

Senior English Summer 2023 Reading Assignments

Introduction

Here's my philosophy on summer reading assignments:

I want to give you a story that is engaging but still has literary merit; in other words, I want you to be engaged with the story *and* with the *art* of storytelling and literature. After all, isn't that what we like to do anyway during our summers of *R and R*, whether by reading for pleasure, or watching movies?

Your Reading Assignments

With the above considerations in mind, I usually choose amongst these four novels:

- *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr*
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathon Safran Foer
- *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Bernierres
- *There There* by Tommy Orange*

*This year, AP students will read *All the Light We Cannot See* and Honor/College Prep students will read *There There*.

All of the above are about love and violence, beauty and terror, sin and redemption: a recipe for a darn good beach book. Hopefully, they make your heart swell, your lips smile, and your eyes water. Enjoy the stories, but also read them with your literature hats on. Do not rely on the film versions, they are much-watered down versions of the novels (although feel free to view them after reading--as of now, however, there is no film version of *There There*). To ensure that you read the novels carefully and purposefully, you will have to complete some Reading Comprehension/Discussion Questions. Additionally, you will be assigned an extension activity--let's call it a Writing/Engagement Assignment--that will help you engage the story on a literary level. It is outlined below.

Your Reading Comprehension/Discussion Questions

To get you thinking critically about your reading assignments, I have required Reading Comprehension/Discussion Questions. Don't freak out; you don't have to answer all of the questions! Read the directions to know how many you have to answer. The answers to the *Oedipus Rex* questions (AP only) do not have to be as thorough as those for *All the Light We Cannot See*, although you do have to respond to more of them. The questions will be uploaded to Google Classroom, and they can also be accessed on The Arboretum Website by clicking on the icon for the novel on the homepage (you may have to scroll down a bit). There are no questions for your required short stories or chapters from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*.

Your Writing/Engagement Assignment

I don't require you to annotate your novels or take copious reading notes. I feel that by this time in your high school career, you will have learned what works best for you when it comes to engaging the text. I myself don't like to disrupt the flow of reading with copious note taking; I do, however, make notations in *my* books. I encourage you to buy *your* own books (although you should have already been provided with a school copy) so that you can underline or mark it up as you see fit.

The kind of annotations I will have you complete will take a different form. I will encourage you to engage with the novel on literary terms by working with a process similar to what is called **ekphrasis**. Ekphrasis is the depiction of a *visual* art form in writing, oftentimes poetry. In other words, ekphrasis

uses one art form to unfold and translate another art form. For your written assignment, I would like you to engage with carefully selected *songs (one art form)* from a playlist that I have created for each *novel (another art form)*. The playlists will be available on my website under each novel's link, and I will also provide the playlist to you in an email and in Google Classroom.

You only have to engage with the lyrics of the songs; however, I highly encourage you to listen to the songs with the music service provider you normally use, such as Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, etc. For example, listening to the musical performance might help you analyze tone or structure or irony. I have sometimes even included songs with no lyrics, so that you can hear the storytelling in the music.

The playlists contain anywhere from 15-20 songs; however you are required to annotate any ten. In your annotations, I would like you to find connections to character, plot, point-of-view, imagery, tone, metaphor, conflict, irony, allusion, and any other literary devices. Essentially, I want you to gain literary insight as you analyze both the music and the novels. Show off what you have learned from literature so far! I will provide you with an example of a student- annotated song from a past class. Note: If you are familiar with a song that is not on my playlist and you feel would make an excellent candidate for inclusion in this assignment, feel free to contact me with your suggestion.

You can make the annotations in the margins using Google Docs, or you can print out the songs and annotate them in writing--it's up to you.

Other Required Reading

Students reading *All the Light We Cannot See*, must also read the play, *Oedipus Rex*, the short story, "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver and chapter 22 in the book, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, ("He's Blind for a Reason, You Know"). These can be accessed on The Arboretum website or on Google Classroom.

Students reading *There There* also have to read the short story, "The Only Stoplight in the Reservation Doesn't Work Anymore" and Chapter 11 in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* ("More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence").

I hope you don't find this too burdensome for summer work, and indeed, I sincerely hope you can have fun with it by exposing yourself to new genres of music and new perspectives on literature and its connection to other art forms. Have a great summer! And don't forget to take your book with you to the beach (especially *All the Light We Cannot See*, which contains seashell motifs)!

Kindly,
Mr. B

Postscript: I will send the playlists out soon after you receive this.