

2017-2018 PRE-REQUISITE SUMMER READING

Advanced Placement Literature & Composition

This year I have assigned five works, an essay and a resume. With one work there is an associated assignment to complete. For the others, you are required to keep a dialectical journal. These works will require a close, thoughtful initial reading followed by (at least) re-readings of selected passages throughout. As you read, keep in mind my expectation that you will be spending significantly more time and thought per page assigned than you are most likely used to doing.

There are five books you will need for these assignments:

NONFICTION

Foster, Thomas C. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*

FICTION

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*

James, Henry. *Daisy Miller*

Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine*

Powers, Kevin. *The Yellow Birds*

Please obtain your own copies of these books as your own copy will allow you to mark in the margins of the text, which will be helpful as you read and, later on, when you are reviewing and writing about the work.

Please read and annotate *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* first.

The Yellow Birds assignment is due by July 31st. The remaining assignments should be complete and ready to turn in on the first day of school.

All work must be according to MLA guidelines: typed, double-spaced, and in eco-friendly 12-point Garamond font (Garamond uses 27% less ink when printed than Times New Roman). All assignments can be submitted through Google Drive. Share your documents with tmattthews@hudsoncatholic.org I prefer you use your school email account.

Assignments:

The Yellow Birds

The following questions come from TeachingBooks.net and pertain to *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers. They are to be answered in their entirety. I am also attaching a PBS video interview with Kevin Powers that might help. Please note that there is some graphic violence in this novel, as well as some vulgar language.

[Kevin Powers Interview](#)

1. The Army tells the soldiers that death is the "great unifier," that it brings people "closer together than any other activity on earth." But Bartle thinks the more common belief among soldiers is that "if you die, it becomes more likely that I will not." What are your thoughts on either philosophy of death. Is the concept of death in civilian life different from war? Is death in war simply a matter of numbers, lacking any significance?

2. What do you make of the troops killing the single man, alone in front of a wall, and the older couple in the car (pg. 20-22). Why are they summarily killed? Is their killing an inevitability of war? Is the killing justified in wartime?

3. Birds, the orchard, and hyacinths are mentioned repeatedly throughout the book. What might their significance be? Dust and footprints are also referred to frequently. Why? What is their thematic significance—any ideas?

4. Talk about the colonel who addresses the troops while in front of the cameras. Do you think his concern for the troops is genuine...or is he preening before the media? He tells the soldiers that some will not return. Why does he tell them that? Should he have done so? What does Bartle think of the colonel's admission (pg. 87)?

5. The colonel also tells the troops that in the coming battle "you may not do anything more important in your life" (pg. 89). How do Murph and Bartle respond to that statement? Whose perspective do you agree with?

6. What do you think of Sterling? What does Bartle think of him? Does your opinion of Sterling change? Does Bartle's? What happens to Sterling...and why?

7. Why do U.S. troops end up fighting three times, in three years, for Al Tifar?

8. Bartle says that "we were unaware of even our own savagery now: the beatings and the kicked dogs, the searches and the sheer brutality of our presence." What do you make of that statement?

9. Murph seems to give up. What precipitates his loss of will? Does it start with his girlfriend's letter telling him she has found someone else? Bartle tortures himself that he should have been able to pinpoint the moment. To what degree is Bartle responsible for Murph?

10. What is Murph's attraction to the young female medic? Why does he sit and watch her? Even Bartle finds her compelling—why? What does she mean to both of them?

11. SPOILER ALERT: Why does Bartle not want to follow standard procedures with regard to Murph's body? Is the decision the right one? Is it—was it—fair to deprive Murph's mother of the return of her son's body? What about the old hermit with the mule—why does Sterling shoot him?

12. What is the significance of the title, *The Yellow Birds*? Consider the canaries from the coal mines that Murph describes to Bartle (pg. 139). What about them...and why might the book be named after them? What about all the other mentions of birds throughout the book

(see Question 3)?

13. SPOILER ALERT: The following aren't questions but observations: note Bartle's mention of Murph's eyes, as early as page 7, which have already "fallen farther into his sockets." Consider how that represents a foreshadowing of his death. Also note the parallel between Bartle's floating in the James River once he's back home and the disposal of Murph's body into the Tigris.

14. On the plane home, Bartle feels he has "left the better portion" of himself behind. What does he mean? By the time he arrives in Richmond, he has lost his way—and his will—as if he had "vanished into thin air." How would you describe his condition? Is his behavior typical of returning vets?

15. SPOILER ALERT: We aren't told how Bartle's trial, or court martial, plays out, exactly what he is charged with. How—or why—do you think he ends up in prison? What is he guilty of? Is he guilty?

16. What do you think the letter to Murph's mother says? She comes to visit Bartle at Fort Knox. Why—what does she want? Bartle says she offers him no forgiveness, yet he is glad she came. Would you have visited Bartle under the circumstances.

17. Bartle's own mother has no ability to understand her son when he returns. Is there any way that any of us can grasp what a soldier's experience in battle is like? How are we ever to integrate them back into society? How are we to heal them? Can they be healed?

18. What is Bartle's emotional state by the end of the novel? Has healing occurred? What might the future hold for him? Why does the book end with Bartle's vision of Murph's floating remains?

College Application Essay

You need an essay in response to one college application prompt—from the Common App or from the college of your choice. You should consider it a 650-word limit.

Resume

The purpose of this document is to have in one place all your activities and accomplishments to give to people you want to write recommendation letters for you. If you look online or in a bookstore, you can find tons of advice on how to construct a resume, ranging from tips on organization to guidelines on formatting. You should include such information as the following:

- a. General contact information (and time to get rid of e-mail addresses like IMAcutebanana@yahoo.com)
- b. Brief high school information (GPA, class rank – stuff you can find

later)

- c. Goal statement
- d. Your activities
- e. Positions of leadership
- f. Awards and honors
- g. Volunteer experience
- h. Work experience (employment history)
- i. Special skills and/or interests

Dialectical Journal

Please maintain your dialectical journal (or any form of note-taking you choose) for the remaining three works of literature in anticipation of classroom activities, projects, and quizzes. All notes may be used on quizzes. Enjoy!

The dialectical journal encourages active, thoughtful, and critical reading. Maintaining the journal depends on readers learning how to respond to their reading in an efficient and somewhat systematic manner. Below is printed a short example of typical dialectical journal entries. If you choose to use this method, I strongly suggest you develop a shorthand system that will remind you at a glance as to why you noted the particular passage, i.e., √=important, remember this; !=something striking, a theme verbalized, etc.; ?=huh? I don't get it, ask about this; and so on. Make sure to write something beyond the shorthand symbol. Try to note the literary significance, i.e., characterization, theme, symbolism, motif, setting, etc. All notes may be used in the event of quizzes.

Dialectical Journal Sample: After reading the first few pages of *Heart of Darkness*

PASSAGE/PAGE #	SIGNIFICANCE	ANALYSIS/QUESTIONS/REACTIONS
<p>Description of Marlow—"He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of his hands outwards, he resembled an idol." p. 1</p> <p>Looking up the Thames (pronounced Tems) "And this also,' said Marlow suddenly, 'has been one of the dark places of the earth.'"</p> <p>"He had to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work on him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate."</p>	<p>?? He looks like a Buddha, or someone enlightened</p> <p>√ Talking about England? Why?</p> <p>!! Talking about experience of early invaders of England. This is the beginning of Marlow's story.</p>	<p>What has he been enlightened about?</p> <p>Notice light and dark motif beginning. Why does he describe England this way?</p> <p>What is the "fascination of the abomination? What kind of abomination?</p>

Consult these resources for note taking and annotating as you read.

Even if you have a method for taking notes as you read, here are three resources that you really should look at. Remember, reading, understanding, and implementing these note taking ideas will take time, but it will take much less time than trying to do this work and all subsequent work without a method for taking notes while you read.

Resource 1: [Note Taking Method \(The flip out chart is a great idea\)](#)--This is a good resource. Stick with it through her recommendations for highlighters. What comes after is quite helpful.

Resource 2: [Annotating a novel](#)

Resource 3: [Cornell College](#)