

## 9 Honors Summer Reading

*Our Town* – Thornton Wilder

*Of Mice and Men* – John Steinbeck

As you read each text, take notes on your thoughts, questions, and observations. (See questions below.) These notes will help you write your in-class graded essay on the summer reading upon your return. Be sure to cite page numbers if you plan to use quotes in your essay.

### Guiding Questions

Consider and take notes on the following as you read:

#### Setting:

What is the setting? How does it impact the plot and characters? How does it further the themes?

#### Characters/Character Traits:

Identify the character traits for each of the main characters. What do you like or dislike about the characters? Are they dynamic or static? What are the characters' motivations?

#### Conflicts:

What are the central conflicts in each novel? Consider both internal and external conflicts. Are they resolved?

#### Important/Interesting Quotes:

Identify and explain the context and significance of quotes that you feel are important or interesting. Cite page numbers.

#### Literary Style and Technique:

What do you notice about the author's style and/or use of literary elements? (Foreshadowing, irony, imagery, symbolism, metaphor, etc.) Provide examples and explain how they add to the meaning of the text.

**Themes** (As opposed to a **topic/subject**, a **theme** is a universal truth that is being expressed *about* that topic):

What themes can you identify? What was the author's purpose in writing the book?

#### Questions:

What questions do you have as you read?

## English 10H Summer Literacy

Required reading:

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Oedipus the King by Sophocles \*

\*There are several translations of this text available. The translation by Bernard Knox is the simplest. Other more complex translations are available. You may wish to glance through a few pages of several translations to find the one that you prefer. Be sure to read the background information on Oedipus (provided below) before reading the play. It will make your reading much easier.

As you read each text, you may wish to take notes on your thoughts, questions, and observations. (See questions below.) While these notes will not be collected for a grade, **they will help you write your graded essay on the summer reading.** Be sure to cite page numbers if you plan to use quotes in your essay.

### **Guiding Questions**

Consider the following as you read:

#### **Characters/Character Traits**

Identify the character traits for each of the main characters. What do you like or dislike about the characters? Are they dynamic or static?

#### **Conflicts**

What are the central conflicts in each novel? Consider both internal and external conflicts. Are they resolved?

#### **Important/Interesting quotes**

Identify quotes that you feel are important or interesting. Cite page numbers.

#### **Literary Style and Technique**

What do you notice about the author's style and/or use of literary elements? (Foreshadowing, irony, imagery, symbolism, metaphor, etc.) How do they add to the meaning of the text?

#### **Themes**

What themes can you identify? What was the author's purpose in writing the book?

## Questions

What questions do you have as you read?

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## Background Information on Oedipus the King

### **Oedipus Trilogy: The Legend of Oedipus**

The classical legend of Oedipus first appears in Greek literature as early as the writings of Homer (700 B.C.), author of the Iliad and the Odyssey. It would have also been well known to the Athenians of Sophocles' time from popular poems and short stories of the period; audience members at a production of Oedipus the King would have known the story before they saw the play. Fix the legend in your mind before you look at the way Sophocles presented it.

It was prophesied that Laius and Jocasta, king and queen of Thebes, would give birth to a child who would grow up to murder his father and marry his mother. Fearing this dreadful prophecy, the parents nailed their first son's feet together--hence the name Oedipus, which means "swollen-foot"--and left him to die on a lonely mountainside outside the city. However, he was found by a wandering shepherd who took the baby to the nearby city of Corinth. There he was adopted by the childless King Polybus and Queen Merope, who raised him as a prince in the royal household. He never knew they weren't his real parents.

When he was a young adult, Oedipus first heard the prophecy. Assuming that this applied to Polybus and Merope, the only parents Oedipus had ever known, he fled Corinth and wandered around Greece. During his wandering he met and killed Laius, believing that the king and his followers were a band of robbers, and thus unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy. Later Oedipus arrived at Thebes and met the Sphinx, a monster who guarded the gates of the city. Sitting on a rock outside the gates of Thebes, the Sphinx asked the same riddle of every passerby: "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?" Answer: man (four legs as a baby, two legs as an adult, three legs as an elder with a cane). Those who could not answer the riddle were strangled. When Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx, she flung herself from the rock and was killed, thus freeing the city. Oedipus was rewarded with the title of king of Thebes and was given the hand of the recently widowed queen, Jocasta. Needless to say, no one -- including Oedipus -- knew that she was his real mother. They had four children--Antigone, Ismene, Eteocles, and Polyneices.

As the king of Thebes, Oedipus ruled in wealth and prosperity for some time. Soon, however, a mysterious plague swept the city. Oedipus the King begins at the point in the legend where Oedipus, king of Thebes, is trying to rid his city of the plague. Oedipus sends Creon to the oracles at Delphi to find out the solution to the city's woes. Creon is away for quite a while, and he returns accompanied by Teiresias, the blind prophet. They report the oracles' statement: the plague will end only when Laius' murderer is discovered. Sophocles shows you the chain of events that finally unmasks Oedipus as the murderer. That Oedipus acted unknowingly is irrelevant; he feels he must be punished for his heinous crime, and so in his despair he blinds himself. His wife and mother Jocasta hangs herself. Creon ascends the throne of Thebes, and Oedipus goes into exile. [For further reading, Oedipus' story is continued in the second two books of Sophocles' trilogy: Oedipus at Colonus and Antigone.]

### **Oedipus Trilogy: Role of the Chorus**

Like Teiresias, the Chorus acts as "ideal spectator." Think of the Chorus as a jury. It is a group of twelve or fifteen wise and honest men ("elders") who listen to the facts presented. When the verdict is reached at the end of Oedipus the King, it is presented as objective truth, based on the evidence the Chorus has seen or heard. The Chorus is expected to express opinions, question the characters, and to offer advice when requested. (In this sense the Chorus has the opposite function of the messengers.) It speaks in a solemn, dignified tone, and moves in circular patterns while chanting or singing.

The Chorus is an important part of any Greek tragedy; listen carefully to what it says. Its speeches set the tone of the play, and it never leaves the stage (reminding you that Oedipus' private tragedy has public dimensions). As the plays develop, the Chorus directs audience attention to important ideas expressed. It also warns and reminds characters of the consequences of their actions. The classical Chorus observes what is said and done and then interprets the meaning for the audience. In particular, you should accept its comments as objective truth. Notice that the Chorus doesn't judge Oedipus until all of the evidence has been presented.

Pay special attention to the changing moods and attitudes of the Chorus. When it speaks directly to the audience, it is presenting moral and ethical issues. Its judgments represent the basic standards and principles against which all people, including Oedipus should be judged. Notice also the odes sung by the Chorus. These lyrical songs help to summarize the plot, comment on the action, and build the play to a climax. The choral odes further help to set the mood of the play, and help the audience understand the emotions of the characters.

[Oedipus notes excerpted in part from Barrons Book Notes]

## **Required Reading and Assignments for English 11H**

*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin

*The Crucible* by Arthur Miller

(pick up both books from Ms. Duffy before the end of year)

Over the summer months, please prepare for our initial meetings by reading the two pieces listed above. As you read each text, you should take notes using the format described below. Although the notes themselves will not be collected, they will help you write the baseline critical lens essay on the summer reading. In addition, a quiz and an essay will be given on this reading during the first quarter. While *The Crucible* is available through the public libraries, purchasing your own copies will enable you to annotate it and have both titles available for review in September.

### **General Format:**

Divide each piece into roughly four parts. Respond while you are reading each part. Please do not wait until you've finished the book. **Label** each entry with the date, chapter/act numbers and pages. Write each entry in **segments**; try to skip spaces between each segment. Be sure to respond to the following four points in each entry.

1. Focus your comments on the **development of the main character** in each work.

Consider the following questions:

- a. What are his/her traits and motivation(s)? How can you tell? Your examples should be specific.
  - b. How does the character recognize, change with, or adjust to circumstances?
  - c. What do other characters do, say, or think to give you insight into the main character?
  - d. How is the character in conflict with his/her society/setting?
2. Note particularly significant lines (with page numbers) and comment on how these lines contribute to your understanding of character and/or theme.
  3. Raise any questions or comments you may have on conflicts, characters, setting, or theme.
  4. Compare and contrast the character(s), setting, and theme of the second novel you read with the same three elements from the first.

**Important note:** Eleventh Grade English Honors students will take the English Regents in January, rather than June. Since this reading assignment will be used to prepare for the Critical Lens section of the exam, please be sure to read and review each work carefully.

**Remember:** These notes are not an essay; they should contain your immediate response to the character as you read. Your goal should be thoughtful and honest comments reflecting a close reading of each text.

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## **Required Reading and Assignments for Grade 12 Honors**

### ***A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving**

While reading, select a minimum of 10 quotes or passages from the novel and respond to each of them.

Questions to consider:

- What is significant about the quote/passage you have chosen?
- What questions are raised?
- What is your opinion on the issues presented?
- What literary techniques does the author use to make meaning?

In your responses, be sure to comment on both the author's style and meaning.

### ***Essays That Worked for College Applications: 50 Essays that Helped Students Get into the Nation's Top Colleges*, edited by Boykin Curry, Emily Angel Baer, and Brian Kasbar**

Select five essays of varying styles and approaches. For each, comment on the author's structure, style, tone, voice, topic selection, and meaning.

Questions to consider:

- How does the author engage the reader (beginning, middle, end)?
- Is the topic appropriate and/or engaging for a college essay?
- What makes this essay stand out from other college essays?
- What would a college admissions officer learn about this candidate through his/her essay?
- How does the author's style complement the content of the essay?

## **Required Reading and Assignments for Students Entering AP English Literature**

### **1. Dramas:**

*An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen

*Othello* by William Shakespeare

### **2. Fiction:**

*Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya

*Pride and Prejudice*\* by Jane Austin

\* pick up from Mr. Stanford before the end of the year

## **ACCOMPANYING ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **An Enemy of the People and Othello**

For EACH play, keep a “quotation journal.” After finishing a thorough and in-depth reading of the play, select ten quotations that strike you as important. Look particularly for passages that reveal character traits, motivation, and themes. Be sure that you have at least three quotes from each act. After typing out each quote, write a paragraph explaining briefly the context and analyzing the quote’s significance to the work as a whole.

### **Pride and Prejudice**

Keep a running reader response journal. The journal entries should be written at structurally natural breaks in the text and serve as a record of events as well as associated analysis and commentary regarding setting, characterization, motivation, conflict, and theme. Important quotes should be incorporated into the journal. Also, be sure to note the structural and narrative devices employed by each author, and explore what these devices offer thematically to the text. These journals should be thorough and precise enough to serve in September as a review of the book, enabling you to discuss the work readily and write about it in class.

### **Bless Me, Ultima**

Read Anaya’s novel toward the end of the summer. We will begin the school year with an in-depth discussion of this work. As you read, keep a reader response journal. The journal should be written after reading chunks of text. Consider using each major dream as a delineating point after which to construct an entry; this will augment your understanding of the text. These notes should be thorough and precise enough to serve in September as a review of the book, enabling you to discuss the work readily and write about it in class. Take notes on characters, settings, significant conflicts, structure, enticing quotes, theme, etc. Pay particular attention to the dream sequence. Write questions you may have about any puzzling sections, including page numbers. As you read, try to make connections between this work and literature you have read in the past.