



English Department May 2009

Summer Reading 2009

If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.

Maya Angelou

Dear students entering 9th grade:

You will enter World Literature next fall. We believe wholeheartedly that literature is both *informational* and *transformational*. Reading makes you smarter not just by giving you information, but also because it changes the way you think. This class will change your mind—literally.

That change starts now. In addition to the reading you do on your own this summer, we have chosen books that will jumpstart conversation in August. The two books you read will begin the discussion about the hero's journey. In addition to completing the assignment outlined below, please take notes during your reading so you can recall the details and themes of the texts. You will spend the first few weeks of school working on these texts, so read them thoughtfully and thoroughly.

All ninth grade students read *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien. In addition, choose *one* of the following:

- *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card is an action-packed science fiction novel about a boy who is striving to win.
- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Susan Monk Kidd relates a girl's journey to find herself and her mother.
- *The Once and Future King* by T.H. White is a modern retelling of the King Arthur story; the first section served as the basis for Disney's *The Sword in the Stone*.

Choose a book that you have not already read, and make sure you use *only the text* as the basis of your analysis. Do not start the year by trying to take the easy way out through collaborating with others or using other resources.

Please contact Anne at (314) 721-4521 or Anne@crossroadscollegeprep with any questions.

All students entering our 9th grade need to have learned the Latin bases in Lessons 1-9 in *Everyday Words from Classic Origins* as well as a few vocabulary words for each base. The book is available from Lisa Straub in the front office (367-8085 X 203). Every student needs one.

Have a great summer and enjoy your reading!

Dear New 9th Grade students and parents:

The following information is intended to help you choose your summer reading book. All of them have thematic elements that will connect directly to the texts you will encounter next year. They are diverse in length, style, and content, so the notes below may help you select a book that is right for your reading level, emotional maturity, and personality. Sarah has also offered to recommend a selection based on her knowledge of your skills and predilections as she observed them in 8th grade. They are listed in order of least challenging to most challenging.

- *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card is an action-packed science fiction novel about a young boy. There is some violence, both on an individual and planetary scale; the novel revolves around a military academy in space and the fear and fruition of a war between humans and an alien species. Themes include the nature and responsibility of government and individuals, xenophobia, indoctrination vs. education, and basic human nature. The writing style is simple and straightforward and the plot is exciting, but the ideas Card tackles are some of the most important and fundamental questions of human existence. At about 350 (depending on your copy) fast-paced pages, this book is best for those interested in adventure, science fiction, and/or philosophy and history.
- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Susan Monk Kidd relates a girl's journey to find herself and her mother. Like *Ender's Game*, this book features an adolescent as a protagonist. Central to Lily's quest for identity is understanding the mystery of her mother's identity and death, and in addition to addressing how we construct our own identity, Kidd portrays the vicious realities of race relations in the 1960s South, the power of community, and the importance of finding out the truth for oneself. A book that explores femininity and communities of women as well as African-American culture and racial cooperation, *The Secret Life of Bees* is appropriate for almost all readers in content and is a relatively easy 330 pages; it is also widely read and will be released as a major film in October.
- *The Once and Future King* by is a very approachable modern version of the King Arthur myth, one of the most referenced and canonical stories in Western literature. T.H. White has drawn on medieval sources to create a version of the ancient tale that is appropriate and understandable for all ages. Similar in tone to the Harry Potter series but more challenging in both theme and style and rendered in clear, descriptive prose, the novel provides a fresh perspective on a classic story while also tying in nicely to the major themes of 9th grade English. This book is appropriate for all readers; though its length might intimidate some, those who have enjoyed J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and/or J.K. Rowling will love this book.

All of these are popular, well-regarded texts that are generally reading-level and age-appropriate. Each ties into one or several of themes we will discuss in class, and each will hopefully provide an interesting, insightful, and rewarding reading experience this summer.

Complete the following charts fully and legibly. You may type or print. This chart is available on the summer reading site: <http://sites.crossroadscollegeprep.org/summerreading/>

Book Title: The Hobbit

Author: J.R.R. Tolkien

Whom do you see as the hero of this book?

Describe this character, both physically and how he or she behaves. (Use quotations with page numbers.)

What does this character do that makes him or her heroic? (Provide at least three specific examples with quotations and page numbers.)

For what is the hero looking? What is the purpose/goal of the quest?

Describe the event that serves as the impetus for the hero's quest. (If you don't know a word, look it up.)

Describe the hero's hesitation/fears at the beginning of the quest. Why does he / she determine to proceed?

Describe the first obstacle that the hero must overcome. How does the hero respond to it?

Identify and describe three challenges that the hero meets and overcomes. How does the hero respond to each?

In what ways does the hero change as a result of these repeated obstacles?

Explain how the hero finally attains his/her goal.

What was your impression of the book? Would you recommend it to others? Explain

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