



INSTITUTE OF NOTRE DAME

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ESTABLISHED BY THE SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME IN 1847

English Department

Required Readings

Summer 2010

These are the assigned books from the English Department. If you have any questions, please e-mail Sister Jane Cayer, SSND at jcayer@indofmd.org.

FRESHMEN - Class of 2014

#111-Honors English 9: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte

#112- Language and Literature 9: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

#113-Language and Literature 9: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

All incoming freshmen are required to read the book **assigned to the course for which they have been registered**. (Please refer to the course number for all books.) Teachers will check the reading during the first week of September.

#111-Honors English 9: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte

Summer Reading Discussion Questions

Please write answers to the following questions and be prepared to submit them on the first day of English class. Each answer should be approximately two paragraphs.

1. Identify and describe a character in the story who has a positive influence on Jane. How does Jane's relationship with this person contribute to her development as a character?
2. Identify and describe a character in the story who has a negative influence on Jane. How does Jane's relationship with this person contribute to her development as a character?
3. Compare and contrast Mr. Rochester and St. John Rivers. Discuss each character's relationship with Jane.
4. Describe Thornfield Hall as vividly as possible.

#112 and #113: Language and Literature 9: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

Summer Reading Discussion Questions

Please write answers to the following questions and be prepared to submit them on the first day of English class. Each answer should be approximately two paragraphs.

1. Francie Nolan, the main character of the novel, faces many obstacles growing up in Brooklyn during the early nineteen hundreds. Describe one conflict or problem that Francie faces that you also face in your own growing up.

2. Contrast Francie's relationship to her mother with her relationship to her father. Explain the reasons for the difference.
3. How does Francie feel about getting a job? Why does she feel this way?
4. How does Francie work to achieve her goal of being a writer?

SOPHOMORES - Class of 2013

#121- Honors American Literature:

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald **and** *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. Is Gatsby great? Why or why not? Who thinks Gatsby is great? Why?
2. Do you trust Nick as the narrator? Why/why not?
3. Describe East and West Egg. What are their similarities and differences?
4. Find at least 3 symbols in this book and describe why you believe they are symbols?
5. What do you believe the theme of the book is and why?
6. Keep a list of characters, their traits, and interactions with each other.
7. Write down any questions you have while reading the book.

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. What do you think of Catherine's character and why?
2. Keep track of each season and what each season brings to war and to the relationships in the novel.
3. Identify at least 2 symbols in the novel and what you believe they symbolize.
4. There are several themes of the novel, identify at least 2 and track how they are shown throughout the novel.
5. Keep a list of characters, their traits, and interactions with each other.
6. Write down any questions you have while reading the book.

#122-American Literature College Prep Level and #123-American Literature Access Level:

Cold Sassy Tree by Olive Ann Burns.

This story takes place in a small Southern town, Cold Sassy, in the early 1900s. Will Tweedy is the main character. Please take note of the following topics and write a one-two paragraph answer for each of the following questions. Have your work typed and ready to hand in on the first day of class.

1. Explain why *Cold Sassy Tree* has been called “. . . a novel about an old man growing young, a young man growing up, and the modern age coming to a small southern town.”
2. Describe three different conflicts in the novel. How is each one resolved?
3. It is often said, “The only thing you can be sure of is change.” How is this idea brought out in the novel? Give at least 5 examples of change and explain how the various changes affect the characters' lives.
4. How does *Cold Sassy Tree* portray women? Describe the stereotypical Cold Sassy woman, and compare her to Miss Love and Aunt Carrie.

JUNIORS - Class of 2012

#131-Honors British Literature: *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford **and** *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark

These questions form the basis of our opening work, so read carefully and answer completely. This is also your first grade for the new year – 100 points total.

The Good Soldier, by Ford Madox Ford

From the introduction to the Barnes and Noble critical edition: Handsome, wealthy, and a veteran of service in India, Captain Edward Ashburnham appears to be the ideal —good soldier and the embodiment of English upper-class virtues. But for his creator, **Ford Madox Ford**, he also represents the corruption at society’s core. Beneath the charming, polished exterior lurks a soul well-versed in the arts of deception, hypocrisy, and betrayal. Ashburnham and his wife Leonora, along with their friends Edward and Maisie Dowell, form a social quartet that stands for something much larger – all that is wrong with the world. The story is narrated by the naïve and unreliable Edward Dowell, who is either unable, or unwilling to see the truth around him. He portrays a society much like our own: dedicated to pleasure and convinced of its own superiority. The writer J.M. Coetzee describes the narrative as a “house of cards,” which creaks and threatens to disintegrate with every step. Answer as completely as possible. You will write about a page and a half, typed and double-spaced, for each book. Writing tips: do not repeat the question. Get right to the point, and **don’t dare** say something as pedantic as —In this essay I will

1) Edward Dowd is horribly unreliable, and can only present limited and prejudiced views of the story. Yet, for precisely that reason, it is his narration that makes this story work. Considering the different possible narrators, why did Ford select Dowd? How does ‘not knowing’ the whole truth keep the story moving forward and keep us, the readers, interested?

2) Honor is a word that’s much used, and much abused, not only in the time of the First World War, but in our time as well (think of Bill Clinton, or Elliot Spitzer, or the continuing debate over the war in Iraq – or the war of my youth, Vietnam). What does *honor* mean to the characters in this book? Which, if any, do you find honorable? Which do you find dishonorable?

3) There are lots and lots of songs about people ‘fooling themselves’ (Styx and Eve6 come to mind). Which characters ‘fool themselves’ in this story? (I don’t care that you turned your back on me, I care that you turned your back on you, says Eve.)

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, by Muriel Spark

Spark has written a deceptively simple/complex novel, taking a straight timeline and chopping it into little pieces which she mixes and matches. The story is ostensibly about a small group of Scottish school girls who come under the power and influence of one Miss Jean Brodie, a self-assured, self-centered, and domineering spinster. She may also be one of the most self-deluded characters in 20th century literature. She expects complete loyalty from her set of girls, and spends most of the book trying to figure out which one betrayed her (It’s Sandy Stranger, but you’ll find out soon enough!). The book is also about doing what’s right, finding yourself, and living with the choices you make.

1) Irony is a literary technique in which the audience knows, or understands, more than the characters involved. There is much irony in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Discuss three ways in which the reader is more aware of what is happening than the characters are. (For instance, is it ironic that Miss Brodie idolizes the Italian government? Does Spark draw parallels between the girls and their teachers, between different teachers, or between teachers and other figures in the news?)

2) Themes of innocence and betrayal run throughout this novel. Which characters do you feel are the most *innocent*? Which characters are *betrayed*? Why? Be specific, use quotes.

3) Creating empathy for a non-empathetic character is a difficult task for a writer to achieve (how does Dickens make you empathize with Fagin, or Shakespeare make you feel [almost] sorry for Macbeth?). In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Spark creates a complex, interesting character. In what ways do you empathize and identify with Miss Brodie? In what ways do you *not* empathize with her?

#132-British Literature College Prep Level: *1984* by George Orwell

Please answer each of the following questions with one or two good paragraphs (approx 150 words each), typed. Have your work ready to hand in on the first day of classes.

1. Write a comparison of Winston and Julia showing the differences in how they rebel against the Party.
2. Of all the horrors described in *1984*, which one do you think would be the hardest to bear?
3. The novel was futuristic when it was written. Identify any elements that Orwell was warning his readers about which you see present in our society today.

134-Investigations in British Literature Access Level: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell

This story is an allegory, a work of literature in which characters and events represent abstract qualities, such as greed, or real people and events. Allegories are written to entertain and to teach a lesson or moral principle. Keep a journal concerning your reading that answers these questions or topics:

1. a list of the characters and what they might stand for
2. the significance of the title
3. explain the Seven Commandments
4. what problems in society the novel comments on

SENIORS - Class of 2011

#141-Advanced Placement English: *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte

1. Read *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver—Keep a reader response journal in which you record your reactions to each of the main characters who take turns narrating the novel: Orleanna Price (mother), Leah, Ruth May, Rachel, and Adah (her daughters). Write a short paper (approximately 350-400 words, typed, double spaced) explaining the relationship of any **one** of these characters with Nathan Price—husband of Orleanna and father of the four girls. This paper is due the first day of class. You do not need to hand in the journal responses, just the essay, but they should help in the class discussion.
2. *Wuthering Heights*. Emily Bronte (1818-1848) wrote the novel during the Victorian Period (mid-nineteenth century), but it is more accurately described as Romantic. Look for typically Romantic traits as you read, e.g., emphasis on emotion, untamed aspects of nature, and mystery. The story is told primarily through two narrators who are minor characters: **Mr. Lockwood**, the new tenant of Thrushcross Grange, and **Nelly (Ellen) Dean**, long-time housekeeper of the **Earnshaw** and **Linton** families. The story is told in such a way that it opens shortly before the end. The major action has already taken place and is presented in flashback as Nelly relates the story of the two families and **Heathcliff** to Mr. Lockwood. The character of Heathcliff unites the plot and the families. The time span covers three generations. Keep track of the typical family traits of the Earnshaws, who lived at **Wuthering Heights** and the Lintons, who lived at **Thrushcross Grange**, as you read. Here is a genealogy chart that may help you keep the characters straight.

Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw		Mr. and Mrs. Linton
Hindley Earnshaw and Catherine Earshaw (Mr. and Mrs.' children)		Edgar Linton and Isabella Linton (Mr. and Mrs.' children)
Hindley marries Frances	Catherine m. Edgar	Isabella m. Heathcliff
(son) Hareton Earnshaw	(daughter) Cathy Linton	(son)Linton Heathcliff

Assignment: Keep notes as suggested in the previous explanation and write any questions you have. After our discussion in September, you will be given an assignment.

#142-Senior Honors English: *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates
***Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates**

Answer thoroughly and with panache – this is the first grade of your final year.

Revolutionary Road is an evocative portrayal of the opulent desolation of the American suburbs. It's the story of Frank and April Wheeler, a bright, beautiful, and talented couple who have lived on the assumption that greatness is only just around the corner. With heartbreaking compassion and remorseless clarity, Richard Yates shows how Frank and April mortgage their spiritual

birthright, betraying not only each other, but their best selves. -- synopsis from Barnes and Noble.com

1) The novel starts with an amateur theater performance. Why does Yates begin the book with a poorly acted stage play? How does this set the scene for what is to follow? In what ways are Frank and April characters in a play?

2) Following World War II, American society became consumer driven and quite conservative. The stereotypical American dream of a suburban home, a car, and a happy family was reinforced nightly with television shows like *‘Ozzie and Harriet’* and *‘Father Knows Best.’* Men worked, women stayed home, children were obedient and happy. How does Yates view this ideal life? How does he delve beneath the surface to expose the truth, as he saw it?

3) "So much nonsense has been written on suburban life and mores that it comes as a considerable shock to read a book by someone who seems to have his own ideas on the subject and who pursues them relentlessly to the bitter end," said a February 1961 review in *The Literary Journal*. More recently, *Revolutionary Road* has been compared with the film *‘American Beauty,’* which also took a hard-edged, critical view of suburban yuppie paradise. In both, one of the main characters becomes disenchanted with their lives, and tosses about for something better, some form of happiness. Why are Frank and April unhappy? If you have seen the film, what similarities are there? If you have not seen the film, do you believe the novel is still relevant to today’s dot.com consumer-oriented society?

a) Answers should get right to the point – do not repeat the question.

b) Use examples and details. Be specific.

c) Responses should be at least about two pages, typed, and double-spaced.

143-Senior Composition (All seniors registered for college prep courses):

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

Read *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and write the following assignment, due the first week of class: Write a personal essay (400-500 words typed) describing your response to reading *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Include the following elements in your paper: 1.) a thesis statement that represents your most significant feelings or thoughts after reading the book. 2.) specific references to characters, places, and incidents that influenced your thoughts and feelings 3.) a concluding paragraph that evaluates the appropriateness of this autobiography as assigned reading for high school students.