

Summer Reading Assignment for English 9 - Pulsinelli

Incoming ninth graders must read the following text over the summer:

***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley**

You must also read **two** other books from this list:

Bradbury, Ray, *Fahrenheit 451*

Bronte, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*

Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood*

Dickens, Charles, *Great Expectations*

Hurston, Zora Neale, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Kingsolver, Barbara, *The Bean Trees*

Knowles, John, *A Separate Peace*

Sebold, Alice, *The Lovely Bones*

Shakespeare, William, *The Comedy of Errors*

Sijie, Dai, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*

Smith, Betty, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

Vonnegut, Kurt, Jr., *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Wiesel, Elie, *Night*

***If you have previously read one or more of these books, you need to pick new ones. Seek out a new intellectual challenge!**

When you return to school in August, you should bring a letter from your parent(s) listing the books you read and the dates you finished them. Be sure a parent signs to verify that you have read these texts. I encourage you to read these texts throughout the summer. Do not wait until the last minute to finish this assignment. Reading is enjoyable... don't make it work.

Paper or electronic versions are fine for summer reading.

In August, you will be given a timed writing assignment based upon these texts, so I strongly advise you to take notes (observations, comments, favorite passages, questions, and so forth) that you may return to later. In addition to keeping the basic plot straight, you should pay special attention to the development of character (how certain character qualities are demonstrated) and the development of themes.

Naturally, you do not have to limit your summer reading to this assignment. Read more if you like. Feel free to ask me or your fellow students for recommendations. Summer is a time to set your own schedules, but I encourage you to keep your mind alive and your days filled with profitable activity.

Mr. Pulsinelli

Here are questions for you to consider as you read *Brave New World*. I don't need formal answers to them in August, but they should inform your reading:

1. Who has the potential to be a hero in this novel? Why? Does anybody succeed in being a hero? Why/why not?
2. "COMMUNITY. IDENTITY. STABILITY." Are these our goals too? Is this what most of us want in society? Can these words mean different things to different people? Is anything important missing from this list?
3. What is "childhood" in your opinion? What does it mean in Huxley's world?
4. How do we define "natural"? Is our human society any more natural than Huxley's?
5. "That is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you've *got* to do. All conditions aim at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny." What do you think about this idea? Wouldn't such a society be a happy one? Wouldn't *we* be happier if we could do this?
6. Are we conditioned as human beings to want certain things and to behave in a certain way? Is that how we account for our modern ethics, our belief in right and wrong? How much of your "self" is determined by the culture around you and how much are you truly free to determine yourself?
7. Consider Mustapha Mond's description and criticism of our present world. Could you make an argument for how he might be right?
8. Do we have a more healthy relationship with death than do the people in Huxley's world? What would define a truly "healthy" relationship with death?
9. What is the Savage's argument against this dystopian society of Huxley's?
10. What is "happiness" for Huxley's people? For the Savage? And what about for us? (And don't tell me that happiness is different for everyone...that is simply lazy thinking. We *can* talk about common definitions of happiness. Is happiness simply physical "pleasure" or does it mean more?)
11. Does the role of women change much in the future? Are they equal to men?
12. Clearly, a modern reader will rebel against the loss of "true" individuality in Huxley's world, but what is "true" individuality? Is it a fiction? And what makes us value our individuality so much?