



Summer Reading, 8th grade 2008

Dear students entering 8th grade,

For your summer reading, you are required to read Ernest J. Gaines's novel *A Lesson Before Dying*. As you read, please keep a journal. Take notes on every chapter. Organize your notes in the following manner:

1. **Plot:** Summarize the action of the plot. **Conflict:** Note any arising conflicts. Identify main and side conflicts. Explain as each conflict resolves, or if it does not, why. (Depending on the length and importance of the chapter, this section could be anywhere from 2 to 10 sentences.)
2. **Characterization:** Write about various characters and their roles, traits, and contribution to the text. As you see a character taking shape, comment on his/her changes. (This section may be brief but should indicate your insightful ability to analyze character development.)

Your ability to describe what motivates and defines a character is one aspect of becoming a mature reader as are identifying conflicts and knowing what aspects of plot are central. Your journal may be created electronically or by hand. On the first day of school, you will be asked to produce this journal. You will be awarded a grade for your efforts. Also upon your return, you will be asked to decide, "What is the lesson that is learned before dying?" This question has many answers. If you keep it in mind as you read and write down your conclusions as they arise, you will find the activity much more enriching.

This letter is also available on the Crossroads College Prep website. (www.crossroadscollegeprep.org) As well as reading Gaines's novel, you should find many more books to read this summer. Reading broadly for pleasure is one of the things that unites people who succeed academically as well as an inexpensive entrée into multiple worlds.

Enjoy your reading!

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