@spsd.us. These assignments can be found on both the school and district website beginning June 15, 2017.

We would like to extend our appreciation to you for your anticipated cooperation in encouraging your child to read. We also challenge students to read additional books over the summer--remember, our libraries are a great resource. Fostering a life-long love of reading invites children to wonder, imagine, and explore life's endless possibilities. Happy reading!

Honors English 12 Required Summer Reading:

Agamemnon by Aeschylus

Othello by William Shakespeare

Beloved by Toni Morrison

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Slaughterhouse 5 by Kurt Vonnegut

Supplemental Journal Assignments (These are not intended as worksheet questions to be answered once; instead, they are meant to provide focus for the student's personal responses throughout each of the entire texts. They should be addressed in the student's reading notes wherever responses to them may be applicable):

For *Agamemnon*: In addition to your personal responses to and notes about this text, comment on the following with regard to the entire play.

- Is Agamemnon a hero? Is he perfect or flawless? In what ways does he fall short of being a perfect hero?
- What does this play seem to illustrate about the concepts of **fate** or **fortune**?
- How does this play fit the category of tragedy? What makes it so?

For *The Kite Runner*: In addition to your personal responses to and notes about this text, comment on the following questions wherever they may be applicable.

- What impressions and experiences of Afghanistan culture do you gain by reading this novel?
- Keep track of details that seem different from your way of life. How is life different for Amir in the US, compared to Afghanistan?
- In what ways does this novel deal with the concepts of **guilt** and **redemption**?
- How is kite flying symbolic in this novel? What ideas or themes does the description of kite fighting evoke? What other **quotes, events** or **symbols** in this novel seem significant to you or interest you for further classroom discussion? Keep track of them as you read.

For *Beloved*: In addition to your personal responses to and notes about this text, comment on the follow.

- What perspectives does this novel seem to offer on the topics of **race** and **gender**? How is this novel about racial and/or gender identity?
- Can this novel be considered a tragedy? How do the issues of race and gender make this tragedy different or unique compared to works like *Agamemnon* or *Othello*? How is it similar?

For *Slaughterhouse 5*: In addition to your personal responses to and notes about this text, comment on the following.

- In what ways is the structure of this novel different than other novels you have read for school or on your own? What purposes do the differences seem to serve for the meaning of the novel?

- What perspectives does this novel offer on the concepts of **fate, chance, and free will**?
- What perspectives does this novel offer on the concept of **war**?

Guidelines for *OTHELLO* supplemental journal: For each scene of the play, make an entry that is made up of **3 of the possible 6** writing activities listed below.

1. Comment in one sentence on what you think is the significance of this scene. What would the play be like without it?
2. Ask questions about the scene. Has anything in the scene caused you confusion? Ask one of the characters in the scene a question--or ask me a question.
3. Quote lines from the scene that you enjoyed and comment on them.
4. Describe your reactions to a character, action, or idea you confronted in the scene.
5. Talk about the relationships characters have to one another, quoting specific words or phrases to give evidence for your opinion.
6. Pretend you are an actor playing one of the characters in the scene. Get inside that character's mind. Tell how the character feels about herself, about other characters, about the situation of the scene.