Dear Student,

Summer shouldn't mean taking a break from learning, especially reading. Studies show that most students experience a loss of reading skills over the summer months, but those who continue to read actually gain skills. Students should make an effort to sustain reading skills, practice reading, and read for enjoyment, even though school is not in session (LD Online Newsletter). As part of our Language Arts requirements, each student in Brighton High School’s Language Arts program will be required to select one book from the following list to read during the summer. The chosen book may be either checked out from the public library or purchased from a local bookstore: students are not required to own the book. Students must have their selected book finished by the first day of the “A-half” of English class.

Each student will need to select a book from the list for the grade level that he or she will be in during the coming school year. Students will be held accountable for their book through a book test and a response journal assignment uploaded to Canvas during the first two weeks of “A” trimester. Important note: if a student does not have English during the first trimester of school, they may check with the English teacher they will have for “A-half” English class at the beginning of the school year to make special arrangements if they would like to take the test before second trimester. They may want to save your response journals in a document to upload later, as well.

A.P. English Language (juniors) students should have received a separate assignment: their books are also listed here. If a student did not receive the A.P. Language assignment, please email: karen.larson@canyonsdistrict.org or kellie.clark@canyonsdistrict.org to request a copy. A.P. English Literature (seniors) students should also have received a separate assignment: their books are also listed here and any senior student is welcome to select one of those for their summer reading, even if they aren’t taking the class. If a student did not receive the A.P. Literature assignment, please email: jennifer.mattson@canyonsdistrict.org to request a copy.

Please note: there is a specific list of books if a student is signed up for Creative Writing for Senior English credit. If the student is a Freshman, Sophomore, or Junior in Creative Writing, they will be responsible for the book for their grade level Language Arts class only, and can use the book for both Language Arts and Creative Writing class.

The following list contains the required book choices and brief summaries about each:

**Freshman List:**

*Cinder* by Marissa Meyer
Cinder, a gifted mechanic, is a cyborg. She’s a second-class citizen with a mysterious past, reviled by her stepmother and blamed for her stepsister’s illness. But when her life becomes intertwined with the handsome Prince Kai’s, she suddenly finds herself at the center of an intergalactic struggle, and a forbidden attraction. Caught between duty and freedom, loyalty and betrayal, she must uncover secrets about her past in order to protect her world’s future.

*Dracula* by Bram Stoker
A dreary castle, blood-thirsty vampires, open graves at midnight, and other gothic touches fill this chilling tale about a young Englishman's confrontation with the evil Count Dracula. A horror
romance as deathless as any vampire, the blood-curdling tale still continues to hold readers spellbound a century later.

_A Moment Comes_ by Jennifer Bradbury
Before India was divided, three teens, each from wildly different backgrounds, cross paths. And then, in one moment, their futures become irrevocably intertwined. Tariq. Anupreet. Margaret. As different as their Muslim, Sikh, and British names. But in one moment, their futures become entirely dependent on one another's.

_Monster_ by Walter Dean Myers
"Monster" is what the prosecutor called 16-year-old Steve Harmon for his supposed role in the fatal shooting of a convenience-store owner. But was Steve really the lookout who gave the "all clear" to the murder, or was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time? To calm his nerves as he sits in the courtroom, aspiring filmmaker Steve chronicles the proceedings in movie script format. The narrative alternates between his screenplay and his journal writings that provide insight into Steve's life before the murder and his feelings about being on trial.

_Sun and Moon, Ice and Snow_ by Jessica Day George
Blessed—or cursed—with an ability to understand animals, the Lass (as she’s known to her family) has always been an oddball. And when an _isbjorn_ (polar bear) seeks her out, and promises that her family will become rich if only the Lass will accompany him to his castle, she doesn’t hesitate. But the bear is not what he seems, nor is his castle, which is made of ice and inhabited by a silent staff of servants.

_Sophomore List:

**Code Name Verity** by Elizabeth Wein
On October 11, 1943 A British spy plane crashes in Nazi-occupied France. Its pilot and passenger are best friends. One of the girls has a chance at survival. The other has lost the game before it's barely begun. When "Verity" is arrested by the Gestapo, she's sure she doesn't stand a chance. As a secret agent captured in enemy territory, she's living a spy's worst nightmare. Her Nazi interrogators give her a simple choice: reveal her mission or face a grisly execution.

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time** by Mark Haddon
Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow. This improbable story of Christopher's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.

**The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society** by Mary Anne Shaffer and Annie Barrows
In January 1946, London is emerging from the shadow of the Second World War, and writer Juliet Ashton is looking for her next book subject. Who could imagine that she would find it in a letter from a man she’s never met, a native of the island of Guernsey, who has come across her name written inside a book? As Juliet and her new friend exchange letters, Juliet is drawn into the world of this man and his friends. “The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society”— a spur-of-the-moment alibi when its members were discovered breaking curfew by the Germans occupying their island—boasts a charming, funny, deeply human cast of characters.
Maus: A Survivor’s Tale (both parts 1 & 2)
The Pulitzer Prize-winning Maus tells the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his father's story. Vladek's harrowing story of survival is woven into the author's account of his tortured relationship with his aging father, all told in comic book form: the Nazis are cats and the Jews are mice. Against the backdrop of guilt brought by survival, they stage a normal life of small arguments and unhappy visits. This astonishing retelling of our century's grisliest news is a story of survival, not only of Vladek, but of the children who survive even the survivors.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Alexander Solzhenitsyn*
(As this is a translation, you will want the Signet version.) One day in the life of a fictional political prisoner in a post-WWII Soviet Gulag in Siberia. Solzhenitsyn himself spent 10 years in a Soviet Gulag. Were it merely the grim testimonial to life in the Soviet Gulags or a witness to infringed liberties, its force would be staggering. Were it a testimony to the indomitableness of human nature, it would be crushing. As it is, it shatters our perception of man and ourselves as few books could ever have done. One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is a searching look at human nature. The biting wind, jagged wire, frigid climate, watery soup, and the warmth provided by an extra pair of mittens or an hour of hard physical labor all find matches in the colorful crowd of characters that parades through this narrative - from the prison guards to the prisoners themselves to the prison director to the turncoat prisoners. (Benjamin Gardner, Amazon.com) *contains a few instances of strong language

Junior List:**

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger
This story of Reuben Land, an asthmatic boy who has reason to believe in miracles, begins in the winter of his 11th year when two schoolyard bullies break into the Lands' house, and Reuben's big brother, Davy, guns them down and is forced to go “on the lam.” Shortly after Davy's escape, Reuben, along with Swede, his younger sister and an aspiring writer of Romantic Western tales, and their father, a widowed school custodian, hit the road too, swerving this way and that across Minnesota and North Dakota, determined to find the lost outlaw, Davy.

The Devil in the White City by Erik Larson
A true crime story of H.H. Holmes, who dispatched somewhere between 27 and 200 people in the churning new metropolis of Chicago; many of the murders occurring during the city's finest moment, the World's Fair of 1893. Larson's breathtaking history is a novelistic yet wholly factual account of the fair and the mass murderer who lurked within it. The author strikes a fine balance between the planning and execution of the vast fair and Holmes's relentless, ghastly activities.

Hole in My Life by Jack Gantos
In the summer of 1971, Jack Gantos was an aspiring writer looking for adventure, cash for college tuition, and a way out of a dead-end job. For ten thousand dollars, he recklessly agreed to help sail a sixty-foot yacht loaded with a ton of hashish from the Virgin Islands to New York City, where he and his partners sold the drug until federal agents caught up with them. For his part in the conspiracy, Gantos was sentenced to serve up to six years in prison. Running just beneath the action is the story of how Gantos – once he was locked up in a small, yellow-walled cell – moved from wanting to be a writer to writing, which helped him endure and ultimately overcome the worst experience of his life.
**Earth Abides** by George R. Stewart
A disease of unparalleled destructive force has sprung up almost simultaneously in every corner of the globe, all but destroying the human race. One survivor, strangely immune to the effects of the epidemic, ventures forward to experience a world without man. What he ultimately discovers will prove far more astonishing than anything he'd either dreaded or hoped for.

**The Snow Child** by Eowyn Ivey
Alaska, 1920: a brutal place to homestead, and especially tough for recent arrivals Jack and Mabel. Childless, they are drifting apart—he breaking under the weight of the work of the farm; she crumbling from loneliness and despair. In a moment of levity during the season's first snowfall, they build a child out of snow. The next morning the snow child is gone—but they glimpse a young, blonde-haired girl running through the trees. This little girl, who calls herself Faina, seems to be a child of the woods. She hunts with a red fox at her side, skims lightly across the snow, and somehow survives alone in the Alaskan wilderness.

**Station Eleven** by Emily St. John Mandel
*Station Eleven* tells the spellbinding story of several individuals impacted when a pandemic wipes out nearly ninety-nine percent of Earth’s population. Moving between the days leading up to the event and the twenty years that follow, it begins with one snowy night when Arthur Leander, a famous actor, has a heart attack onstage during a production of King Lear. Jeevan Chaudhary, a paparazzo-turned-EMT in the audience, leaps to his aid. A child actress named Kirsten Raymonde watches in horror as Jeevan performs CPR, but Arthur is dead. As Jeevan walks home from the theater, a terrible flu begins to spread. Hospitals are flooded and Jeevan and his brother barricade themselves inside an apartment, watching out the window as life disintegrates around them. Fifteen years later, Kirsten is an actress with the Traveling Symphony. Together, this small troupe moves between the settlements of an altered world, performing Shakespeare and music for scattered communities of survivors. *Station Eleven* tells a story about relationships, the ephemeral nature of fame, and the fragile beauty of the world.

**ONLY students who possess an IEP and/or teacher accommodations may select from the following:**

**Speak** by Laurie Halse Anderson*
Since the beginning of the school year, Melinda has found that it's been getting harder and harder for her to speak out loud. What could have caused Melinda to suddenly fall mute? Could it be the fact that no one at school is speaking to her because she called the cops and got everyone busted at the seniors' big end-of-summer party? Or maybe it's because her parents' only form of communication is Post-It notes written on their way out the door to their nine-to-whenever jobs. While Melinda is bothered by these things, deep down she knows the real reason why she's been struck mute: something else occurred at last summer’s party and she can’t seem to tell anyone the truth. *Contains subtle references to rape.*

**Slam!** by Walter Dean Myers
Harlem is the backdrop for Myer’s tales about “Slam” Harris, a seventeen-year-old boy whose dreams of playing basketball in the NBA overshadow everything else in his life. Although Slam has grandiose dreams of making millions, Slam is on his way to flunking out of high school. It is Slam’s attitude that changes as he reconciles a harsh reality with his dreams.
A.P. English Language List (A.P. English Language students – juniors – must read one from this list):

*Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* – Mark Aronson and Maria Budhos
When this award-winning husband-and-wife team discovered that they each had sugar in their family history, they were inspired to trace the globe-spanning story of the sweet substance and to seek out the voices of those who led bitter sugar lives. The trail ran like a bright band from religious ceremonies in India to Europe’s Middle Ages, then on to Columbus, who brought the first cane cuttings to the Americas. Sugar was the substance that drove the bloody slave trade and caused the loss of countless lives but it also planted the seeds of revolution that led to freedom in the American colonies, Haiti, and France. With songs, oral histories, maps, and over 80 archival illustrations, here is the story of how one product allows us to see the grand currents of world history in new ways.

*Unbroken* – Laura Hillenbrand
In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channelled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics. But when World War II begins, the athlete became an airman, embarking on a journey that led to a doomed flight on a May afternoon in 1943. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, Zamperini survived, adrift on a foundering life raft. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, he answers desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will.

*The Perfect Storm* – Sebastian Junger
Meteorologists called the storm that hit North America's eastern seaboard in October 1991 a "perfect storm" because of the rare combination of factors that created it. In *The Perfect Storm*, Junger conjures for the reader the meteorological conditions that created the "storm of the century" and the impact the storm had on many of the people caught in it. Chief among these are the six crew members of the swordfish boat the Andrea Gail, all of whom were lost 500 miles from home beneath roiling seas and high waves. Working from published material, radio dialogues, eyewitness accounts, and the experiences of people who have survived similar events, Junger attempts to re-create the last moments of the Andrea Gail as well as the perilous high-seas rescues of other victims of the storm.

*The Glass Castle* – Jeannette Walls
*The Glass Castle* is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette’s brilliant and charismatic father captured his children’s imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn’t want the responsibility of raising a family. The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed, and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children prospered.
**In the Garden of Beasts – Erik Larson**
The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America’s first ambassador to Hitler’s Nazi Germany in a year that proved to be a turning point in history. A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and flamboyant daughter, Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for restoring Germany to a position of world prominence. Enamored of the “New Germany,” she has one affair after another, including with the surprisingly honorable first chief of the Gestapo, Rudolf Diels. But as evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, confirmed by chilling first-person testimony, her father telegraphs his concerns to a largely indifferent State Department back home. Dodd watches with alarm as Jews are attacked, the press is censored, and drafts of frightening new laws begin to circulate. As that first year unfolds and the shadows deepen, the Dodds experience days full of excitement, intrigue, romance—and ultimately, horror, when a climactic spasm of violence and murder reveals Hitler’s true character and ruthless ambition.

**Senior List:**

**The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver**
Marietta Greer hits the road in her 1955 junker Volkswagen, determined to remake her life, and begins by renaming herself after the first place she buys gas: coasting “into Taylorsville on fumes.” Now “Taylor” Greer, she discovers that car trouble can change more than just her name: when her rocker arm breaks in Oklahoma, she is "given" a baby; when she has two flat tires in Tucson, she limps into “Jesus Is Lord Used Tires,” where she begins to learn that her troubles are minor compared to what many other people have to endure.

**Blink by Malcolm Gladwell**

*Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant—in the blink of an eye—that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others?

**Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger**
Holden Caulfield narrates the story of a couple of days in his 16-year-old life, just after he's been expelled from prep school. His constant wry observations about what he encounters, from teachers to “phonies” (the two, of course, are not mutually exclusive), capture the essence of the universal teenage experience of alienation. (This book contains strong language.)

**The Chosen by Chaim Potok**
In 1940s Brooklyn, New York, an accident during a baseball game throws rivals Reuven Malther and Danny Saunders together. Despite their differences (Reuven is a Modern Orthodox Jew with an intellectual, Zionist father; Danny is the brilliant son and rightful heir to a Hasidic rebbe), the young men form a deep, if unlikely, friendship. Together they negotiate adolescence, family conflicts, the crisis of faith engendered when Holocaust stories begin to emerge in the U.S., loss, love, and the journey to adulthood.
**The Demon in the Freezer** by Richard Preston

In this nonfiction work, Richard Preston ventures into the heart of Usamriid, the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Maryland, once the headquarters of the U.S. biological weapons program and now the epicenter of national biodefense. Usamriid went into a state of Delta Alert on September 11, 2001, and activated its emergency response teams when the first anthrax letters were opened in New York and Washington, D.C. The author, Preston, reports, in unprecedented detail, on the government’s response to the attacks and takes us into the ongoing FBI investigation, based on interviews with top-level FBI agents and doctors.

**I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** by Maya Angelou

Sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, Angelou learns a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there. These lessons carry her throughout the hardships she endures later in life, including a tragic occurrence while visiting her mother in St. Louis and her formative years spent in California – where an unwanted pregnancy changes her life forever. (This book deals with rape and teenage pregnancy.)

**A.P. English Literature List** (open to all seniors, but A.P. English Literature students must read one from this list):

**My Antonia** by Willa Cather – Set in Nebraska in the late 19th century, this tale of the spirited daughter of a Bohemian immigrant family planning to farm on the untamed land is told through the eyes of Antonia’s childhood friend, Jim Burden. Jim has been newly orphaned at the beginning of the novel and arrives at his grandparents' neighboring farm on the same night Antonia’s family arrives in this new country. Antonia represents immigrant struggles with a foreign land and tongue, the restraints on women of the time, and the great courage and determination that marked the earliest settlers on the frontier. Cather opens the novel with Virgil’s phrase "Optima dies ... prima fugit", meaning "The best days are the first to flee.” This could be said equally of childhood and the earliest hours of this country.

**Catch-22** by Joseph Heller – *Catch-22* satirizes war in a way at once both outrageously funny and strangely affecting. Set in the closing months of World War II in an American bomber squadron on a small island off Italy, its hero is a bombardier named Yossarian, who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he hasn't even met keep trying to kill him. (He has decided to live forever even if he has to die in the attempt.) His problem is Colonel Cathcart, who keeps raising the number of missions the men have to fly. The unusual cast of characters ranges from Lieutenant Milo Minderbinder, a dedicated entrepreneur (he bombs his own airfield when the Germans make him a reasonable offer: cost plus 6%), to the dead man in Yossarian's tent; from Major Major Major, whose tragedy is that he resembles Henry Fonda, to Nately, in love with a prostitute; from Clevinger, who is lost in the clouds, to the wounded gunner Snowden, who lies dying in the tail of Yossarian's plane.

**A Prayer for Owen Meany** by John Irving – In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire, when one of the boys hits a foul ball that kills his best friend’s mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn’t believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God’s instrument. What happens to Owen, after that 1953 foul ball, is extraordinary and terrifying, and haunts his friend, John, into his adulthood. Mixing flashbacks of their growing up years through the ‘50s and ‘60s with his present year of
1987, John narrates this coming of age story which involves comedy and tragedy, friendship and faith.

*All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy – John Grady Cole, finds himself in love at age 16 with a dying lifestyle as he is soon to be cut off from the only life he has ever imagined for himself: that of a long line of Texas ranchers. To escape a society moving in all the wrong directions, Cole and two companions decide to seek their future in Mexico, a land at once beautiful and desolate, rugged and cruelly civilized, still a “last frontier.” But what begins as an idyllic, sometimes comic adventure, leads, in fact, to a place where dreams are paid for in blood. Within months, one of the boys is dead, and the other two aged beyond their years.

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison – In the troubled years following the Civil War, the spirit of a murdered child haunts the Ohio home of a former slave. This angry, destructive ghost breaks mirrors, leaves its fingerprints in cake icing, and generally makes life difficult for Sethe and her family. Set in rural Ohio several years after the Civil War, this haunting chronicle of slavery and its aftermath traces the life of a young woman, Sethe. The narrative juxtaposes scenes from Sethe's former life as a slave on Sweet Home Farm, her escape with her children, and the tragic events that ensue, with her struggles to deal with the consequent present.

Creative Writing:

*On Writing* by Stephen King  
*Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott  
*The Book On Writing* by Paula LaRouque  
*Two-Way Mirror: A Poetry Notebook* by David Meltzer

**Response Journal Assignment for Summer Reading:**

**Assignment:** the first of your two summer reading assignments will be to write a Response Journal. You will need to have five separate entries for your novel. Divide the pages of your novel into five sections—your entries should not simply focus on only the beginning or ending of the novel, but should reflect the entirety of the book. Use the template below for each response entry. Your five entries should be uploaded into a Canvas assignment for your “A”-half English teacher by the eighth day of school.

**Title of the Text:_____________________________________
Author:__________________________________________
Section (which chapters or pages did you read):______________________________

**Summary:** Summarize the important aspects of the reading section in a minimum of five sentences. Use main points only, avoid including your personal opinions, and use attributive tags:
Literary Response: Referring to one of the attached essential questions for literature, write out the question and a thoughtful response/answer to the question as it relates to this section of your novel:

Two favorite quotes or important/powerful sentences (write them out with the page numbers. Avoid huge chunks of text. Add two sentences explaining why you picked them and why they matter):

1. Page:_______ Quote:
   Explanation:

2. Page:_______ Quote:
   Explanation:

Personal Connection: Respond in 3–4 thoughtful sentences about how this incident/character/statement/book connects to another text, something that has happened in your life, or how it relates to a historical or current event. What parts of the reading make you think of a text to text, text to self, or text to world connection?

Essential Questions for Literature

The American Dream
- What is the American Dream, and to what extent is it achievable for the characters?
- In what ways does the American Dream mean different things for different characters?
- What is the perspective of the nature, culture, or region of this work in regard to the American Dream, and what factors create those perceptions?

Decisions, Actions, and Consequences
- What is the relationship between decisions and consequences for one or more of the characters?
- How do the decisions and actions of the characters reveal their personalities?
- How do decisions, actions, and consequences vary depending on the different perspectives of the people involved?
Conflict and Change

- How does conflict lead to change for the characters?
- What problem-solving strategies do the characters use to manage conflict and change?
- How does a character’s point of view affect the way s/he deals with conflict?
- What personal qualities help a character to deal with conflict and change?

Constructing Identities

- How do one or more characters form and shape their identities? How do they define who they are?
- How does what others think about a character affect how s/he thinks about him/herself?
- In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define us, how do we make decisions for ourselves?

The Human Condition

- In the face of adversity, what causes some people to prevail while others fail?

Culture: Values, Beliefs and Rituals

- How does family play a role in shaping one or more characters’ values and beliefs?
- To what extent do belief systems shape and/or reflect culture and society?
- When a person’s individual choices are in direct conflict with his/her family or society, what are the consequences?
- What role or purpose does religion/spirituality serve in the culture of this work?
- How do values and beliefs shape who characters are as individuals and influence their behavior?

Social Justice

- How does power or the lack of power affect individuals in this work?
- How are prejudice and bias created? How do characters overcome them?
- What does power have to do with fairness and justice?
- Is it ever necessary to question the status quo?
- How do labeling and stereotyping influence how characters look at and understand the world?
- What are the causes and consequences of prejudice and injustice, and how does an individual’s response to them reveal his/her true character and his/her morals, ethics, and values?

Chaos and Order

- What is the importance of civilization and what factors support or destroy its fabric?
- What are the politics and consequences of war, and how do these vary based on an individual or cultural perspective?

Utopia and Dystopia

- What are the ideals (e.g., freedom, responsibility, justice, community, etc.) that should be honored in a utopian (“perfect”) society?

Freedom and Responsibility
• What is the relationship between freedom and responsibility in this work?
• When does government have the right to restrict the freedoms of people?
• What sacrifices do the characters make for freedom?

Good and Evil in the World
• Is humankind inherently good or evil?
• What is the function of human will in relationship between good and evil?
• How do different cultures shape the definitions of good and evil?

Heroes and Sheroes
• How do the attributes of a hero change and/or remain the same over time?
• When does a character’s positive personality trait become a tragic flaw?
• What is the role of a hero or “sheroe” (coined by Maya Angelou) in a culture?
• How do various cultures reward/recognize their heroes and sheroes?

Language and Literature
• How is a character’s understanding of culture and society constructed through and by language?
• How is language used to manipulate people in this work?
• How does language influence the way characters think, act, and perceive the world?
• How does the author use the resources of language to impact an audience?
• What universal themes emerge in this work that are of interest or concern to all cultures and societies?

Love and Sacrifice
• What are the boundaries of love and sacrifice, and where does one draw the line between them?
• What are the factors that move individuals, communities, or nations to great sacrifice, and what are the consequences?

Nature in the Balance
• What are the responsibilities of the individual and/or society in regard to the health of the environment?
• How do different world views lead to different views toward nature?
• How does nature inspire a character in this work, or even the author?

Our View of Ourselves and the World
• How do we know what we know?
• How does what we know about the world shape the way we view ourselves?
• How do personal experiences shape one or more characters’ view of others?
• What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider?
• What does it mean to “grow up”? What turning points determine our individual pathways to adulthood in this work?
• Are things fated no matter what, or does a character believe his/her actions can change the course of his/her life?
The Pursuit of Happiness

• What is happiness, and what is the degree of importance in one’s life?
• Why does happiness seem to be so elusive for one or more characters in this work?
• How much does a culture or society shape a character’s understanding or concept of happiness?

Relationships and Community

• What are the elements that build a strong friendship in this work?
  What do the characters learn from different generations?
• How is conflict an inevitable part of relationships in this work?
• How do we know if a relationship is healthy or hurtful?
• What personal qualities help or hinder the formation of relationships for one or more characters?
• How are characters transformed through their relationships with others?
• What are the individual’s responsibilities to the community as well as the community’s responsibilities to the individual?