

English 10 Honors –Summer Reading Assignment 2018:

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Course Overview & Expectations:

This course is run as a combination of open discussions (seminars) & independent reading, compositions, and projects.

- Students should be interested in stories and why we tell them; they should be prepared to consider the voices within storytelling and the truth behind the human condition. This is a theme that will be explored throughout the year.
- Students should have an open mind. We will cover lots of topics with a variety of viewpoints. While it is not expected that all students believe the same thing, it is expected that students will hear each other, respond to each other, and learn and grow together.
- Students are required to read closely and actively, participate regularly in class, write frequently, and reflect thoughtfully on the material and their own progress.
- Student writings include literary analysis compositions, unit “personal thoughts” that are shared to the class, informal reflections and discussion on Schoology, and unit projects.

Student Summer Work

- **Read *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver.**
 - This book will be followed during the school year by excerpts from *Heart of Darkness* and the reading of Shakespeare’s, *The Tempest*, works of literature that use an African or isolated setting to explore ideas about perspective and human nature, post-colonialism and imperialism, and prejudice and racism.
 - *The Poisonwood Bible* will introduce questions and themes that we will continue to examine in these subsequent works, so it is essential that you read it thoughtfully. This novel will take a concentrated amount of time, so you should not wait until the last days of your summer vacation to begin the assignment. If you read the novel earlier in the summer, I suggest you review it and your response questions shortly before school begins. **It is not acceptable to argue that you did not do well on the quiz/ are not prepared for the quiz because you “read the book too long ago.”**
- **Complete your own literature notes for *The Poisonwood Bible*. See the attached handout for your instructions.**
- **Complete three responses as described on the back of this handout and hand them in on the first day of school.**
- **Be prepared to take a short, objective test and write an essay on the novel when you return to school.**

As you read, consider the following important elements of the novel (hint, hint):

- Characters: How does Kingsolver portray them? Consider thematic nomenclature (classifications).
- Identify and reflect on the significance of character foils.
- Biblical allusions
- Symbolism and motifs (recurring ideas or things to further the plot or theme)
- Imagery
- Foreshadowing
- Tone/Attitude of the narrators
- Diction/Syntax and how both are used to create distinctive voices for the characters
- Theme/Thematic concepts
- Structure of the novel, including the significance of the quotes that precede each section.

***Poisonwood Bible* Response Questions—to be handed in on the first day of school.**

Please complete three responses as you read. These responses will be like the online discussion responses that you'll complete during the school year. Each response should answer at least one of the prompts, **using integrated, apt quotes from the reading to support your assertions**. End your response with a “lingering question” – a question that remains unanswered at the end of that section of the reading. Each response should be about a page in length.

Response #1: pages 1 - 186 (CHOOSE ONE)

- The novel opens with a narrative directive, presumably to the reader: *Imagine a ruin so strange it must never have happened. First, picture the forest. I want you to be its conscience, the eyes in the trees.* What is the effect of this directive on you as a reader? What does it suggest about the novel that's about to unfold? As Orleanna continues her narration, who does the “you” that she is speaking to appear to be? To what great disasters does she allude? Why is she telling the story looking back (past) on Africa while the girls seem to tell it as if it's happening (present) in Africa? “And now we are here” (Kingsolver 13).
- How does Kingsolver use voice to characterize each sister? Which sister's voice is the most compelling for you?
- Kingsolver has said, in talking about how she names her characters that, “A name has to be just right: memorable, culturally appropriate, original but not silly. And ideally, it carries some meaning that coincides nicely with the person's intentions and character.” Consider the significance of names in *The Poisonwood Bible*.
- Book Two is entitled “The Revelation” and the girls’ section is entitled “The Things We Learned.” Whose revelation? What is the revelation? What do the girls learn?
- Patrice Lumumba: Kingsolver’s novel arguably is as much about Patrice Lumumba and the historical events in the Congo in the early 1960s as it is about the Price family. As you read, consider how the political events in the Congo affect and mirror what is happening to and within the Price family.

Response #2: pages 187-376 (CHOOSE ONE)

- What is the significance of the Kikongo word *nommo* and its attendant concepts of being and naming? How do the Price sisters’ Christian names and their acquired Kikongo names (210, 225) reflect their personalities and behavior?
- The African concepts of *nommo* and *muntu* are introduced in this section of the reading (209 - 210). Explain them. How do these ideas compare to similar western concepts of naming and existence?
- What ideas are examined about justice and balance/ betrayal and salvation/ guilt and innocence/ freedom and captivity?

Response #3: pages 377-end (CHOOSE ONE)

- Look again at the first and last chapter of the novel. Consider the ways in which the last chapter is a response to the first. Consider how the idea of “ruin” is reworked. Consider the significance of the okapi.
- Orleanna says, "To live is to change, to acquire the words of a story, and that is the only celebration we mortals really know" (385). Adah says, about her mother, "...she constantly addresses the ground under her feet. Asking forgiveness. Owing, disowning, recanting, recharting a hateful course of events to make sense of her own complicity. We all are, I suppose. Trying to invent our version of the story. All human odes are essentially one. 'My life: what I stole from history, and how I live with it.' (492). What does this novel ultimately say about story-telling?
- Within the context of her novel, Kingsolver both introduces us to African concepts such as *nommo* and *muntu* and then goes a step further and requires us to accept those beliefs. Consider the

significance of book 7, “The Eyes in the Trees” and its impact on the reader. What is Kingsolver doing with this final book of her “Poisonwood Bible”? Consider the significance of this quote: “The glide of belly on branch. The mouth thrown open wide, sky blue. I am all that is here. The eyes in the trees never blink. You plead with me your daughter sister sister for release, but I am no little beast and have no reason to judge. No teeth and no reason. If you feel a gnawing at your bones, that is only yourself, hungry” (Kingsolver 537).

- How can this novel be read as a political or religious allegory? Do you agree with Kingsolver's conclusions that everyone is complicit?

Enjoy the novel! Have a great summer! I'll see you in the fall.

Questions? Email me: sreed@marisths.org

LITERATURE NOTES

Use the front and back of **TWO** sheets of **college-ruled** notebook paper and **handwrite** the following information **neatly** on each side.

PAGE ONE:

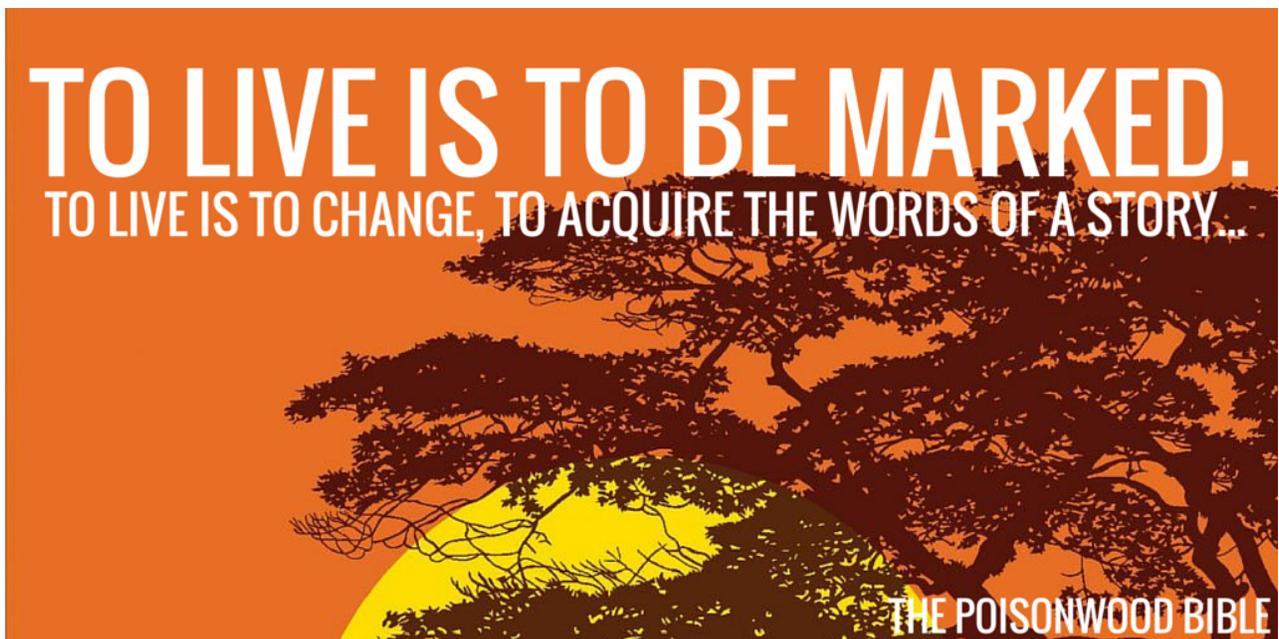
FRONT:

1. Title of the work and significance of it
2. Author of the work
3. Date of first (earliest) publication
4. Brief character identifications of at least six characters (stick to the main ones)

BACK

5. Two symbols in the novel (don't create your own) and explanations of each one
6. Three settings of the work and a brief identification of the significance of each (include time, place, and season, if relevant)
7. Three major conflicts of the work listed as “ _____ is struggling against _____ when _____.”
8. Include in a creative manner a major color on your paper, one which you associate with the work for some reason, and explain why you chose this color.

NOTE: Creativity and neatness will be considered when grading your notes.



PAGE TWO:

FRONT:

1. A motif in the novel and an explanation of its use in the novel.
2. Three allusions, page numbers of appearance in the novel, and brief explanations of their use
3. Three major themes stated in your own words, stated in sentence format, with two instances of textual support for each theme, and the page numbers of the textual evidence
 - a. Consider what the author is trying to say about mankind
 - b. Consider what the author is trying to say about life

My first statement of a theme in the novel, stated in my own words.	Page number Page number	1. A quotation that supports what I stated as a theme in the novel. 2. A quotation that supports what I stated as a theme in the novel.
My first statement of a theme in the novel, stated in my own words.	Page number Page number	1. A quotation that supports what I stated as a theme in the novel. 2. A quotation that supports what I stated as a theme in the novel.
My first statement of a theme in the novel, stated in my own words.	Page number Page number	1. A quotation that supports what I stated as a theme in the novel. 2. A quotation that supports what I stated as a theme in the novel.

BACK:

4. Choose a character in the novel on which to focus and for whom to answer the following questions:
- What is the character's name?
 - What is the character's function or position in the story?
 - Does the character change? If so, how and why?
 - What motivates the character?
 - What are the conflicts involving this character?
 - How do the conflicts develop the character?
 - How are the conflicts resolved?
 - What other characters influence the character and how?
 - How does the character help to communicate the theme of the story?

Everything you're sure is right
can be wrong in another place.
- Barbara Kingsolver