

English 10 Summer Reading

READING ASSIGNMENT:

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight, a memoir by Alexandra Fuller

This Boy's Life, a memoir by Tobias Wolff

Read both memoirs, and have your OWN paper copy (new or used) of both books to use in class. You are not required to take notes or annotate. However, read carefully and use strategies that result in a strong recall of both texts by the start of classes in mid-August. Do NOT return saying, I read it in June, so don't remember much. You'll be writing an in-class essay on both books right away, so you need to have a sharp knowledge of both texts.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Below you will find 3 Questions. You need to pick 2 for each of the two memoirs. You will offer one 500-550 word paragraph for each response. This means you will have a total of 4 writings @ 500-550 words each. Your total word count will be 2,000-2,200 words total. Yes, you may use first person, if you'd like.

You can pick which questions you want to do, as long as it totals 4 paragraphs, 2 for each book. And you can skip a question if, for example, you want to just write about both memoirs for two of the questions and skip the third question altogether. Here is an example of how you could do it: you could write a paragraph in response to Question 1 for Wolff and a paragraph in response to Question 1 for Fuller (result: 2 separate paragraphs), and then write a paragraph response to Question 2 on a scene in Wolff's memoir (result: 1 paragraph), and then write a paragraph in response to Question 3 in Fuller's memoir (result: 1 paragraph).

Write in a Google doc that you will submit to Google Classroom. I'll email you in August to let you know when the English 10 (2025-26) classroom is set up, and the deadline will be to have your document submitted by 8 am on the first day of school.

GRADING:

- Clear, grammatically correct writing
- MLA format, including heading & a clever title
- Writing packed with paraphrased specifics from the text—show that you read!
- Quoting not required, but if you do, quote only the words you need, integrated grammatically *so the majority of the writing is yours*, not Wolff's and Fuller's.
- No repetition of text use/examples across all the writings. Once you use one, you cannot reuse it for another question.

Question 1: Thank You for Sharing

The most engaging memoirs take readers inside the life of the writer, and that often means sharing information that is personal, intimate, revealing...even embarrassing. Pick a scene from the memoir, summarizing it in one sentence, that strikes you as particularly honest. Like, you found yourself thinking both "*I would not have shared that with the world,*" but also, you, as a reader, are grateful the writer *did* share it in the memoir. Your job in your paragraph is to explain what strikes you as so honest about it. Does it go so far as to be a brave thing to share? And why are you as a reader grateful that this scene is there? What does the writer gain by it? Your trust? A sense of relatability? Explain your thinking, and be specific. Remember, declaring something is "relatable" is not explaining how or why it's relatable. We need the how/why.

Question 2: Smile—You're on camera!

There's a t-shirt I've seen for years in book catalogs that says, "Be careful what you say because you might end up in my novel!" There are many characters in literature that are flatteringly or unflatteringly based on real people the author has known. Regardless of what people think is true in a novel, it is fiction, so there's always deniability. I've always thought it would be more important to warn people about *nonfiction*: "Be careful what you say because you might end up in my memoir!" Pick a scene in the book that you feel the writer may have had to consider the ethical considerations of including. Why? What ethical issues do you think are relevant here? What do you think the writer thought made it worth including, despite the fact that it might have violated the privacy of a person in their life?

Question 3: The Shape of Water

One of the attractions of nonfiction is feeling you are reading something that is true. Shirley Jackson, who wrote both memoirs about raising her 4 kids and the horror novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*, once observed, "an accurate account of an incident is not a story." Stories are like water—they take the shape you give them. In other words, even when using reality as a subject, for it to be a story, a writer *shapes* elements: deciding what to include, what to omit, when to start, when to end, how to describe the events, etc. Pick a specific incident from the memoir, and offer a 1 sentence summary so I know which scene you are referencing. Then, explain *how* the writer shapes the story, taking into consideration shaping elements as listed above. Explain your logic for how you feel it was shaped to make it have an overall engaging effect. Please note: you are not questioning the veracity of the incident; you are explaining how the writer presented it (be careful not to fall into plot summary) and what you think works about how the writer presented it.

