

Summer Assignment for ALL COURSES, GRADES 9-12

The list of questions below is related to the literature that you will read in your English classes from your freshman to senior year. As English instructors, our collective goal is dual--to enhance your skills in reading and writing and to provide you with the opportunity to apply universal ideas to your own understanding of your world.

From the eight questions below, choose **five** that you consider relevant to your summer reading text. For each question, choose **one** quotation that exemplifies a main idea/theme or that you could use to respond to the question when you return in the fall for a class discussion, Socratic seminar, or a literary analysis (5 quotations total).

For each quotation, write a sentence or two that explains the connection between the quote and the question. Bring this typed assignment (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12-point font) with you during the first week of class. (Because it is required that you type your assignment, you will not need to turn in your work on the first day of class. Your teacher will inform you of the due date.)

1. How is our understanding of culture and society constructed through and by language? In what ways are story, language, and power inseparable?
2. What factors shape our cultural values and beliefs? How do individuals reconcile competing belief systems within a given society? How do religion and spirituality shape a culture?
3. How do we form and shape our identities? When can a positive personality trait become a flaw? In the face of adversity, what causes some individuals to prevail while others fail?
4. What are the factors that move individuals, families, communities, and nations to great sacrifice? What are the consequences?
5. How are the various roles of a hero culturally defined?
6. What is community and what are the individual's responsibilities to the community, as well as the community's responsibilities to the individual? What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider?
7. How does perspective shape or alter the perception of truth?
8. To what extent does power or the lack of power affect individuals?

Example:

7. How does perspective shape or alter the perception of truth?

"The bombing almost seemed a natural disaster—one that it had simply been her bad luck, her fate (which must be accepted) to suffer" (Hersey 93).

Mrs. Nakamura's perception of the truth was very insular. The bombing was much larger than her individual experience. Though she perceived it that way, the catastrophe was not brought on by anything that she did, and it was not her burden alone to bear. The bombing was the result of war and politics, which were global issues, but she did not consider the larger meaning.