

Overview

Incoming AICE General Paper students are required to read one (1) book over the summer in preparation for the course and subsequent AICE exam. The first semester of our class will deal with fictional writing in most of its forms: short stories, novels, and poetry. Some students question why we read fiction in school—after all, fiction is “make believe,” so what can it tell you about the real world? But, in the words of psychologist Keith Oatley, fiction allows us a chance to “enter a world that is somewhat different than our own, where we can compare our thoughts and feelings with those of the characters in the story...and hopefully at its end, we can come to better know ourselves and others in this world.” Thus, while reading your book, make sure to pay close attention to *your own thoughts, feelings, and reactions* to what is happening on the pages as you turn them.

AICE General Paper *is* college; it is not preparation for college. If you are looking for ways around completing your summer reading assignment, you should not enroll in this class. Students who do not complete the summer reading—all of it, as spelled out by these guidelines—will not be eligible to take this course. Online summaries, such as *SparkNotes*, will not be sufficient to complete your summer reading assignment. If you have any questions, write to me at jonathan.hampton@marion.k12.fl.us or see my website for more information: <http://jhampton.pbworks.com>.

Requirements

1. Read “On *Not Reading*” on the back of this page.
2. Choose one (1) novel from the following list.
3. Read the chosen novel. While reading, complete the assignment listed on the back of this page. You will be turning in this assignment during the end of the second week of school.

Titles

The following list of books comprises a conversation that should take place between you, the authors, and their characters. I have listed a common “theme” and essential question for each novel to make the selection easier. If bookstore prices are too much, check out the used section at Amazon.com—many of these books cost less than \$1 to own a personal copy.

Theme / Essential Question	Novel
THE POWER OF WORDS “What kind of power does the written word have?”	• <i>The Book Thief</i> , Zusak
DECISIONS “What kinds of decisions affect the rest of my life?”	• <i>When Crickets Cry</i> , Martin
EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE “What is the world like for people with mental disabilities?”	• <i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i> , Haddon
RACISM & PREJUDICE “Why do we fear people who are different?”	• <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> , Kidd *
GROWING UP “How can I stay true to myself, even when bad things happen?”	• <i>The Yearling</i> , Rawlings *

On Not Reading

Before embarking on your novel, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making the choice to *read* your novel from the first until the very last page. No matter how many times I warn students that *not reading* will cause them to fail this class, every year at least 2-3 students are withdrawn from my course because of choosing to *not read*. These students attempt to use SparkNotes (or some other online summary) to help create superficial journal entries, bogus discussion items, and poorly-written essays. Some of those essays are even found to be examples of plagiarism, either in part or in their entirety.

Of course, to some degree I do know why this happens: many English classes seem to make literature a right and wrong answer game, whereby you as the student simply need to “parrot” back answers to receive full credit. Not “parroting” back these answers and using your own interpretive skills seems to give you a lower grade, so you’ve learned it is far better if you don’t read. I’m sure there are times that a teacher has asked a question and you stayed silent, fearing your own interpretation wouldn’t match your instructor. In fact, I’m willing to bet that you can recall a quiz or test from a past English class where you had to recall *who* the characters were, or *what* they did in the story, or perhaps *when* a certain event took place. Certainly these types of questions have their place in the classroom, but my question to you is, “So what?” You know *who* the characters are and *what* they have done, but is that all that reading is supposed to be?

The short answer is no; reading literature was never meant to be this way! When I read a novel, I’m not interested in *who* did this, or *where* the story takes place. Instead, I’m interested in *how* the story engages, enlightens, instructs, and ultimately transforms me during its reading. It is the ritual of reading that makes the story come alive, time and time again. Unfortunately, the students who choose to *not read* will never know the transformative power of reading; for them, reading is just a game of who did this or that. You, on the other hand, by choosing to *read* are about to begin an incredible journey—one that I hope will be imbued upon your mind for the rest of your life.

Assignment

The assignment below will be due during the end of the second week of school. You will not be able to complete this assignment by *not reading*; you must read the book in its entirety.

1. Keep a **journal** of your thoughts (on paper) after you finish reading each day.
 - This can be hand-written or typed (single or double-spaced).
 - Each entry should be no less than a ½ page (more is required for a higher grade)
 - You should aim for at least 10 entries, although I’m sure more will be required.
 - I still expect at least 10 entries, even if you manage to read your book in one 6-8 hour sitting. Try to stop every 30 minutes or so.
 - Quotes (any line from the story) with page numbers are required in each entry; I expect at least 2-3 quotes from your reading for every entry.
 - This journal is a record of *your* thoughts, so think about what interested, intrigued, or confused you while you read. Also, pick out interesting lines from the story that you might wish to share with the class when we return from summer break.