

Parkview High School



Parkview High School Summer Independent Reading 2010 AP Language and Composition (Juniors)

Summer reading is an opportunity for you to broaden your reading repertoire and to enjoy the reading experience more or less at leisure, without the pressure of the various demands of the school year. Please do not procrastinate, for you will definitely destroy the pleasure element of this assignment if you do so (and really, there can be a pleasure element—if you don't think so, perhaps you shouldn't be taking this class!). You may choose only from the titles on this list.

All AP Language students will read two books: the first is *The Crucible*, a play by Arthur Miller, and the second is a nonfiction book chosen from the list below.

Part I: Fiction

All students will read Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. You may check out a copy from Mrs. Finco or Mrs. Leazenbee before school is out or get your own. Please only come by before or after school to get a book. You will have a test over the book the first week of school. *The Crucible* is a play written in 1953 and is about the witch-hunts and trials in 17th century Salem, Massachusetts. It is also “a mirror Miller uses to reflect the anti-communist hysteria inspired by Senator Joseph McCarthy's ‘witch-hunts’ in the United States.” Be sure to look up any words you don't know as you read!

Part II: Non-Fiction Choices: Choose One Book

***Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt:** Despite impoverishing his family because of his alcoholism, McCourt's father passed on to his son a gift for superb storytelling. He told him about the great Irish heroes, the old days in Ireland, the people in their Limerick neighborhood, and the world beyond their shores. McCourt writes in the voice of the child with no self-pity or review of events and just retells the tales. He recounts his desperately poor early years, living on public assistance and losing three siblings, but manages to make the book funny and uplifting. (review from *School Library Journal*)

***Seabiscuit: An American Legend* by Laura Hillenbrand:** This well-written and compelling book celebrates the life of a racehorse that just happened to be a descendant of Man O' War. It is a story of a huge talent that almost went unrecognized until the right people came along. According to descriptions, Seabiscuit was a runt, with stubby legs, an odd walk, and a lazy nature. However, he became so popular that he drew more news coverage than President Roosevelt, Hitler, or Mussolini. The atmosphere surrounding his historic match with War Admiral was so intense that FDR kept advisors waiting as he listened with the rest of the country to hear the outcome. Hillenbrand also tells the stories of owner Charles Howard, trainer Tom Smith, and jockey Red Pollard and the part each man played in the recognition and development of a racing legend. But the book is much more. *Seabiscuit* is a story of the times and it is a story of the hard and dangerous life of a jockey. Even readers with no interest in the sport will be hooked with the opening sentence of the book's preface. Hillenbrand does a wonderful job in bringing an unlikely winner to life. (review from *School Library Journal*)

Endurance by Alfred Lansing: The astonishing saga of polar explorer Ernest Shackleton's survival for over a year on the ice-bound Antarctic seas, as "Time" magazine put it, "defined heroism". Alfred Lansing's scrupulously researched and brilliantly narrated book...has long been acknowledged as the definitive account of the "Endurance's" fateful trip.

Amazing Grace by Jonathan Kozol: The children in this book defy the stereotypes of urban youth too frequently presented by the media. Tender, generous and often religiously devout, they speak with eloquence and honesty about the poverty and racial isolation that have wounded but not hardened them. The book does not romanticize or soften the effects of violence and sickness. One fourth of the child-bearing women in the neighborhoods where these children live test positive for HIV. Pediatric AIDS, life-consuming fires and gang rivalries take a high toll. Several children die during the year in which this narrative takes place. A gently written work, *Amazing Grace* asks questions that are at once political and theological. What is the value of a child's life? What exactly do we plan to do with those whom we appear to have defined as economically and humanly superfluous? How cold -- how cruel, how tough -- do we dare be?

Into Thin Air John Krakauer: Heroism and sacrifice triumph over foolishness, fatal error, and human frailty in this bone-chilling narrative in which the author recounts his experiences during the ill-fated, deadly climb of Mt. Everest in 1996. Thrilling armchair reading. (review from *School Library Journal*)

The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan: A national bestseller that has changed the way readers view the ecology of eating, this revolutionary book by award winner Michael Pollan asks the seemingly simple question: What should we have for dinner? Tracing from source to table each of the food chains that sustain us— whether industrial or organic, alternative or processed—he develops a portrait of the American way of eating. The result is a sweeping, surprising exploration of the hungers that have shaped our evolution, and of the profound implications our food choices have for the health of our species and the future of our planet.

The Demon in the Freezer by Richard Preston: This book about smallpox begins with the anthrax attacks of October, 2001, and, by the end of this thriller, Preston has chillingly linked the two topics. All of the anthrax evidence from the Hart Senate Office Building was taken to the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) in Fort Detrick, MD, and it is here that the author first brings smallpox into consideration by introducing Peter Jahrling, the organization's senior scientist. He believes that smallpox, which has killed more people than any other infectious disease, is the greatest biological threat facing humanity. Preston relates the history of smallpox from 1000 B.C. to the outbreaks in the 1970s. He goes into great detail about the World Health Organization's campaign to eradicate it and the lost opportunity to destroy it forever. His final chapter introduces the idea of genetically modified smallpox that might be resistant not only to vaccines, but also to acquired immunity. The author draws readers into his narrative by humanizing his facts; researchers, WHO workers, and smallpox victims relay parts of this vivid and alarming story. (review from *School Library Journal*)

The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College by Jaques Steinberg:

Education reporter Steinberg presents a compelling tale in this account, told from the perspective of Ralph Figueroa, an admissions officer at Wesleyan University. Expanding on a series of articles in the New York Times, Steinberg provides an insider's look at how Figueroa and the school's admissions committee factored grades, test scores, essays, extracurricular activities and race into account as they winnowed 700 students for the class of 2004 from nearly 7,000 applicants. Using real names, applications and interviews, Steinberg follows six applicants of varying backgrounds from their first encounter with Figueroa to their final acceptance or rejection. Although not a how-to book per se, Steinberg's work does include helpful advice, such as "there's no way to outthink this process" and "if you've got something you want to write, then write it the way you want." (Review from *Publishers Weekly*)

The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History by John M. Barry: In 1918, a plague swept across the world virtually without warning, killing healthy young adults as well as vulnerable infants and the elderly. Hospitals and morgues were quickly overwhelmed; in Philadelphia, 4,597 people died in one week alone and bodies piled up on the streets to be carted off to mass graves. But this was not the dreaded Black Death—it was "only influenza." In this sweeping history, Barry (*Rising Tide*) explores how the deadly confluence of biology (a swiftly mutating flu virus that can pass between animals and humans) and politics (President Wilson's all-out war effort

in WWI) created conditions in which the virus thrived, killing more than 50 million worldwide and perhaps as many as 100 million in just a year. (Review from *Publishers Weekly*)

***The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* by Lawrence Wright:** Wright, a *New Yorker* writer, brings exhaustive research and delightful prose to one of the best books yet on the history of terrorism. He begins with the observation that, despite an impressive record of terror and assassination, post-WWII, Islamic militants failed to establish theocracies in any Arab country. Many helped Afghanistan resist the Russian invasion of 1979 before their unemployed warriors stepped up efforts at home. Al-Qaeda, formed in Afghanistan in 1988 and led by Osama bin Laden, pursued a different agenda, blaming America for Islam's problems. Less wealthy than believed, bin Laden's talents lay in organization and PR, Wright asserts. Ten years later, bin Laden blew up U.S. embassies in Africa and the destroyer *Cole*, opening the floodgates of money and recruits. Wright's step-by-step description of these attacks reveals that planning terror is a sloppy business, leaving a trail of clues that, in the case of 9/11, raised many suspicions among individuals in the FBI, CIA and NSA. Wright shows that 9/11 could have been prevented if those agencies had worked together. As a fugitive, bin Laden's days as a terror mastermind may be past, but his success has spawned swarms of imitators. This is an important, gripping and profoundly disheartening book.

***Microtrends: the Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* by Mark Penn** Mark Penn argues that the biggest trends in America are the Microtrends, the smaller trends that go unnoticed or ignored. One million people can create new market for a business, spark a social movement, or effect political change. In 1996, a microtrend identified by Penn ("soccer moms") was crucial in re-electing President Clinton. With years of experience as one of world's most highly regarded pollsters, Mark Penn identifies the new microtrends sweeping the world...highlighting everything from religion to politics, from leisure pursuits to relationships. MICROTRENDS will take the reader deep into the worlds of polling, targeting, and psychographic analysis, reaching tantalizing conclusions through engaging analysis.

Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest for Dr. Paul Farmer by Tracy Kidder: Thought-provoking and profoundly satisfying, this book will inspire feelings of humility, admiration, and disquietude; in some readers, it may sow the seeds of humanitarian activism. As a specialist in infectious diseases, Farmer's goal is nothing less than redressing the "steep gradient of inequality" in medical service to the desperately poor. His work establishing a complex of public health facilities on the central plateau of Haiti forms the keystone to efforts that now encompass initiatives on three continents. Farmer and a trio of friends began in the 1980s by creating a charitable foundation called Partners in Health (PIH, or Zanmi Lasante in Creole), armed with passionate conviction and \$1 million in seed money from a Boston philanthropist. Kidder provides anecdotal evidence that their early approach to acquiring resources for the Haitian project at times involved a Robin Hood type of "redistributive justice" by liberating medical equipment from the "rich" (Harvard) and giving to the "poor" (the PIH clinic). Yet even as PIH has grown in size and sophistication, gaining the ability to influence and collaborate with major international organizations because of the founders' energy, professional credentials, and successful outcomes, their dedicated vision of doctoring to the poor remains unaltered. Farmer's conduct is offered as a "road map to decency," albeit an uncompromising model that nearly defies replication. This story is remarkable, and Kidder's skill in sequencing both dramatic and understated elements into a reflective commentary is unsurpassed. (review from *School Library Journal*)

***Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time* by Greg Mortenson:** Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coauthor Relin recounts Mortenson's efforts in fascinating detail, presenting compelling portraits of the village elders, con artists, philanthropists, mujahideen, Taliban officials, ambitious school girls and upright Muslims Mortenson met along the way. As the book moves into the post-9/11 world, Mortenson and Relin argue that the United States must fight Islamic extremism in the region through collaborative efforts to alleviate poverty and improve access to education, especially for girls. Captivating and suspenseful, with engrossing accounts of both hostilities and unlikely friendships, this book will win many readers' hearts. (review from *Publisher's Weekly*)

***Autobiography of a Face* by Lucy Grealy:** At age nine, Lucy Grealy was diagnosed with a potentially terminal cancer. When she returned to school with a third of her jaw removed, she faced the cruel taunts of classmates. In this strikingly candid memoir, Grealy tells her story of great suffering and remarkable strength without sentimentality

and with considerable wit. Vividly portraying the pain of peer rejection and the guilty pleasure of wanting to be special, Grealy captures with unique insight what it is like as a child and young adult to be torn between two warring impulses: to feel that more than anything else we want to be loved for who we are, while wishing desperately and secretly to be perfect. (review from Amazon.com)

The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as

Possible by A. J. Jacobs: What would it require for a person to live *all* the commandments of the Bible for an entire year? That is the question that animates this hilarious, quixotic, thought-provoking memoir from Jacobs. He didn't just keep the Bible's better-known moral laws (being honest, tithing to charity and trying to curb his lust), but also the obscure and unfathomable ones: not mixing wool with linen in his clothing; calling the days of the week by their ordinal numbers to avoid voicing the names of pagan gods; trying his hand at a 10-string harp; growing a ZZ Top beard; eating crickets; and paying the babysitter in cash at the end of each work day. (He considered some rules, such as killing magicians, too legally questionable to uphold.) In his attempts at living the Bible to the letter, Jacobs hits the road in highly entertaining fashion to meet other literalists, including Samaritans in Israel, snake handlers in Appalachia, Amish in Lancaster County, Pa., and biblical creationists in Kentucky. Throughout his journey, Jacobs comes across as a generous and thoughtful (and, yes, slightly neurotic) participant observer, lacing his story with absurdly funny cultural commentary as well as nuanced insights into the impossible task of biblical literalism. (review from *Publisher's Weekly*)

***A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson:** Returning to the U.S. after 20 years in England, Iowa native Bryson decided to reconnect with his mother country by hiking the length of the 2100-mile Appalachian Trail. Awed by merely the camping section of his local sporting goods store, he nevertheless plunges into the wilderness and emerges with a consistently comical account of a neophyte woodsman learning hard lessons about self-reliance. Bryson carries himself in an irresistibly bewildered manner, accepting each new calamity with wonder and hilarity. He reviews the characters of the AT (as the trail is called), from a pack of incompetent Boy Scouts to a perpetually lost geezer named Chicken John. Most amusing is his cranky, crude and inestimable companion, Katz, a reformed substance abuser who once had single-handedly "become, in effect, Iowa's drug culture." The uneasy but always entertaining relationship between Bryson and Katz keeps their walk interesting, even during the flat stretches. Bryson completes the trail as planned, and he records the misadventure with insight and elegance.

***E-MC²: A Biography of the World's Most Famous Equation* by David Bodanis:** Generations have grown up knowing that the equation $E=mc^2$ changed the shape of our world, but never understanding what it actually means, why it was so significant, and how it informs our daily lives today--governing, as it does, everything from the atomic bomb to a television's cathode ray tube to the carbon dating of prehistoric paintings. In this book, David Bodanis writes the "biography" of one of the greatest scientific discoveries in history--that the realms of energy and matter are inescapably linked--and, through his skill as a writer and teacher, he turns a seemingly impenetrable theory into a dramatic human achievement and an uncommonly good story.

***Genome: Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters* by Matt Ridley:** The genome's been mapped. But what does it mean? Arguably the most significant scientific discovery of the new century, the mapping of the twenty-three pairs of chromosomes that make up the human genome raises almost as many questions as it answers. Questions that will profoundly impact the way we think about disease, about longevity, and about free will. Questions that will affect the rest of your life. *Genome* offers extraordinary insight into the ramifications of this incredible breakthrough. By picking one newly discovered gene from each pair of chromosomes and telling its story, Matt Ridley recounts the history of our species and its ancestors from the dawn of life to the brink of future medicine. From Huntington's disease to cancer, from the applications of gene therapy to the horrors of eugenics, Matt Ridley probes the scientific, philosophical, and moral issues arising as a result of the mapping of the genome. It will help you understand what this scientific milestone means for you, for your children, and for humankind.

***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot:** Science journalist Skloot makes a remarkable debut with this multilayered story about faith, science, journalism, and grace. It is also a tale of medical wonders and medical arrogance, racism, poverty and the bond that grows, sometimes painfully, between two very different women—Skloot and Deborah Lacks—sharing an obsession to learn about Deborah's mother, Henrietta, and her magical, immortal cells. Henrietta Lacks was a 31-year-old black mother of five in Baltimore when she died of cervical cancer in 1951. Without her knowledge, doctors treating her at Johns Hopkins took tissue samples from her cervix for research. They spawned the first viable, indeed miraculously productive, cell line—known as HeLa. These cells have aided in medical discoveries from the polio vaccine to AIDS treatments. What Skloot so poignantly portrays is the devastating impact Henrietta's death and the eventual importance of her cells had on her husband and children. Skloot's portraits of

Deborah, her father and brothers are so vibrant and immediate they recall Adrian Nicole LeBlanc's *Random Family*. Writing in plain, clear prose, Skloot avoids melodrama and makes no judgments. Letting people and events speak for themselves, Skloot tells a rich, resonant tale of modern science, the wonders it can perform and how easily it can exploit society's most vulnerable people. (review from *Publisher's Weekly*)

Nonfiction Assignment: Choose One to Do

1. Make a list of at least **5** important interpretive discussion questions or discussion topics about the book and answer each question in a paragraph of at least 3/4 page each (the paragraph itself should be double-spaced, typed). Examples of interpretive questions include (and this is only a tiny sample...):

Why does someone in the novel . . . ?

How does this event (or person, etc.) change the course of the book , change the author's life, change the world, etc.?

Explain a quotation. (Choose a thoughtful statement/idea from the text to discuss. Perhaps it is something you don't understand and you want to try to untangle, or perhaps it's a quotation that has moved you...)

Caution: Do not include any literal questions. Literal questions generally begin with "Who, what, when, where." The questions you select or the topics you address will most likely begin with the words "Why, how, explain, describe, compare and contrast, analyze, discuss," etc.

Please note that the questions which you ask are just as important as how you respond to the question of topic. Questions should reflect your active reading and understanding of the entire literary work as well as the overall them of the book. Also, because you are asking and answering interpretative questions, there might be several possible correct answers or no specific answer. Your interpretations are fine so long as you support your answers with specific examples from the book.

2. Write a two page critique of the book. Do not write more than two pages. Address some or all of the following, giving specific examples from the text (quotes, anecdotes) to support your statements. The assignment should be two pages, double-spaced.
 - o What did you like and why?
 - o What did you dislike and why?
 - o Did the book change you or change your way of thinking? Explain.
 - o Critique the author's writing style.

Assignment Information:

1. For the nonfiction assignment, you must bring your response to class the first day of school, August 9, 2010. Late nonfiction responses will be accepted only on Tuesday the 10th, at a cost of 25 points off for being late. I don't recommend this since you've had the whole summer to do this assignment!
2. Both *The Crucible* test and the nonfiction written assignment will each count as a test grade, which means there are two test grades possible in the first few days of school.
3. Type the nonfiction assignment, double-spaced, using only one side of the page. Please use MLA format for your name. It should be on the left side of the paper, like this (personalized, of course):

Your Name

Finco or Leazenbee (depends on which teacher you end up with!)

AP Language

The Date (choose the date you actually did it or the date it was due; hopefully those are not the same dates!)

Following instructions matters! Thought matters! Organization matters! Intellectual risk-taking matters! Mechanics matter!

DO NOT WRITE A BOOK REPORT! AVOID PLOT SUMMARY!

Grading (Scores may fall somewhere within this range)

A+: (100) *outstanding, no obvious errors, insightful, thorough -- goes beyond the criteria of the assignments.*

Both of the assignments reveal a depth of thought on the part of the writer. There has been a tremendously successful attempt to make personal and intellectual connections with the topics, question the ideas being explored, and draw astute conclusions. This work goes beyond the highest expectations. The work represents great effort and a strong interest in the topic.

A: (92) *thorough, thoughtful, sincere, truthful -- meets all criteria of the assignments.*

Most of the assignments reveal a depth of thought on the part of the writer. There has been a successful attempt to make personal and intellectual connections with the topics, question the ideas being explored, and draw conclusions. The length, organization, and mechanical correctness of the entries reflect effort on the part of the writer.

B: (84) *acceptable -- meets criteria.*

The assignments reveal some depth of thought on the part of the writer. There has been some attempt to make personal and/or intellectual connections, question the ideas, and draw conclusions. The length, organization, and mechanical correctness of the entries reflect more than minimal effort from the writer.

C: (75) *superficial -- does not meet criteria of assignment.*

The assignments reveal that the writer has not spent sufficient time thinking through the topics or has only exerted minimal effort. The length, organization, and mechanical correctness of the entries also reflect only minimal effort.