

Reading Selections

9th: Appearance vs. Truth

- Mandatory: *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde

Student Choice: select one (1) from the following list:

- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
- *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad
- *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot

Introduction to Summer Reading

The summer reading assignment at THS is an important means for students to keep their critical reading and thinking skills sharp from one year to the next. Students will have the opportunity to engage in the readings as a foretaste of the academic expectations of the next grade level, to strengthen their understanding of literary elements, and to articulate their ideas about the literature that derive from the results of their own reading and thinking rather than that of secondary sources (i.e. Cliff Notes, End Notes, Schmoop, etc.). Students will work at their own pace, which can renew the joy of reading and help them practice important time management skills needed during the school year. Finally, the summer reading assignment serves to spark classroom conversations about the literature and to generate ideas for essays, projects, or other summative assessments over the literary works.

To help students in this grand endeavor, we make the following recommendations for completing the summer reading assignment:

- Read the entire text before answering the specific questions to understand the full plot and character development rather than reading solely to answer the questions.
- After reading the books, answer the questions within a week so as not to forget details.
- Prior to the beginning of the school year, review the content of each book and reread your journal responses to refresh your knowledge of plot and characters.

Summer Reading Assignment Details

Students entering 9th grade will complete a Critical Response Journal for both summer reading books using the following criteria:

- Students will answer the five specific questions for the mandatory work for 9th grade and choose five general questions to answer for the student choice reading book.
- All journal entries should be typed, collated, and stapled together with a cover sheet indicating the student's name and grade level.
- Minimum length of journal responses for each question should be 125 words.
- Each journal response should be labeled with the title of the work and the specific question being answered.

- Students are expected to use their own ideas and to demonstrate their understanding of the books by completing this assignment. Therefore, students should NOT consult internet and/or other sources of information about the books to avoid plagiarism, which includes but is not limited to:
 - cutting and pasting information or answers from an internet source
 - copying information or answers from any source other than the book itself
 - paraphrasing the ideas of or altering the words of other sources

Due dates for the summer reading assignments:

- Friday, August 14 for returning students and new students enrolled by July 31
- Friday, August 21 for new students enrolled on or after August 1 (mandatory reading selection only, answering the five specific questions)

Grading Policy for Summer Reading Assignment:

- Formative Assessment Grade of the Critical Response Journal, based on the following:
 - Thorough, substantial responses that include specific details and references to the books
 - Accuracy of plot and character—correctly identify the actions of the story and the characters involved
 - Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
 - Following directions
- Summative Assessment Grade during the 1st Quarter as determined by each teacher

Mandatory Questions for *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Answer ALL 5 questions.)

1. What is the difference in meaning between “earnest” and “Ernest?” Why might Oscar Wilde have chosen to spell the title with the former rather than the latter? What other significance does the play’s title have? In your discussion, provide specific details to show how the title reflects characters, settings, events, symbols, or other ideas present in the play.
2. Give an example of a specific turning point in the play. Explain the importance of this event.
3. Look up the definition of a “comedy of manners.” Bearing the style of the show in mind, explain the flaws of Gwendolen and Cecily, respectively. What statement might Wilde be making about the way real people act?
4. What broader social issues does the character of Lady Bracknell bring up in the book, for example, class conflicts, poverty, prejudice, etc.? How do these issues affect the plot and other characters? Provide specific examples to support your answer.
5. What moral or ethical choices do Algernon and Jack make in the play? Describe the impact these decisions have on them as well as others involved in the plot.

General Questions for Student Choice Book (Select five questions to answer.)

1. How does the title relate to the book? In your discussion, provide specific details to show how the title reflects characters, settings, events, symbols, or other ideas present in the novel or play.

2. Give an example of a specific turning point in the novel or play. Explain the importance of this event.
3. What objects, characters, or places function as symbols in the novel or play? Identify three symbols and explain the meaning and significance of these symbols.
4. What broader social issues does the author address in the book, for example, class conflicts, poverty, prejudice, etc.? How do these issues affect the plot and characters? Provide specific examples to support your answer.
5. Select a major or minor character from the novel or play and describe this character's motivations. Why does he or she act in this manner? Does the character undergo any changes during the story?
6. What specific experiences, struggles, or conflicts of the characters in the work are relevant to our own experiences in the 21st century? What makes these experiences universal?
7. Examine the characters' actions: do they act with free will, directing their own lives, or do they act according to fate, unable to determine their own lives? Provide specific examples from the novel or play to support your answer.
8. Describe the setting (both time and place) of the novel or play. How does the setting contribute to the main ideas (themes) presented in the work?
9. Most writers use irony—a discrepancy between what we expect to be true or to happen and what actually is true or does happen—to draw attention to important ideas or themes in their works. Cite an example of irony in the novel or play and explain the important idea it reveals.
10. What moral or ethical choices do the main characters make in the novel or play? Describe the impact these decisions have on the character him or herself as well as others involved in the plot.