

British Literature Summer Reading Assignment

Ms. Surat

Roberts, Jason. *A Sense of the World: How a Blind Man Became History's Greatest Traveler*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2007. Print.

This biography was selected for several reasons:

1. The author creates an inspirational view of the life of a nineteenth century British traveler, James Holman. During his life Holman covered more than 250,000 miles through five continents and two hundred distinct cultures. Unstoppable, Holman refused to let his blindness deter him from his dream of traveling the world.
2. The biography covers the time periods and characteristics of both the Romantic and Victorian eras of British literature.
3. The text provides an interdisciplinary approach to our study of the literature and lifestyles of the British.

ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Directions: Come to the first class prepared with the text. Also have a neatly written copy of your questions (word-processed, Times New Roman or Arial, 12 point, MLA style observed). This will count for a homework grade and will form the basis for our first seminar. Do all of the following:

- A. **Explore the text** before delving into the biography. Consider the quotation from Seneca, the brief "Introduction," and "The Prelude." Peruse the maps of Holman's voyages and the images that the author includes. Explore the "P.S." section including an interview with Roberts and his comments on the writing process.
- B. **Annotate the text. Mark 4-6 quotations** throughout the book that will be useful for the seminar.
- C. **Five Questions to Create**
 1. **WORLD CONNECTION:**
Compose a question connecting the text to that of another discipline or literary work. Draw connections between *A Sense of the World* and other historical topics/events, past or present.
 2. **CLOSE-ENDED:**
Compose a question about the text that will help everyone in the class come to an agreement about people, places, or events. This question usually has a "right" answer.

3. OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:

Compose an insightful question that will require textual support and will instigate group discussion. This question should involve the deconstruction of logic to discover or explore the answer to the question.

4. UNIVERSAL THEME/CORE QUESTION:

Compose a question dealing with a theme(s) that will encourage group discussion about the universality of the text.

5. LITERARY ANALYSIS QUESTION:

Create a question that explores Jason Roberts's choice of style in creating this biography. For example, consider his conversational tone, the order of events, and the insertion of maps, images, and comments to augment the text. You may also wish to review <http://jasonroberts.net/a-sense-of-the-world/from-the-author/> for further information.

6. FOLLOW-UP: IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT

On a class day following the seminar, you will be writing a timed essay about the biography. This essay will be the initial assessment of your close reading and composing skills and will be added to your writing folder for the year. Your senior English teacher encourages you to be self-directed, but, of course, you are welcome to email Ms. Surat (msurat@gsgis.k12.va.us) if you have any questions.