

Summer Reading 9th Grade Honors English

Mrs. Ross

Welcome to English 9 Honors! I am excited that you are in my class, and I look forward to the school year together. In this class, you will be exposed to a variety of different books, styles of writing, and themes.

Your reading assignment is *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok.

I strongly recommend that you complete this attached assignment during the summer, but the actual due date is mid-September.

Please purchase the book so that you can underline or star key sections of the book, and so that you will have a copy with you when we discuss and complete more assignments on the book in September.

The Chosen is about two Orthodox Jewish boys growing up in the 1940's; the book discusses their friendship, their relationships with their fathers, and the role their religion plays in their daily lives.

Assignment:

Read *The Chosen* and complete the following questions. This will be due in mid-September but strongly recommended that you complete during summer.

The goal of this assignment is to guide you as you read through the book and to help you engage in critically thinking about the themes and messages in the book. **I suggest that you answer the questions after you finish each section (i.e. Book 1).**

I have also attached brief background material to aid in understanding (see page 3), which I suggest you read before starting the book.

As an Honors Student, I expect that

1. You actually read the book (no summaries or internet help, except on vocabulary terms) and
2. You answer the questions to the best of your ability (you need to write a thoughtful answer even if you are unsure if your answer is "correct." Leaving a question blank is not an option) and
3. Each answer is at least 4-5 sentences long. They can be handwritten or typed.

You may email during the summer if you have any questions or are confused about the assignment. My email is jross@cvcs.org.

The Chosen

Book 1 (Chapters 1-4)

1. A). Explain who Reuven and Danny are and how they meet. B). What do you learn about each character in the chapters 1-4?
2. A). What happens to change the relationship between Reuven and Danny? B). How do the boys feel about each other before and after this event?
3. A). What is the relationship between Danny and Mr. Malter? B). How does Reuven learn of this relationship and why do you think Potok reveals it to the readers in this way?
4. What was your favorite part of Book 1 and why?

Book 2 (Chapters 5-12)

1. A). Explain the history that Mr. Malter gives to Reuven about the Hasidim? B). How does this history help Mr. Malter explain Danny's life?
2. A). Describe the debates over Talmud between Danny and his father (both the one in Chapter 7 and the one in Chapter 8). B). What emotional and mental impact does it have?
3. A). How does Reuven fare when he joins in both Talmud debates (Chap 7-8)? B). What does he think of each experience?
4. A). Why would Reb choose to treat his son with silence? B). Can any good come of it? Why/why not?
5. What was your favorite part of Book 2 and why?

Book 3 (Chapters 13-18)

1. Using Chapters 12 and 13, how does David Malter feel about rebuilding Jewish culture and waiting for the Messiah differ from how Reb Saunders feels about creating a Jewish home in Israel?
2. A). Describe Reuven's experience on the Talmud discussion in his college class. B). What is unusual about his response to the Talmud argument? What could it symbolize?
3. Explain why Reb raised Danny in silence.
4. Do you think Reb Saunders is a good father? Why/why not?
5. What was your favorite part of Book 3 and why?

Concluding thoughts (these should be at least 1 solid paragraph each—8-10 sentences):

1. What did you like about the book? Why? Use specific incidents from the story.
2. What did you dislike about the book? Why? Use specific incidents from the story.
3. What is the theme of the book? Support your answer. Use specific incidents from the story.

Did You Know?

Judaism is one of the oldest of the world's religions. It dates back about 4,000 years and was the first faith to worship one God rather than many gods. Judaism has much in common with the religions that grew out of it— Islam and Christianity. All three faiths teach that God is a guide and ultimately a judge. All three faiths have a day of rest and worship, which for Jews is from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday.

Three texts are considered holy in the Jewish tradition: the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and the Talmud. The Torah includes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Christians refer to the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament. The Talmud contains Jewish law.

Except in Israel, where Hebrew is the main language, most modern Jews speak the language of the nation where they live. Many Orthodox Jews in the United States use Hebrew for prayer and religious study and English for everyday conversation.

Over the years, different branches of Judaism have emerged. The four main branches of Judaism include the Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Reform movements. Only a small percentage of Jews practice Orthodox Judaism.

The way that Orthodox Jews practice their faith has changed very little over time. Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah, or first five books of the Bible, was given by God to Moses. They

apply their interpretation of the Torah's laws very literally to their everyday lives. During the Sabbath, they follow strict rules about not using any electricity, telephones, or cars; and they do no work of any kind. The Sabbath is also a day for Orthodox Jews to spend time with their families, to pray, and to study their sacred texts.

Even within the Orthodox branch there are different divisions. One group of Orthodox Jews is called Hasidim. This sect dates back to eighteenth-century eastern Europe, when strong leaders with inspiring personalities began to look at Judaism in a new way. These leaders, called tzaddiks, wanted to reshape their religion to focus more on the kind of heartfelt worship in which even an uneducated person could participate. Hasidim also wanted to protect Judaism from becoming too modernized. As a result, they kept their communities more separate than did other Orthodox Jews. People responded with great feeling and intense loyalty to the early Hasidic spiritual leaders. These rabbis gained great power over their people—a power they then passed on to their sons. Reb Saunders's character in *The Chosen* is based on the image of such a leader. Today, Hasidic men dress as did their Hasidic ancestors in eastern Europe. They wear black coats, black hats, and beards. In addition to Hebrew, many Hasidim also speak Yiddish, a folk language that evolved in eastern Europe.