Upper School summer reading 2015

Mission
To promote literacy, intellectual stimulation, social awareness, diversity of viewpoints, and independent thinking through reading and writing.

Overview

- You will read two books this summer: one required book and one that you choose from our approved list.

- Read the required book before the first day of class, and be ready for a quiz, test or essay assignment. This assignment will vary by class.

- Read your self-selected book before the first day of class, and complete the assigned journal entries to show that you are thinking carefully and analytically.

- Type and double-space your journal assignment, using Times New Roman 12-point font (example below). Print a copy for your teacher and save an electronic copy for your records. Submit your writing by the end of the first full week of class for a major grade.

- Plagiarism warning: Read, interpret, and write about the books independently. Do not consult SparkNotes or any other study guide, or any essay that you have written previously, or that a peer or friend has written. Do not choose a book that you have already read. Do all of the work this summer, and do it yourself. Do not use any resources that interpret the book for you. If you turn in a piece of writing that is not your own, or that uses words or ideas from sources other than your book, you will be referred to the Honor Council for possible violation of the Honor Code. If you are found in violation of the Honor Code, you will receive a grade of zero.

If you have questions, please contact Chris Schmidt, Subject-Area Coordinator for Upper School English: cschmidt@parishepiscopal.org
Required reading for all students

These texts are available at competitive prices in the PAWS store.

9th Grade – *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini

10th Grade – *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya

11th Grade – *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger
(Little, Brown and Co.) ISBN 978-0-316-76917-4

12th Grade – *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Approved list for 9th and 10th grades (choose one)

A *Dog’s Life* by Peter Mayle
*And We Stay* by Jenny Hubbard
*Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya
*Colors of the Mountain* by Da Chen
*Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton
*Daughter of Smoke* and Bone by Laini Taylor
*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer
*Fat Cat* by Robin Brande
*Graceling* by Kristin Cashore
*Grave Mercy* by Robin LaFevers
*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
*Kaffir Boy* by Mark Mathabane
*Last Summer of the Death Warriors* by Francisco Stork
*Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow
*Love and Other Foreign Words* by Erin McCahan
*Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco Stork
*March* by Geraldine Brooks
*Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac* by Gabrielle Zevin
*My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok
*Revolution* by Jennifer Donnelly
*Gabriel* by Garth Nix
*Stardust* by Neil Gaiman
*Swamplandia!* by Karen Russell
*Tender Morsels* by Margo Lanagan
*The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver
*The Fetch* by Laura Whitcomb
*The Heretic’s Daughter: A Novel* by Kathleen Kent
*The Name of the Star* by Maureen Johnson
*The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay
*The Raven Boys* by Maggie Stiefvater
*The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd
*The Wolves of Andover: A Novel* by Kathleen Kent
*Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis
*Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen
*We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart
*What Can’t Wait* by Ashley Hope Perez
*Zorro* by Isabel Allende
Instructions for the Journal Entries

To complete the journal entries for your self-selected book, please follow these instructions carefully.

First, divide your book into three sections of roughly the same length. You may divide it by page numbers or by chapters.

Then, after you read each section of the book, write a journal entry of 200-300 words that addresses the correct prompt below. (You will write three journal entries in all – one for each section.) Be sure to label

Approved list for 11th and 12th grades (choose one)

A Confederacy of Dunces by John Kennedy Toole
A Lesson before Dying by Ernest Gaines
A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving
A Spool of Blue Thread by Anne Tyler
Bellweather Rhapsody by Kate Racculia
Brimstone by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Childs
Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese
Gilead by Marilyne Robinson
Girl with the Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier
Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford
In the Garden of Beasts by Erik Larson
Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri
Love, Anthony by Lisa Genova
Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden
My Year of Meats by Ruth L. Ozeki
One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks
Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett
Remarkable Creatures by Tracy Chevalier
State of Wonder by Ann Patchett
The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay by Michael Chabon
The Blue Shoe by Anne Lamott
The Bonesetter’s Daughter by Amy Tan
The Circle by Dave Eggers
The Dive from Clausen’s Pier by Ann Packer
The Enchantress of Florence by Salman Rushdie
The Girl You Left Behind by Jojo Moyes
The Great Santini by Pat Conroy
The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara
The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
The Last Town on Earth by Thomas Mullen
The Light between Oceans by M. L. Stedman
The Lords of Discipline by Pat Conroy
The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri
The Paris Wife by Paula McLain
The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver
The Power and the Glory by Graham Greene
The Sherlockian by Graham Moore
The Technologists by Matthew Pearl
The Tragedy of Arthur by Arthur Phillips
The Tortilla Curtain by T.C. Boyle
Where’d You Go, Bernadette by Maria Semple
each journal entry by page, chapter, act or scene, so that you and your teacher will be able to identify which part of the book you are writing about.

Each of the prompts below contains a central question (in **bold** type). You should write your entry to answer this central question. The other questions (in regular type) may be helpful to consider, but you are not required to answer all of them. They are suggested topics to help you think about the central question.

Your entries will be graded on focus (staying on topic), organization (presenting thoughts in a logical order), **accuracy** (representing the book correctly), **insight** (thinking carefully and deeply), **development** (explaining each idea fully) and **grammar** (following the rules of Standard English).

Again, you need to complete this journal assignment only for the self-selected text, not for the required text. Your assessment on the required text will be determined by your teacher and administered in the first week of school.

Prompt for Section 1

**How do the setting and central conflict of this book affect the characters and the plot?**
Where and when is the story set? What unique features of this setting make the story interesting? How do these features affect the characters—their beliefs, values, needs, concerns and goals? What is the central conflict of the story? How do some of the characters try to resolve that conflict? Can you predict how their efforts will succeed or fail? Where does this story seem to be going?

Prompt for Section 2

**How have the main characters developed and changed over the course of the book so far?**
What choices have they made, and how do those choices reveal their motivations or personalities? Do you understand or relate to these changes? Do the characters' choices make them more or less likeable? How do you predict that these characters will continue to develop as the plot moves toward resolution?

Prompt for Section 3

**What seems to be the central theme, message, or moral of this story?**
What have you learned from the characters’ experiences? Do their choices seem wise and good or foolish and evil? Does the narrator or protagonist ever make a statement that seems to summarize the lesson of the book as a whole? Does the book confirm what you already believe or challenge you to think differently? (How and why?) Is it possible to tell what the author is trying to teach you? Or does the author raise philosophical questions that she or he does not answer?

REMINDER: Focus each journal entry on the question in **bold** type. Use the other questions – those in regular type – as suggestions to help you think about the central question. You do not have to answer all of the questions, only the central one.

NOTE: When writing these entries, you are NOT required to use direct quotations from the text, but you should strive to refer as specifically as possible to characters, events and ideas from the book. You may feel free to summarize or paraphrase rather than quoting, but you should remember that good writing is precise and accurate, not vague.

**Grading Rubric**
Your English teacher will use the following rubric to grade your journal entries.
A

All three journal entries are complete, and they cover the whole book from beginning to end. The document is typed and double spaced, using Times New Roman 12-point font. Each journal entry has a proper label, identifying which section of the book it will discuss. Each entry is between 200 and 300 words in length. In each journal entry, you clearly and insightfully answer the central question (in bold type), offering precise, well-chosen and specific facts from the book to illustrate or prove that answer. Your writing is consistently focused, organized, insightful, accurate, well developed and free of grammatical errors. There is no redundancy.

B

All three journal entries are complete, and they cover the whole book from beginning to end. The document is typed, but may have some formatting irregularities. Each entry is between 200 and 300 words in length. In each journal entry, you clearly answer the central question (in bold type), offering specific facts from the book to illustrate or prove your answer. Your writing is mostly focused, organized, accurate and well developed, but your ideas may be simplistic or lacking insight. There are few grammatical errors and little or no redundancy.

C

You have completed three journal entries, but one or more entries feel incomplete or hastily done, and/or the document is formatted incorrectly. Your writing may also show gaps in understanding of the book. In each journal entry, you try to answer the central question (in bold type), but you offer only vague or inaccurate references to the characters, events and ideas of the book. Your writing lacks focus, organization, insight, accuracy or development. Grammatical errors, wordiness and/or redundancy occasionally distract your reader or make your meaning unclear.

D/F

Your journal entries are incomplete, hastily done and/or formatted incorrectly. Your writing shows significant gaps in understanding of the book, offering little evidence that you can answer the central questions with any degree of specificity. Your writing is unfocused, unorganized, inaccurate or undeveloped. Grammatical errors, wordiness and/or redundancy are prevalent.

A sample journal assignment is provided on the following pages to serve as a model for students to follow.
Journal Entries for John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*

**Section 1: Chapters 1-2**

This story is set during the Great Depression in rural California. The two main characters, George and Lennie, are migrant farm laborers. They seem not to have very many life options. They are at the mercy of the ranch owners, who can decide to give them a job (or not) and to fire them at any time. They are also at the mercy of the lazy bus driver, who can leave them stranded in the wrong location and force them to walk for hours. Their position is always vulnerable because they can never get enough money to save or to pursue their long-term dream of owning a farm. Lennie and George both have their own vulnerabilities, too, which make me wonder whether they can stay safe. Lennie likes to pet small, pretty, soft things—so much so that he unintentionally kills mice. He cannot control his strength; he seems to have some sort of mental disability. He is not mean, but he cannot remember simple facts or predict the consequences of his actions. His innocence can be lethal. George seems to have too much of a temper. He is very smart and calculating, but he often loses patience with Lennie and wishes he could escape from his companion. This wish could also be dangerous, since Lennie seems to need George’s constant supervision. Lennie and George are not making a good start at the new ranch: they are late for their first day, and they have already made the owner’s son angry. There seem to be dozens of ways to get in trouble at this ranch. Lennie says it “ain’t no good place,”
and he wants to leave. I predict more trouble with Curley, especially concerning his lonely and flirtatious wife.

**Section 2: Chapters 3-4**

The tension builds in these chapters as the men reveal more and more of their vulnerabilities. Candy reveals that he is afraid of being fired. He also reveals that he lacks the courage to stand up to the other ranch hands when they take his dog away and kill it. We see more of Curley’s wife, and see once and for all that the men view her as a threat, as “jail bait.” Though she tells them she is not dangerous, she does threaten Crooks with a lynching if he does not do as she says. And Curley attacks Lennie without provocation, showing how far his pride can take him. Lennie shows in this scene, and in the scene with Crooks, that his strength and temper are dangerous: if George tells him to, or if someone “talks hurt to George,” Lennie can crush a man without thinking twice. All of these events seem to foreshadow a coming disaster. However, there are two moments that seem to brighten the mood of the book. First, George seems to be building a meaningful friendship with Slim. Apparently Slim is the only hired man who understands Lennie, and he is the only one to whom George can speak honestly. George needs a friend like that. Lennie is still his favorite, like a brother, but he definitely needs someone more on his level. Second, I’m beginning to think that the farm idea might work out after all. Candy has pledged enough money for a down payment on the land, so all George has to do is contact the people and make sure he saves his money and Lennie’s. He has talked about “cat houses,” and he seems to have gone to one after receiving his first payment...so I’m skeptical of his self-discipline. But maybe he can pull it together the following month and they’ll achieve their dream.
Section 3: Chapters 5-6

I’m intensely disappointed by the ending of this book. I suppose it was inevitable that Lennie kill Curley’s wife; she was too flirtatious, and he was too naive. I see now that all the previous events were pointing to this one. He killed a mouse; then a puppy; and finally a human. This ending is the natural consequence of the event in Weed, too. He’s too scared of being caught and fired, so he can’t think clearly enough to let go when Curley’s wife starts struggling. George’s decision to shoot Lennie seems to have been foreshadowed by Candy’s earlier insistence that he should have shot his own dog. But is Lennie so much like a dog? Is Steinbeck really saying that George had the right to do what he did? A human being with a mental illness is not an animal. The lesson of the story seems to be that dreams cannot come true, at least for most people; and that sometimes the best thing to do for your friend is to betray him. This theme is deeply troubling, and I want to challenge Steinbeck on this point. Isn’t it George’s responsibility to try, however hard it may be, to help Lennie escape from the mob—and at least turn him in to a sheriff? Does George really have the right to decide that a life in a mental institution isn’t worth living, and that it would be better for Lennie to be shot? I feel like George is placing himself in the same place as the lynch mob: he is the one who decides what is best, and he kills Lennie because he is the only one who knows. What human being has the right to make this sort of independent decision?

NOTE: This document is an example of a summer reading assignment, using John Steinbeck’s novel Of Mice and Men. We chose to use this novel for our example because it is familiar to many of our students. Please use this example to make sure your journal entries are written with sufficient clarity and depth, as well as to make sure your document is formatted correctly.

Remember to complete your journal entries on your self-selected text, NOT on Of Mice and Men.