

Summer Reading Assignment

I believe that today more than ever a book should be sought after even if it has only one great page in it. We must search for fragments, splinters, toenails, anything that has ore in it, anything that is capable of resuscitating the body and the soul. –Henry Miller

This summer you will be required to read two books. These readings are works of both fiction and non-fiction by American authors or are works that relate to themes in American history or culture. You will choose your readings from the book lists provided. These readings may also be used for your research paper assignment that is due later in the course. Since you will develop a thesis to research during the year, we recommend that you choose texts that are interrelated in some sense, such as by time period or theme. Read each book's description carefully, do a little research about the work on the Internet (Wikipedia.com and/or Amazon.com are nice places to start), and try to see how common themes begin to emerge among texts, even if only very generally. Choose books that might help you to develop a thesis for your research paper. *Most importantly, make choices that are interesting to you, about topics that you would like to explore further or learn about more.*

You will need a good dictionary for use while reading. You, as an aspiring scholar, must define new words as you chance upon them; this is a habit that will help all of your educational pursuits. We recommend using a good collegiate dictionary.

You will be required to complete a dialectical journal and a short writing assignment *for each* of the books that you read. It is important to remember that as you read, you are looking for various levels of meaning, not merely reviewing plot or summarizing ideas. Recall your literary terms and employ them as you read. Some terms and techniques that may be helpful for fiction choices: symbolism, imagery, metaphor, theme, point of view, characterization, irony, conflict, and atmosphere or tone.

Requirements:

- Choose two books. *At least one of your choices must be a complete work of fiction.* (For short story collections, you must read the entire collection.)
 - If you have Mr. Kenning's AP US History class, you may use one of the books for his summer reading assignment for this project. Just be sure to treat the writing assignments for both classes as separate assignments.
- You will be responsible for a dialectical journal *for each of the books.* Follow the directions (attached). Use a 3-ring binder and loose leaf paper. Divide the binder into a section for *each book.*
- Each book's section should then be subdivided into three parts: Part I, the dialectical journal; Part II, your vocabulary list; and Part III, the short research/writing assignment.
- Although it is not required, try to choose books that will help you with your upcoming research about some aspect of American history or culture that will be developed into the course term paper. (This way you will be "killing two birds with one stone," as the saying goes.)
- CITE EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE, including page numbers.
- You will have to either purchase these books or borrow them from a local library on your own. If purchasing, you should look for used copies at one of the large on-line bookstores since most can be found very inexpensively. Many of these books are in the Portage High School Media Center.

Part I: The Dialectical Journal

Every student is required to maintain a dialectical journal to record impressions of, responses to, and reflections on these books. See the attached for specifics on what a dialectical journal is and how to write one; follow the instructions carefully.

These journals should be helpful to you in several ways. First, they will help you *notice what you notice as you read.* This is an important step toward becoming strong, independent, and critical readers. Recording what you notice will also help you to discover the value of your own impressions, observations, and questions. It allows you to respond to the text informally so that you can flesh out your thoughts without worrying about grammar or whether you are "right" or "wrong" in your assumptions about what you are reading. Finally, these journals will serve as the basis for class discussion, a resource to study from, and a reservoir of ideas to draw upon when drafting your essays.

These journals become pointless for both the student and the teacher when the student does not keep up with the reading or the writing and tries to cram a summer's worth of work into the last weekend of summer. As you should space out your reading and writing, you should space out your journal entries, capturing important moments from the entire book. **You will write 20-30 entries per book.**

Part II: New Vocabulary

1. Define a minimum of **thirty new words for each text**. Make sure your definitions fit the context for how each word is used in the book.
2. Beneath the definition for each word, write the sentence in which it occurs from the text and its page number.

Part III: Writing Assignment

For fiction choices, research the date of publication and information about the authors for each literary work.

For non-fiction choices, research information about the main topic that is explicated in the work. Encyclopedias, your history text, and Internet resources are a good start for this.

Next for both fiction and non-fiction, research the time period and events taking place in the world before or during each publication; or if the book is strongly related to a specific period or event in history, research that. How does this book fit into US History or culture? You must cite at least one other historical text (e.g., a passage of the textbook or an outside article on the same topic.) to place this work in comparative perspective. This will allow you to better evaluate the author's point of view and/or conclusions.

You should use only 10-12 pt., Times New Roman font. We are NOT interested in fluff. Please do NOT include artwork, pictures, or colorful fonts. Do not attempt to dazzle us with special effects! This is academic work, and we are only interested in the relevant content of your writing, your understanding and thinking about the texts that you have chosen to read, and their relation to historical and/or cultural contexts. This project should contain your best reading and composition efforts.

Due Date for the entire project: All summer assignments are DUE at the end of the first week that we return to school, **ON AUGUST 24, 2007**. Even though your summer reading project is for dual credit, you will only need to make one copy, which will be turned into your AP English teacher on the due date. If you do not turn this work in by the end of school on August 24, **you will receive a zero for this grade on your first term report card.** *There are no exceptions for late work, including technical problems related to computers, transportation, etc.,* so do not wait until the last minute. Get started on this project early, and work on it regularly and consistently during the summer months. Be prepared and be aware; enjoy your work!

After reading these works, we are confident you'll come back to school with plenty to question and discuss. Be prepared for some sort of additional "evaluation" for each book—check tests, essays, or a combination of both—within the first two weeks of class and depending on your English teacher.

Do

Enjoy your summer
Expect to enjoy the books
Choose interrelated books
Read in a comfortable, quiet spot
Plan out a reading schedule
Stick to the schedule
Work at engaging with the texts
Hand in your work on the first day back

Don't

Wait until the last minute
Complain before reading
Read while on the phone, Internet,
while watching TV, or listening to
your iPod
Copy another student's work
Bother surfing the Web for shortcuts

The Dialectical Journal

The Wikipedia entry for "dialectic" states: In classical philosophy, **dialectic** (Greek: *διαλεκτική*) is an exchange of *propositions* (theses) and *counter-propositions* (antitheses) resulting in a *synthesis* of the opposing assertions, or at least a qualitative transformation in the direction of the dialogue.

Simply put, a dialectical (or reading) journal is merely a double entry journal. The purpose of such a journal is to identify significant pieces of text and explain their significance. It should be used to think about, digest, summarize, question, clarify, critique, and remember what is read. It is a way to take notes on what is read using the actual text. In effect, you will be holding a discussion with yourself – and the author – on key points, asking questions, and reacting to particular phrases that drew your attention.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND AND REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A *CRITICAL* READING JOURNAL, NOT A PERSONAL RESPONSE JOURNAL. THIS JOURNAL IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING AND READING SKILLS SO THAT YOU CAN BOTH DEVELOP AND ARTICULATE LEGITIMATE READINGS OF A TEXT.

Using reading journals, we hope, will make your reading and learning personal. And as you attend carefully to how you read and to what you personally make of your reading, we believe you will be surprised to find that such things can improve your enthusiasm for reading and your participation in the classroom. By watching your own reading move from puzzlements through approximations and misreading to more and more satisfying readings, you will gradually develop a more realistic sense of what valid and legitimate readings of texts are, and in class discussion you will more readily share your readings and build on each other's perceptions instead of worrying about who is right and who is wrong.

The core of your work in the English course will be composed in your reading journal.

You will need to get a separate 3-ring binder with loose-leaf paper just for this purpose, and keep it organized during the term. If you need help getting a binder, see Mr. Downes, Moody, or Ms. G. or K. Kotyuk, and they will find one for you. (Mr. Moody is teaching at Portage High School during first summer session and can help with any aspect of this project during that time.)

It is essential to the project that you make entries in the journal on the readings *as you read them*. *There is one rigid rule about the format of the journal--we want you to use the facing pages in a special way. Take all of your reading notes on only the right hand pages. Leave the opposing pages blank for later. (You might want to reverse this if you're left-handed.) The basic difference is that the right-hand pages are for comments on the reading. The left-hand pages are for comments on the right-hand pages. Keep the difference clear and make use of it--don't write continuously from front to back of the sheet.*

For directions on how to create a Word formatted electronic journal, go to:

<http://moodyap.pbwiki.com/f/journal.WordFormatting.pdf>

Caution: Technical glitches, such as lost documents, broken computers, inaccessible storage media, incorrect formatting, etc. is NOT an excuse for not turning work in on time. All work is always due on due dates – no exceptions!

What to put on the right side:

For fiction, you want to think about answering the questions:

- What is this story about?
- What happens first, second, third . . . ?
- What's the significance of what's going on?
- What details seem particularly important?
- What are some of the problems (conflicts, contradictions) in the story?
- What are some of the problems (conflicts, contradictions) you have with story?
- Are characters complex and three dimensional, or are they one-dimensional stereotypes? Does this change throughout the story? Do minor characters become major characters and visa versa?
- What about the point of view? Is it first person or third person? Is point of view consistent throughout, or is it changing and/or less clear? What does point of view say about the work, if anything?
- When you read an *essay* or other *non-fiction text*, you want to think about answering the questions:
 - What is this author's argument?
 - How does he or she go about making that argument?
 - What details seem particularly important?
 - How does the author feel about his/her topic? Is the work personal? Is the author objective in his/her point of view, or is he/she clearly subjective? Why do you think this is so, what effect does his/her point of view have on the work?

Other things to put on the right-hand pages (for both fiction and non-fiction texts):

- Thought provoking, puzzling, poetic, and/or important quotes.
- Times when your reading changes.
- You see something you didn't see before.
- You recognize a pattern – images start to overlap, gestures or phrases recur or get repeated, some details seem to be associated with each other or bring to mind other works.
- The work suddenly seems to be about something different from what you thought.
- You discover that you were misreading.
- The writer introduces a new idea.
- Times when you are surprised or puzzled.
- Something just doesn't fit.
- Things just don't make sense – pose explicitly the question or problem that occurs to you.
- Details that seem important and that make you look twice.
- Your first impression of the ending.
- What you think is the most important point in the work (and why)?

When writing in the journal, write down page numbers from your book for later reference. Use full sentences instead of phrases. The demands of the sentence will help you draw out your thoughts fully. Be *explicit* about the nature of your surprise or change or puzzlement--what caused it in the text? The journal will seem less of an intrusion into your reading if you follow the natural rhythms of reading. Sometimes we're carried along by the flow of a work, but the things I've asked you to note are all signs that it's time to pause and reflect. Nobody reads a work

straight through or at a uniform speed. Only machines work that way. The journal is a device to help you make more of the moments of *reflection* and to preserve them for later reconsideration.

What to put on the facing pages (left side):

While the right-hand pages involve your direct reactions to the text--your first gestures at making meanings out of it--the left-hand pages are for a completely different activity. When you finish the reading for a particular author, or after we've discussed them in lecture and class, go back and use the facing pages to comment on *your* original observations and to make something of them.

- Is there a pattern to the changes you experienced?
- Does the end of the work tie them together?
- Why did you misread when you did?

Then reflect on yourself as a reader--

- What do you focus on?
- What do you most care about?
- What do you disregard?
- When do you have the most trouble staying with a work?

Finally, as you make these reflections on your reading experience, discuss your emerging sense of what the work is about.

Ideas adapted from Toby Fulwiler, University of Vermont Writing Program Director; Ann Berthoff, Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston; and Gary Lindberg's "The Journal Conference: from Dialectic to Dialogue," in *The Journal book*, ed. by Toby Fulweiler (1987)