

Summer Reading and Critical Thinking Project – 2014

The St. Theodore Guerin Catholic High School Summer Reading program strives to present current, relevant and high interest literature to foster reading for pleasure 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. With this aim in mind, this year we have added 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 this option will watch and analyze **three** films.

Parents may wish to review the novels and films. 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, Shelley Horn, at the following address: shorn@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 OPTIONS below to complete for Summer Reading/Critical Thinking.**

Due Date

ALL STUDENTS (including those who do not have English until the 2nd Trimester) must submit this assignment to their English teacher by Friday, August 15th. This is the first Friday of the first week 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

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night, by Mark Haddon **9/10

Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson **9/10

A Prayer for Owen Meany, by John Irving

Season of Life, by Jeffrey Marx

The Timekeeper, by Mitch Albom

Ceremony, by Leslie Marmon Silko **11/12

Nonfiction

Witness to Hope, The Biography of John Paul II, by George Weigle

David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Battling Giants, by Malcolm Gladwell

Behind the Beautiful Forever: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity, by Katherine Boo

Unbroken, by Laura Hillenbrand

The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Tales, by Wes Moore **11/12

The Glass Castle, by Jeannette Walls **11/12

****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.**

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. "Make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait." Focusing on one of these demands for writing, show how it emerges as a significant factor in creating interest in the book you read.

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 Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), directed by John Ford

The Maltese Falcon, by Dashiell Hammett and *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), directed by John Huston

Jaws by Peter Benchley and *Jaws* (1975), directed by Stephen Spielberg

Jurassic Park, by Michael Crichton and *Jurassic Park* (1993), directed by Stephen Spielberg

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Bronte and *Jane Eyre* (2011), directed by Cary Fukunaga

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, by Jonathan Safran Foer and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2011), directed by Stephen Daldry

OPTION TWO QUESTIONS

1. Illustrate an unimportant change made by the film adaptation's 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 an important change made by the film adaptation's director and explain why this change is important. These changes may include an added scene(s), omitted scene(s), and/or scenes that were altered.
3. Illustrate the most important change made by the film adaptation's 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.

4. Which change increased your understanding or enjoyment of the story? How? Why?
5. Which change decreased your understanding or enjoyment of the story? How? Why?
6. 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

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.

Gone with the Wind (1939), directed by Victor Fleming
Citizen Kane (1941), directed by Orson Welles
A Streetcar Named Desire (1951), directed by Elia Kazan
Rear Window (1954), directed by Alfred Hitchcock
Bridge over River Kwai (1957), directed by David Lean
To Kill a Mockingbird (1962), directed by Robert Mulligan
Dr. Strangelove (1964), directed by Stanley Kubrick
E.T. The Extraterrestrial (1982), directed by Stephen Spielberg
Dances with Wolves (1990), directed by Kevin Costner
Forrest Gump (1994), directed by Robert Zemeckis

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.