

June 4, 2021

Dear incoming Upper School students,

This document outlines the required reading and summer assignments for students entering Upper School English courses. Requirements for all grades are included here, so please be sure you have the correct text and assignments for your 2021-2022 English courses.

Overview

Entering 9th grade: See below for required text and assignment

Entering 10th grade: See below for required text and assignment (note: the 10th-grade assignment appears *after* the 9th-grade assignment)

Entering 11th grade: See below for required text and assignment (note: the 11th-grade assignment appears *after* the 9th- and 10th-grade assignments)

Entering 12th grade: No required summer reading text or assignment

Any questions about the texts or the assignments should be directed to the teachers of the courses. You will find your teachers' names and e-mail addresses at the bottom of each summer assignment.

Have a great summer! We look forward to reading, writing, and learning with you this fall.

Sincerely,
The Upper School English Department

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION FOR INCOMING NINTH-GRADERS

English I: Foundations of Language and Literature
Summer 2021

Welcome to high school and to English I!

One of the themes we will explore this year is the role of storytelling in the human experience. To jumpstart our conversations, please read Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (ISBN 978-0-14-015737-6) and complete the three assignments below before our first day of class.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories is the fictitious tale of a 12-year-old boy, Haroun Khalifa, and his father Rashid, a renowned and sought-after storyteller. When an upheaval in the Khalifa family causes Rashid to lose his voice, Haroun sets off on a quest to restore his father's talent for stories—a journey that will take him to a fantastical world of water genies, mechanical birds, and the sinister Khattam-Shud, who is poisoning the Ocean of the Sea of Stories.

Although the book reads like a children's fairy tale—it is dedicated to and was primarily written for Rushdie's then-11-year-old son, Zafar—it is also a commentary on such topics as the power of stories, the effects of censorship, and the role of artists in society.

Assignment 1: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* Annotations

As you read *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*...

- mark lines that seem to say something about the purpose, power, or nature of stories, of language, and of speech
- mark references to well-known stories, or stories you may recognize from your childhood
- use the glossary at the back of the text to think about the names Rushdie uses
- circle any words you do not know, then look up and note their meanings
- write other impressions, reflections, thoughts, and questions in the margins

Assignment 2: *Haroun* Big Questions

After you finish reading *Haroun*, review the notes you made in the book. Select five quotations from the book that struck you as significant, thought-provoking, or valuable. For each quotation you choose, generate at least three big questions the quotation makes you think about, and which you would genuinely be interested in thinking about further. (The questions don't have to relate solely to the book, and likely won't.)

Please type the quotations you chose (include a page citation for each), and list under each quotation the questions you formed from it.

Assignment 3: Writing Task

Inspired by the primary question that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* asks—“What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?”—I’d like you to respond to the following prompt in a typed reflection between 500 and 750 words in length:

Identify one fictitious story that you love, and explain why you love it.

Before committing to a topic, please...

- keep in mind that many different kinds of stories qualify here—you can write about a story you encountered through a book, a stage (e.g., a play or musical), a screen (e.g., a movie or television series), or another medium. The only requirement is that the story not be a true one.
- generate a list of potential ideas rather than run with the first idea that comes to you. You may find a later idea more exciting to write about and better representative of the person you are today.

As you write, keep in mind that...

- your piece should use first-person-singular pronouns (I, me, my, mine).
- your piece should have multiple paragraphs—however, it doesn’t have to follow the “five-paragraph essay” structure. (I encourage you to develop your own structure!)

After you finish your draft, I encourage you to...

- look over the whole piece, ensuring that it reflects your best understanding of capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics
- read your piece out loud, asking yourself “Does this sound like me?” and “Where is my reading getting tripped up by unnecessary (or needed) punctuation?”, and modify your draft accordingly

On the first day of class, please bring your annotated copy of *Haroun*, and have Assignments #2 and 3 completed on separate digital documents.

Please email me (david.kaye@pcds.org) with any questions you have. I look forward to meeting you in August!

Mr. Kaye

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION FOR INCOMING TENTH-GRADERS

English II: Finding Your Voice
Summer 2021

Welcome to English II!

This fall, we will consider these questions: what does it mean to find your voice? What does finding your voice make possible? And what does it mean for a person or group of people when their voice is suppressed or misrepresented by the broader culture?

To begin this conversation, please read Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (ISBN # 978-0375714573)* over the summer and complete the writing prompts below.

*Satrapi has also published *The Complete Persepolis*, which combines *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* with *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*. Students are welcome to read *Persepolis 2* on their own, but it is **not** part of the summer assignment.

Pre-Reading Journal Prompts

We'd like you to spend some time reflecting before you begin reading. We will do a lot of journal writing during the semester, so you're welcome to go ahead and select a notebook to use for the semester. Or, you can type up your notes and then print them out.

This is informal, private writing (i.e., you won't be turning it in), so focus on getting your thoughts on the page without worrying about what shape those thoughts end up taking. It's fine if you have more to say about certain questions and less about others! Please answer BOTH pre-reading prompts.

Prompt 1 -

Persepolis is a memoir set in Iran, a country long considered a political "enemy" of the United States*. Of course, there are (at least) two sides to every story, a theme that will quickly come across in the text.

How do you feel approaching a text set in a country that our nation considers an "enemy?" What preconceived notions are you bringing to the text? What questions do you have/what are you hoping to get out of the experience of reading Persepolis?

- If you'd like some background on the political history between the two countries, check out this timeline of U.S-Iranian relations compiled by the nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations by visiting cfr.org/timeline/us-relations-iran-1953-2021.

Prompt 2 -

For some of us, *Persepolis* is a text that exposes us to a culture & history with which we were previously unfamiliar. For others of us, *Persepolis* may serve as a valuable piece of representation, the opportunity to see part of our own experience reflected in the text.

Reflect on one text that challenged you by exposing you to a set of experiences very different from your own. What did you learn or gain as a result of reading this book?

Also, reflect on the experience of reading a text that felt familiar to you, a text that mirrored your own experience. What was it like to read this book?

Post-Reading Journal Prompt

As with the pre-reading prompt, this is informal, private writing that you will use to develop a longer, more polished piece at the start of the semester. Consider this an opportunity to reflect on past experiences and think about how they've shaped you.

Choose one of the following topics to reflect on:

“The Water Cell” - in this chapter, Marjane discovers the importance of questioning what she has been previously taught. *Write about an experience through which you came to discover that you could not necessarily trust everything you learned from an adult.*

“The Letter” - in this chapter, Marjane begins to understand the implications of social class and grapples with a sense of guilt related to her family's economic privilege. *Write about an experience through which you came to discover or deepen your understanding of how class functions in society, and your place inside of it.*

“The Cigarette” - in this chapter, Marjane deliberately rebels against her mother and, in so doing, “kissed [her] childhood goodbye.” *Write about an experience of rebellion or an experience of hardship through which you felt yourself consciously moving away from your own childhood.*

Whether you choose to write in a notebook or type up your notes, please bring your pre-and-post-reading thoughts with you to the first day of class. We look forward to meeting you in August!

Ms. Mehra & Dr. Vap
(nishta.mehra@pcds.org; sarah.vap@pcds.org)

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION FOR INCOMING ELEVENTH-GRADERS

English III: The American Imagination
Summer 2021

Summer Reading & Writing Tasks

Required Text

Future Home of the Living God by Louise Erdrich (ISBN 978-0-06-269406-5)

Pre-Reading Writer's Notebook Prompt

As an introduction to how we will often work in class, I'd like you to spend some time reflecting before you begin the novel. We will work in our Writer's Notebooks (a.k.a. journals) pretty much every class, so you can take this opportunity to choose the sort of notebook you'd like to use. Or, because it's summer, you can write this on anything and tape it into a notebook later. Either way, do a little writing before you read, and make sure to bring it with you to our first class.

This is informal writing; no need to attend to language conventions, spelling, or anything that takes you away from generating ideas. Try to write continuously for at least 5-6 minutes for Parts 1 & 3. This will be primarily private writing (i.e., you won't be turning it in), though I will ask you to share some ideas from it in class.

Part 1:

Novelist and journalist Jason Heller writes,

Post-apocalyptic books are thriving for a simple reason: The world feels more precariously perched on the lip of the abyss than ever, and facing those fears through fiction helps us deal with it. These stories are cathartic as well as cautionary. But they also reaffirm why we struggle to keep our world together in the first place. By imagining what it's like to lose everything, we can value what we have.

(If you're interested, you can read the full article here:

<https://www.npr.org/2015/05/02/402852849/does-post-apocalyptic-literature-have-a-non-dystopian-future>)

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this explanation for the now decade-long excitement around dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction. Do you agree? Have you found your past experiences with this type of fiction to be both cathartic and cautionary? Or would you describe it some other way? Do you find such fiction to be motivational in terms of your actions to preserve our world?

Part 2:

Make a list of the dystopian stories you've considered. Think about texts in any genre, films, TV series, even music. Add as many titles as you can think of.

Part 3:

Poet T.S. Eliot concludes his work "The Hollow Men" with these lines:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

Do you think the world will end with a bang or a whimper? And what will that bang or whimper be? That is, do you imagine a sudden collapse or a slow decline, and what brings it about? What in our present moment feels potentially catastrophic to you?

As You Read

You'll see that the post-reading task asks you to work with 3-4 (or more) quotes from the novel, so as you're reading, be on the lookout for passages you find appealing, intriguing, or disconcerting, even if you can't say exactly why. Mark these in any way that makes them easy to return to.

Post-Reading Writer's Notebook Task

As with the pre-reading task, this will be informal, private writing/creating from which you will develop a longer, more polished piece of writing when we begin class. For now, focus on generating as many ideas as possible; let your thinking spill onto the page, trying not to censor yourself.

Choose one of the quotes you found and copy it into your notebook. Then engage with the quote in one (or more) of the following ways (or in some way that you dream up):

- Use it as the first line of a poem or story or reflection
- Talk back to it—push, question, challenge, disagree
- Define a word or phrase from the quote in detail—what it means in this context, in other contexts, to you personally, to Erdrich
- Connect it to a present personal, societal, political, or philosophical concern
- Draw, doodle, paint, compose, sculpt, collage, or create something non-textual
- Create a found poem or a blackout poem with the surrounding pages
- Make a short film enacting, evoking, or reacting to it
- Turn it into performance art or choreography
- Use it as the caption for a series of photos

Then repeat this process with 2-3 more passages, choosing a different form of engagement for each.

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