

Secondary Novel Review Committee

Welcome!
The sign in sheet will be coming around shortly.

February 16, 2023
5:00-7:00 PM

AGENDA



1. Introductions
2. Review purpose, norms
3. Review of January 5 Minutes
4. Small group presentations and recommendations of books followed by whole group discussion
5. Individual recommendations
6. Round 5 book assignment and small group meeting

Introductions:



What's for Dinner?

If you could have an endless supply of any food, what would you get?

Purpose

- a) To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum and Arizona Standards, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, learning styles, and maturity levels of the students.
- b) To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge and literary appreciation.
- c) To provide materials so that young people may have an opportunity to practice critical analysis and make informed judgments in their daily lives.
- d) To assure a comprehensive collection appropriate to the school community.

*(adapted from American Library Association)

Norms



What is needed to be successful as a committee?

- Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings
- Listen to understand
- Practice being open minded
- Be mindful of how often and how long you speak in consideration of hearing all feedback
- Ask questions for clarification
- Support the group's recommendation after consensus is reached

Responsibilities and Expectations

Upcoming Meetings and Due dates

Small group meeting:

Book #1 discussion: Week of September 26

Book #2 discussion: Week of November 7

Book #3 discussion: Week of December 12

Book #4 discussion: Week of February 6

★ Book #5 discussion: Week of March 6

Book #6 discussion: Week of April 17

Whole group meeting:

Meeting #1: August 25

Book #1 discussion: October 6

Book #2 discussion: November 17

Book #3 discussion: January 5

★ Book #4 discussion: February 16

Book #5 discussion: March 23

Book #6 discussion: April 27

Completion of rubric:

Book #1: September 26

Book #2: November 7

Book #3 December 12

Book #4: February 6

★ Book #5: March 6

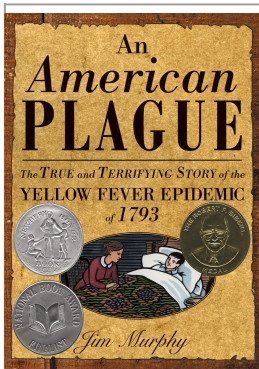
Book #6: April 17

January 5th Minutes

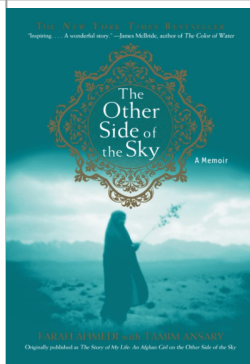
*Discussion

*Approval

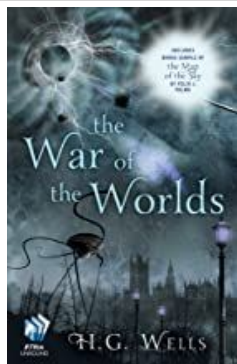
Small Group Novels



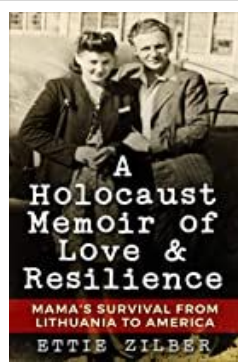
Grade 7: *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* by Jim Murphy



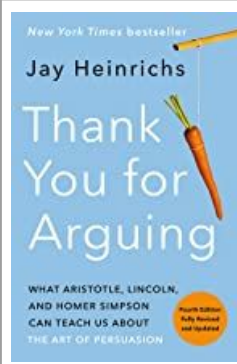
Grade 7: *The Other Side of the Sky: A Memoir* by Farah Ahmed (with Tamim Ansari)



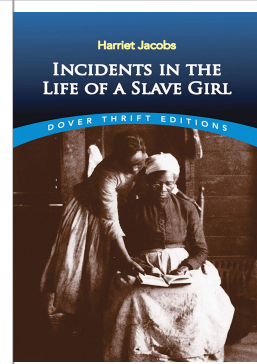
Grade 8: *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells



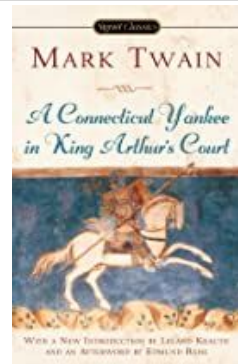
Grades 10-12 Holocaust/Genocide Class: *A Holocaust Memoir of Love & Resilience: Mama's Survival from Lithuania to America* by Etti Zilber



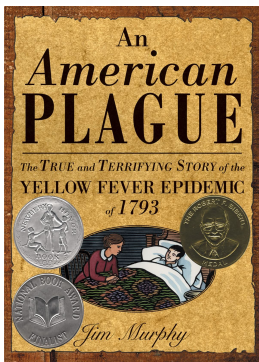
AP Language & Composition: *Thank You for Arguing* by Jay Heinrichs



Grade 10: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs



Grade 12: *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain



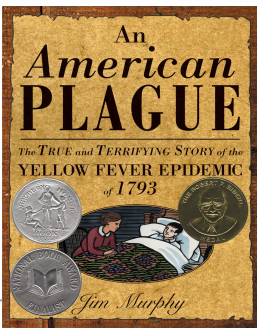
Grade 7:

***An American Plague* by Jim Murphy**

This novel is recommended for use in Unit 4 of the StudySync ELA curriculum. The theme of Unit 4 is “Moment of Truth,” and the Essential Question for this unit is: “How can one event change everything?”

Summary

Long before Covid and the West Nile virus, yellow fever was a medical mystery that forced thousands in Philadelphia, the nation’s temporary capital, to flee and brought the workings of the federal government to a virtual halt. This is the story of how half the city’s residents fled and half of those who remained died; neighboring towns, cities and states barricaded themselves; George Washington himself fled, setting off a constitutional crisis. It is also the story of a little known chapter in Black history in which free Blacks nursed the sick only to be later condemned for their heroic efforts. Meticulously researched, first-hand accounts, newspaper clippings, death lists, and period engravings recreate the fear and panic while exploring the political, social, cultural, medical and scientific history of the times.



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Positives

- Lots of interesting facts and snippets from primary sources.
- Good pictures that back up the information in the text.
- Discussions about life in that time period and parallels to the current time
- Provides a good breakdown of how lack of preparation in the face of an emerging pandemic can create chaos within society.

Concerns

- Some gross descriptions of people with yellow fever, but it didn't seem extraneous.
- For those with a weak stomach, they might have a tough time with the novel.

Recommendation: We recommend this book for seventh grade.

Grade 7:

The Other Side of the Sky: A Memoir by Farah Ahmed

This novel is recommended for use in Unit 5 of the StudySync ELA curriculum. The theme of Unit 5 is “Test of Time,” and the Essential Question for this unit is “Why do we still read myths and folktales?”

Summary

The Other Side of the Sky is the memoir of Farah Ahmed, a young girl living in Afghanistan between 1987 and 1997 during its Soviet occupation and then the Taliban rule. Living in Afghanistan with her family, Farah steps on a landmine on her way to school at the age of 7. Her leg was amputated and she spent 18 months in a German hospital. Upon returning to Afghanistan, her father and two sisters were killed and she fled with her mother to Pakistan as refugees. After several years there, she was able to resettle in the US at the age 14. At 17 she wrote her story and entered it in a competition which she won. This book highlights the central ideas of survival and helping others. Her story can also be tied to the “hero’s journey”.

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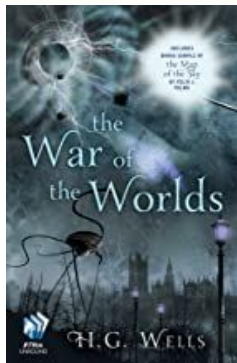
Positives

- Identifies and discusses cultural differences in an informative way
- Encouraging story in the face of difficulties and struggles
- Overcoming adversity
- Always finding the positive in situations
- The book encourages empathy for people with physical and financial challenges

Concerns

- Not a literary masterpiece - lacks literary elements such as character development, organization, and sentence structure and word choice.
- Some may find it challenging to understand the religious aspects
- Some aspect of war may be unsettling.

Recommendation: Yes - great book to use with Social Studies, cultural aspects and a springboard for research. Also a great book to show perseverance, tenacity, and positive attitude. (Although the book lacks some literary merit.)



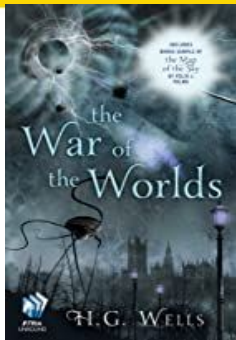
Grade 8:

***War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells**

This novel is recommended for use in Unit 6 of the StudySync ELA curriculum. The theme of Unit 6 is “Beyond Reality,” and the Essential Question for this unit is: “What do other worlds teach us about our own?”

Summary

This is the first-person narrative of an unnamed protagonist in Surrey and that of his younger brother in London as Earth is invaded by Martians. Written between 1895 and 1897, it is one of the earliest stories that detail a conflict between mankind and an extraterrestrial race. The novel is one of the most commented-on works in the science fiction canon. The narrator, a philosophically inclined author, struggles to return to his wife while seeing the Martians lay waste to the southern country outside London. Book One also imparts the experience of his brother, also unnamed, who describes events as they deteriorate in the capital, forcing him to escape the Martian onslaught by boarding a paddle steamer near Tillingham, on the Essex coast.



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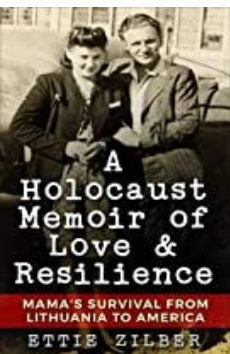
Positives

- It is “written like a journalistic report by a scientist who witnesses the Martian invasion” (*The Guardian*)
- “It gives the perspective of a disaster from the everyday person on the street. Everyone is trying to survive and ‘We see how resilient we can become and how we can survive things we never thought we would’” (SF Book Review)
- Fits well with Essential Question
- Readable; an approachable classic

Concerns

- Above average evidence of violence (but not gratuitous)

Recommendation: Recommend for use in 8th grade.



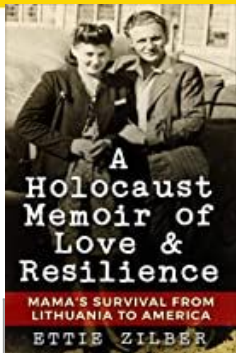
Grades 10-12 Holocaust/Genocide Class: ***A Holocaust Memoir of Love & Resilience* by Ettie Zilber**

This is a teacher request. “The instructional purpose for this book is as a memoir study in Holocaust Genocide. To address potentially sensitive content, we build identity charts and learn how to discuss death.”

Summary

With the Nazi occupation of Kovno (Lithuania), her life changed forever. Zlata Santocki Sidrer was Jewish, but she survived the horrors of the Holocaust. Gone was her normal life and her teenage dream of becoming a doctor. Instead, she witnessed untold deprivations, massacres, imprisonment, hunger and slave labor before being transported to the Stutthof Concentration Camp. Her story of the death march is a testament to her fighting spirit and the limits of human endurance. Yet the challenges did not end with liberation.

Lovingly compiled from recorded interviews and researched by her eldest daughter, Ettie, this is an account of a remarkably resilient woman who raised herself out of the ashes after unimaginable hardship and sorrow.



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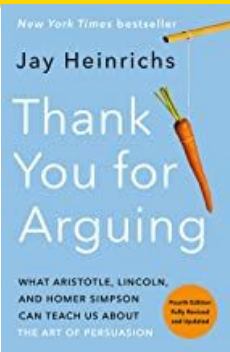
Positives

- Well researched and documented to account to mother’s memories (confirmed details)
- Three parts are good storytelling (Mama’s Memoir, Travels in Mama’s Footsteps, The Second Generation)
- Strong female protagonist - resilient
- Models that historical storytelling/interviews/recording them is a good way to save history
- Book gives extension resources for topics discussed (models and motivates inquiry)

Concerns

- Stories include threat of rape and mother’s abortion (no details)
- Teacher should be ready to address her references to current events (she doesn’t impose thoughts but does discuss politically sensitive events)

Recommendation: Yes



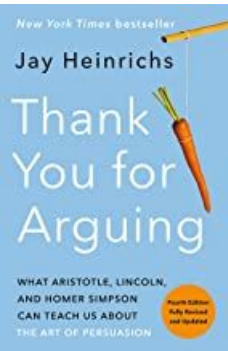
AP Language & Composition:

***Thank You for Arguing* by Jay Heinrichs**

This is a teacher request. “This novel provides the ability to teach students how to structure their argument in a refreshing and entertaining way. This novel will be used for summer reading so that students are able to apply the information in the reading throughout the year.”

Summary

Jay Heinrichs uses and gives examples of tools of rhetoric in order to explain the art and science of persuasion. He uses “time tested secrets for emerging victorious from any dispute, including Cicero’s three-step strategy for inspiring action and ‘Honest Abe’s Shameless Trick’ for lowering an audience’s expectations.” “Additionally, Heinrichs considers the dark arts of persuasion, such as politicians’ use of coded language to appeal to specific groups. His sage guide has been fully updated to address our culture of “fake news” and political polarization.”



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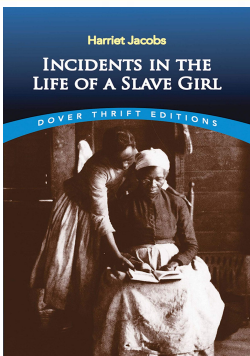
Positives

- Great introduction to rhetoric
- User friendly
- Gives modern/current examples, easy to understand
- Provides clarification through sidebar boxes, metacognitive explanations

Concerns

- Some sexual references/ innuendo, requiring form
- Socially/Politically charged
- Some statements lack political objectivity (examples pages 196-197, 322)

Recommendation: Do not recommend



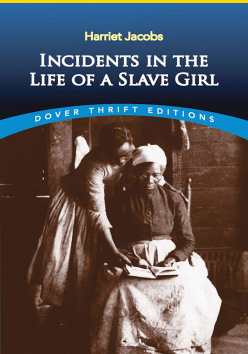
Grade 10:

***Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs**

This novel is recommended for use in Unit 3 of the myPerspectives ELA curriculum. The theme of Unit 3 is “Extending Freedom’s Reach,” and the Essential Question for this unit is “What is the relationship between power and freedom?”

Summary

This is an autobiographical slave narrative written by Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897), a slave who was born in 1813 in Edenton, NC. The author uses the pseudonym Linda Brent to tell her story. The novel chronicles her journey from slavery in Edenton, NC, to freedom in New York. Jacobs's book was published in 1861, the first year of the American Civil War. The novel follows the structure for a slave narrative: personal accounts of incidences of being chattel property and the evils of slavery, descriptions of how enslaved men and women escaped, and details that explain the processes involved to secure freedom. Jacob's narrative is different from other slave narratives during that era: she discusses the enslaved Black woman's experience. The narrator tells a story of resistance to political structures, yet strategically embeds it within a women's domestic sentimental novel.



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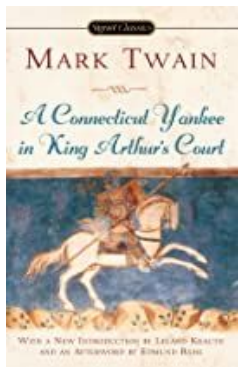
Positives

- Female voice to a male dominated topic
- Not a typical slave narrative
- Holistic View on slavery
- Significant message - needs to be told - imperative to learn history
- If taught with empathy - potential to address race and gender
- As a parent reading this: heartbreaking to be disconnected from your family
- As a student reading this: the feelings behind being sold away from your family

Concerns

- No concerns, but might get flagged in today’s climate

Recommendation: Yes, we recommend this book.



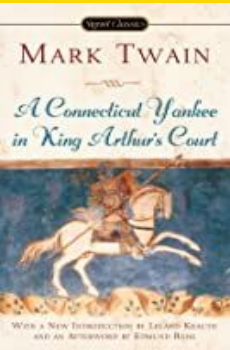
Grades 12:

***A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain**

This novel is recommended for use in Unit 2 of the myPerspectives ELA curriculum. The theme of Unit 2 is “Reflecting on Society,” and the Essential Question for this unit is “How do people come to have different views of society?”

SUMMARY

The novel is a comedy set in 6th-century England and its medieval culture through Hank Morgan's view; he is a 19th-century resident of East Hartford, Connecticut, who, after a blow to the head, awakens to find himself inexplicably transported back in time to early medieval England, where he meets King Arthur himself. Hank, who had an image of that time that had been colored over the years by romantic myths, takes on the task of analyzing the problems and sharing his knowledge from 1300 years in the future to try to modernize, Americanize, and improve the lives of the people.



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Positives

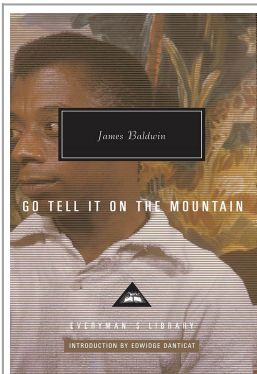
- Written by an author considered to be one of the greatest American authors of the late 19th, early 20th, centuries.
- Provides insight into the belief systems/mindsets of many White Americans in the late 19th century.
- Commentary on how personal biases/beliefs influence an individual's perceptions
- Our beliefs regarding others say more about us than about the people/cultures on which we are commenting.

Concerns

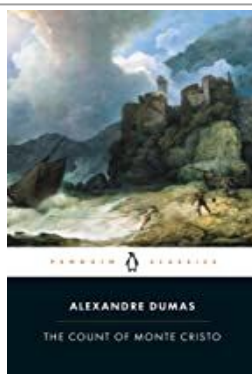
- Difficult to read - not as engaging as Twain's other novels.
- Contains terms and phrases that would require scaffolding to understand/not misinterpret (i.e. “I can lick you...” chp.3; “By midnight everybody was fagged out...” chp. 12)
- Novel refers to American Indians as “savages”

Recommendation: As an American classic, approved for 12th grade.

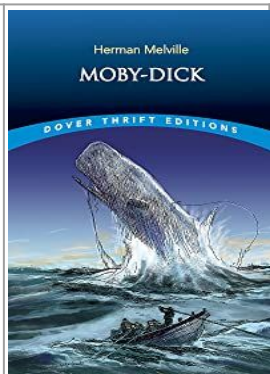
Small Group Novels



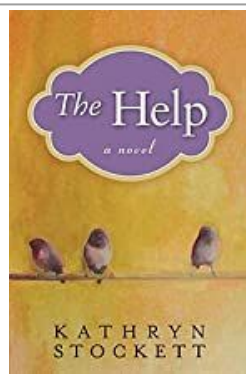
Grade 9:
Go Tell It on the Mountain by James Baldwin



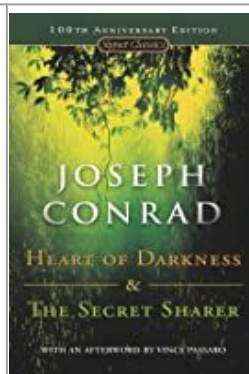
Grade 10: *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas



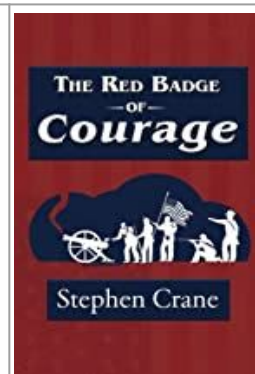
Grade 10: *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville



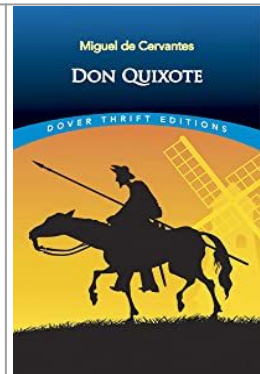
Grade 11: *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett



Grade 11: *Heart of Darkness and the Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad



Grade 11: *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane



Grade 12: *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes

*Thank
you*

Next whole group meeting date:

March 23, 2023
5pm, MDA

