

## Summer Reading and Critical Thinking Project – 2015

The St. Theodore Guerin Catholic High School Summer Reading program strives to present current, relevant and high interest literature to foster reading for pleasure and in young adults. To this end, students enjoy a wide range of choices in fiction and nonfiction.

The program also aims to provoke critical thinking and to foster the analysis of rich texts. Especially with this aim in mind, this year we have included classic cinematic texts—films selected from the American Film Institute’s “100 Best American Films of All Time” list—for students to ‘read’ as an alternative to the book list. Although students often watch films for entertainment, we know that they rarely ‘read’ films, analyzing and evaluating them as literary texts. ‘Reading’ a film is challenging and rewarding. That said, since ‘reading’ a film takes less time than reading a book, students selecting Option Three will watch and analyze **three** films.

Parents may wish to review the novels and films or participate in the project with your student. Some books listed below contain mature content such as war, relationships, civil rights, death, and acceptance. Parents with questions regarding the films’ or novels’ content may contact English Department Chairperson, Jeff Buckner, at the following address: [jbuckner@guerincatholic.org](mailto:jbuckner@guerincatholic.org)

### **The Task**

**No matter which option is selected, students will complete the following:**

- 1) Read and/or view the assigned text or texts.**
- 2) Think critically about the text or texts, re-reading and re-watching as necessary.**
- 3) Write 500-1000 words to explain your critical insights in response to the assigned questions.**
- 4) Support your critical insights with specific details from the text(s), using MLA formatting and documentation. See Purdue OWL for MLA guidance.**
- 5) Select ONE of the following three OPTIONS below to complete for Summer Reading/Critical Thinking.**

### **Due Date**

**ALL STUDENTS (including those who do not have English until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trimester) must submit this assignment to their English teacher by Wednesday August 12. This is second full day of school. No exceptions will be made for this due date.**

### **OPTION ONE INSTRUCTIONS**

Read **one** book from the lists below of **either fiction or nonfiction** and answer any or all of the Option One questions. Refer to specific parts of the text as you develop clear and thoughtful critical insights in your response (s) totaling between 500-1000 words.

#### **Fiction**

*Hotel at the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford

*Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline

*The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah

*Life After Life* by Kate Atkinson

*The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce

*The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson (11-12)

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini (10-12)

*Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury  
*The Violent Bear it Away*, by Flannery O'Connor (11-12)  
*Playing for Pizza* by John Grisham

### **Nonfiction**

*Heaven on Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family, and the Church in the Twenty First Century*, by Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Abraham Skorka  
*Saint John Paul the Great: His Five Loves*, by Jason Evert  
*Unplanned* by Abby Johnson (10-12)  
*Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*, by Sheryl Sandberg (11/12)  
*A More Beautiful Question; The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*, by Warren Berger  
*Mindset, the New Psychology of Success* by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.  
*You Have a Brain: A Teen's Guide to T.H.I.N.K. B.I.G.* by Ben Carson, M.D.

**\*\*Recommendations for grade appropriate novels/non-fiction are noted above. These recommendations are for guidance only; students are free to select any book from the fiction or non-fiction reading list. Parents may wish to review the novels and films or participate in the project with your student.**

### **OPTION ONE QUESTIONS**

1. Symbols and/or motifs are an essential element of many novels and short stories. How have either or both of these devices been used and, in your opinion, how successfully?
2. If one of the roles of literature is to provide insight into human nature, by what techniques and to what degree does the book you read offer you such insight?
3. "Some works of literature are universal and timeless; others seem specific to one place and/or time." In what ways does the book you read explore this range of possibilities?
4. Writers make many deliberate choices in the course of creating their works. Consider one or two elements of style (such as diction, tone, organization, imagery, figurative language, irony, etc.) Then, illustrate and evaluate those stylistic choices.
5. Examine the role of minor characters in the novel you read. Choose one minor character and analyze his or her impact on the novel's thematic elements. What effect does the writer achieve through this minor character?
6. "Reading non-fiction has the effect of interesting us in the author as much as in the subject matter." Referring closely to the stylistic and/or narrative features of your non-fiction selection, discuss the extent to which you agree with this statement.
7. "Prose non-fiction often has a pointed purpose." How and to what extent is the purpose made clear in the non-fiction work you have selected?
8. Who is intended audience of your prose nonfiction selection? How do you know this, and how does the author engage that audience?

## **OPTION TWO INSTRUCTIONS**

After reading the assigned book and viewing the filmed adaptation of that same book, answer any or all of the following questions. Your goal, of course, is to reference specific parts of the text and film as you develop clear and thoughtful critical insights in your response (s) totaling between 500-1000 words.

### **Book/Film Choices**

*The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton (1920) and *The Age of Innocence*, directed by Martin Scorsese (1993)

*Empire of the Sun* by JG Ballard (1984) and *Empire of the Sun*, directed by Steven Spielberg (1987)  
*David Copperfield* (1850), by Charles Dickens and *David Copperfield* (1935), directed by George Cukor

*Sense and Sensibility* (1811), by Jane Austen and *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), directed by Ang Lee  
*Lilies of the Field* (1962), by William Edmund Barrett and *Lilies of the Field* (1963), directed by Ralph Nelson

*The Natural*, by Bernard Malamud (1952), and *The Natural* (1984), directed by Barry Levinson  
*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams (1979) and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (2005)

## **OPTION TWO QUESTIONS**

1. Illustrate an unimportant change made by the film adaptation director. Explain the effect of this change and why that effect is not important. These changes may include an added scene(s), omitted scene(s), and/or scenes that were altered.
2. Illustrate the most important change made by the film adaptation director and explain why this change is so incredibly important. These changes may include an added scene(s), omitted scene(s), and/or scenes that were altered.
3. Which change increased your understanding or enjoyment of the story? How? Why?
4. Which change decreased your understanding or enjoyment of the story? How? Why?
5. When a new adaptation is planned and filmed, what new change would you recommend to the new screenwriter or director? Explain how this change could improve the audience's enjoyment or understanding.
6. Examine the film techniques employed in the adaptation (sequencing, camera angles, lighting, costume, sound, focus, framing, point-of-view, voice-over, etc.) against the imagery in the novel. Choose a particular scene to analyze, comparing and contrasting the techniques used in the film adaptation to convey this scene and its corresponding thematic importance of the story.

### **OPTION THREE INSTRUCTIONS**

Watch **three** of the following films and write a combined 500-1000 words in response to any or all of the following questions. Be prepared to review the movies more than one time to excel with this assignment.

*Song of Bernadette* (1943), directed by Henry King

*Out of Africa* (1985), Sydney Pollack

*Ben-Hur* (1959), directed by William Wyler

*Singin' in the Rain* (1952), directed by Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen

*Casablanca* (1942), directed by Michael Curtiz

*To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), directed by Robert Mulligan

*E.T. The Extraterrestrial* (1982), directed by Stephen Spielberg

*My Fair Lady* (1964), directed by George Cukor

*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), directed by Stanley Kramer

*Star Wars* (1977), George Lucas

*The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945), Leo McCarey

*Les Miserable* (1998), Billie August

### **OPTION THREE QUESTIONS**

1. Symbols and/or motif are an essential element of many films. How have either or both of these devices been used and, in your opinion, how successfully?
2. If one of the roles of film is to provide insight into human nature, by what techniques and to what degree does a film you watched offer you such insight?
3. "Some films are universal and timeless; others seem specific to one place and/or time." In what ways does a film you watched explore this range of possibilities?
4. Film directors make many deliberate choices in the course of creating their works. Consider one or two elements of style (such as lighting, camera angles, costuming, sound, props, blocking, etc.). Then, illustrate and evaluate those stylistic choices.
5. "Make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait." Focusing on one of these demands for filmmaking, show how it emerges as a significant factor in creating interest in a film you watched.