

American Studies

(AP US History and AP Language and Composition)

2023-2024 Summer Reading Assignment

READINGS:

You are responsible for reading one book and two essays. Links to the essays are provided here. You will need to purchase the book for yourself. You will also need to purchase a composition or spiral notebook for this assignment.

Essays:

["How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer Adler](#)

["1491" by Charles C. Mann](#)

Book:

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

ASSIGNMENT:

PART ONE:

Read "How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer Adler. This essay will guide you through the process of reading actively; the principles explained here will help you to be successful on both this summer assignment and the assignments you will encounter during the rest of the course.

PART TWO:

Read *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson. While reading, use the principles in "How to Mark a Book" to identify and respond to important words, sentences, and passages. Engage in a conversation with the text that is visible on the pages! When you return to school and we look at your book, we should see clear evidence of your reading and wrestling with the ideas therein.

Complete a minimum of twenty (20) journal entries in your Dialectical Journal. See instructions below. Create a distinct section of your notebook for this journal.

DIALECTICAL JOURNALS

The term “Dialectic” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” Think of your dialectical journal as a series of conversations with the text. You will find that this journal is a useful way to process what you are reading, prepare yourself for group discussion, and gather textual evidence for your various writing assignments.

STEP ONE: THE NEW NOTEBOOK

- Purchase a new bound composition (or spiral) notebook
- Put your name, the course (American Studies), and Mr. Cook/Mrs. Valdeperas on the front cover in a clear hand.
- **Neatness in this journal is absolutely essential** (AP Exam readers must be able to read your ideas without difficulty). Your journal should be free of drawings and doodles, and must have good titles and clear demarcations.

STEP TWO: PROCEDURE

- As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of a T-chart (ALWAYS include page numbers). These should be passages that you have noticed and marked as a part of your active reading (thank you, Mr. Adler!). Be sure to give each entry a heading (see example below). In the right-hand column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage).
- Complete *at least one* journal entry for each chapter in *Just Mercy* and a minimum of *twenty (20)* entries overall. *Just Mercy* contains 16 chapters, so you will have more than one entry for at least four of the chapters. **These are minimums**; feel free to make as many entries as you like while you interact with this quality text.

STEP THREE: CHOOSING PASSAGES FROM THE TEXT

- Look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking, or puzzling. For example, you might record:
 - Effective use of stylistic or rhetorical devices (i.e. strong diction, parallel structure, rhetorical questions, etc.)
 - Passages that remind you of your own life or something you’ve seen before
 - Structural shifts or turns in the narrative
 - A passage that makes you realize something you hadn’t known or noticed before
 - Patterns in the text: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols, or motifs
 - Passages with confusing language or unfamiliar vocabulary
 - Events you find surprising or confusing
 - Passages that deepen your understanding of a particular character or setting

STEP FOUR: RESPONDING TO THE TEXT

- You can respond to the text in a variety of ways. The most important thing to remember is that your observations should be specific and detailed. As an “AP Langer,” your journal should be made up of **25% Basic Responses** and **75% Higher Level Responses (DON'T FORGET THE HEADINGS...See examples below.)**
 - **Basic Responses (a *starting point* for understanding the text)**
 - Raise questions about the beliefs and values implied in the text
 - Give your personal reactions to the passage
 - Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)
 - Tell what it reminds you of from your own experiences
 - Explain what it makes you think or feel
 - Agree or disagree with a character or the author
 - **Higher Level Responses (*deeper thought* leading to deeper understanding)**
 - Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery); be sure to explain the effect; avoid merely naming techniques.
 - Make connections between different characters or events in the text
 - Make connections to a different text (or film, song, etc.)
 - Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s) and their effect on the overall text, especially in establishing tone
 - Consider an event or description from the perspective of a different character
 - Analyze a passage and its relationship to the story as a whole

Example Dialectical Journal from *Life of Pi* by Yan Martel. Notice the direct references to text in both columns.

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| <p>Attitude toward self, narrator “I am a person who believes in form, in the harmony of order...we must give things a meaningful shape...that’s one thing I hate about my nickname, the way that number runs on forever. It’s important in life to conclude things properly.” (Martel 285)</p> | <p>Pi’s obsession with “form” and “the harmony of order” explains why religion appeals so strongly to him. He finds great importance in concluding things “properly”. Pi is essentially asking what kind of life would we be leading if, when it was over, we simply died and remained dead to rot for eternity? Pi hopes and believes that there is more. He believes what he is told about afterlives and moral judgment because he is afraid of his life ending in a pointless and almost anticlimactic manner. Pi’s obsession with closure can also be found in the founders of almost any</p> |
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| | <p>religion to have ever been preached throughout history.</p> |
| <p>Attitude toward life, existence “I have nothing to say of my working life, only that a tie is a noose, and inverted though it is, it will hang a man nonetheless if he’s not careful.” (Martel 6)</p> | <p>Pi respects the importance of work, however finds much more value in the beauty of life itself. Pi believes that to ignore the offerings of life and to focus too much on work is detrimental to one’s health.</p> |
| <p>Imagery to create Tone “A foul and pungent smell, an earthy mix of rust and excrement hung in the air. There was blood everywhere, coagulating to a deep red crust. A single fly buzzed about, sounding like an alarm bell of insanity.” (Martel 127)</p> | <p>Martel paints a disturbing picture in his description of the lifeboat following the slow painful death of the zebra. He describes the air as smelling like “an earthy mix of rust and excrement”, the boat as having “blood everywhere”, and his only companion as “a single fly...sounding like an alarm bell of insanity”. Through this shockingly filthy and revolting portrayal of the lifeboat, Martel establishes a tone of absolute disgust.</p> |
| <p>Diction (word choice) to create tone “The ship sank. It made a sound like a monstrous metallic burp. Things bubbled at the surface and then vanished. Everything was screaming: the sea, the wind, my heart.” (Martel 97)</p> | <p>When describing the sinking of the Tsimtsum, Martel utilizes a variety of strong and violent words to establish a tone of disorder and fear. Martel describes the sound of the ship sinking as a “monstrous metallic burp” simultaneously noting its enormity and its violent, industrial nature. He also says that “everything was screaming” suggesting disorder and confusion.</p> |
| <p>Theme “I wept heartily over this poor little deceased soul. It was the first sentient being I had ever killed. I was now a killer. I was now as guilty as Cain...I had blood on my hands. It’s a terrible burden to carry” (Martel 183)</p> | <p>Another theme found in Life of Pi is the loss of innocence. Prior to his being stranded at sea, Pi is a god loving vegetarian who would never even consider eating the flesh of an animal. Once forced to end the life of another creature in the interest of prolonging his own, Pi is overcome by guilt. At this point, he has entered a phase of existence that, until his problem of being stranded is resolved, he is forced to endure, therefore making a transition from an innocent vegetarian to a hunter with “blood on my [Pi’s] hands”.</p> |

PART THREE:

Read "1491" by Charles C. Mann.

Complete the following activities *in your notebook*:

- Begin a new section of your notebook for these activities.
- Identify the main claims of the article.
- Identify how the author supports his claims with evidence.
- Construct an outline of the article that includes the claims the author makes and the evidence he uses to support those claims in the order that they appear in the article.
- Write a response to the article in which you discuss the following:
 - assumptions you may have had prior to reading the article
 - how your assumptions were impacted or changed by the reading
 - the process Mann uses to arrive at his thesis/claim; in other words, his historiography (historical methods: gathering primary and secondary sources, engaging with and synthesizing those sources, and creating a thesis)

Rubric

A (90-100)

- Completed all activities (book annotations, journal entries, and article response) in a manner that demonstrates active, involved, thoughtful reading of each text.
- Used the Mortimer Adler strategies to annotate the book *Just Mercy*.
- Completed the required number of journal entries, including at least 75% higher level responses.
- Participated consistently in class discussions, displaying a comprehensive reading of all texts and a concerted effort to think critically about the ideas presented.

B (80-89)

- Completed all activities (book annotations, journal entries, and article response) in a manner that partially demonstrates active, involved, thoughtful reading of each text.
- Partially used the Mortimer Adler strategies to annotate the book *Just Mercy*.
- Completed the required number of journal entries, but falls just short of 75% higher level responses.
- Participated consistently in class discussions, displaying a general reading of all texts and a partial effort to think critically about the ideas presented.

C (70-79)

- Partial completion of activities or completed all activities (book annotations, journal entries, and article response) in a manner that partially demonstrates little active, involved, thoughtful reading of each text.

- Annotations in *Just Mercy* are sparse and do not follow Mortimer Adler's guidelines.
- Fell just short of the required number of journal entries, and does not have 75% higher level responses.
- Little participation in class discussions, displaying a rushed reading of all texts and little effort to think critically about the ideas presented.

F (<70)

- Has not completed the activities.
- No annotations in *Just Mercy*.
- Completed no or very few journal entries.
- Is not able to productively participate in class discussions due to lack of reading.