

AP Language and Composition

Required: *On Writing* by Stephen King or *The Writing Life* by Annie Dillard

Read ONE from the following (Either Fiction or Non-fiction):

Fiction Selection

The Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison – *Invisible Man* chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless black man, as he moves through the hellish levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness. Searching for a context in which to know himself, he exists in a very peculiar state. "I am an invisible man," he says in his prologue. "When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination--indeed, everything and anything except me."

The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway – Jake Barnes is a veteran of World War One now forced by his wounds to live as a man without the ability to act like one, forced by impotence to forgo all of life's usual intimacies, and all of its associated life connections for which he so yearns. At the same time, Jake attempts to live a life of meaning and purpose, one crammed full with activity, work, and friendships. Yet it is within this network of friendships and connections that he must confront his painful circumstances.

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck – Set during the Great Depression, it traces the migration of an Oklahoma Dust Bowl family to California and their subsequent hardships as migrant farm workers. *The Grapes of Wrath* poses fundamental questions about justice, the ownership and stewardship of the land, the role of government, power, and the very foundations of capitalist society.

The Awakening by Kate Chopin – *The Awakening* perfectly (and poetically) captures the inner life of a solitary person who is forced to live for the sake of others. With this novel, Chopin also challenges the cultural definition and expectations of womanhood.

Bread Givers by Anzia Yesierska – The story takes the reader inside an early twentieth-century American immigrant Jewish family, a family without a son to lighten their load or brighten their lives. Sarah, the narrator, describes with urgency and in detail the lives she, her sisters, and her mother live to support their father and his constant demands.

Black No More by George Schuyler – This 1930's scathing satire about race asks: What if black people could change themselves to white? Inspired by popular products for skin-lightening, Schuyler imagines the discovery of a process that transforms Negroes into white people, and then watches all hell break loose.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien – Weapons and good-luck charms carried by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam here represent survival, lost innocence and the war's interminable legacy. "O'Brien's meditations--on war and memory, on darkness and light--suffuse the entire work with a kind of poetic form, making for a highly original, fully realized novel," said Publishers Weekly

Nonfiction Selections

Grand Central Winter by Lee Stringer – *Grand Central Winter* is the tale of Stringer's twin addictions--writing and crack--and the lengths he went to in order to satisfy each. But Stringer dwells on neither his descent into hell nor the long journey back. Instead, he paints a nuanced portrait of street life itself, its pleasures as well as its terrors.

Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafisi – In 1995, after resigning from her job as a professor at a university in Tehran due to repressive policies, Azar Nafisi invited seven of her best female students to attend a weekly study of great Western literature in her home. Since the books they read were officially banned by the government, the women were forced to meet in secret, often sharing photocopied pages of the illegal novels. They used the meetings as a springboard for debating the social, cultural, and political realities of living under strict Islamic rule.

All Over But the Shoutin' by Rick Bragg – One reason Rick Bragg won a Pulitzer Prize for his feature articles at the *New York Times* is that he never forgets his roots. When he writes about death and violence in urban slums, Bragg draws on firsthand knowledge of how poverty deforms lives and on his personal belief in the dignity of poor people. His memoir of a hardscrabble Southern youth pays moving tribute to his relentless mother and struggles to forgive his drunken father. *All Over but the Shoutin'* is an example of beautifully written stories that stick to your bones that make you either proud to be from the South or wish you were.

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America by Barbara Ehrenreich – Essayist and cultural critic Barbara Ehrenreich has always specialized in turning received wisdom on its head with intelligence, clarity, and verve. With some 12 million women being pushed into the labor market by welfare reform, she decided to do some good old-fashioned journalism and find out just how they were going to survive on the wages of the unskilled--at \$6 to \$7 an hour, only half of what is considered a living wage. So she did what millions of Americans do, she looked for a job and a place to live, worked that job, and tried to make ends meet.

AP Language and Composition – Summer Reading Assignment

Everyone should be prepared to discuss and complete an assignment for either *On Writing* or *The Writing Life* August 8.

Fiction – For those choosing to read one of the fiction selections, pick one of the following assignments to complete by August 10.

Novel Web Site – Your job is to create a web site for the novel you read. Your site must include the following pages:

- **Setting** – short discussions of various aspects of the setting and the impact they have on the story and/or characters.
- **Theme** – short discussions on various themes and how those themes are conveyed to the reader (i.e. what evidence is there that tells you this is a theme and/or underlying message.)
- **Character Profiles** – information about the individual characters' personalities, his/her significance to the plot and message of the story, and at least one quote you believe best reflects the true essence of that character.
- **Criticism** – write a 400 word critique of the novel, being sure to not only use specific references and quotes from the novel but also information from credible sources to support your conclusions (this means incorporating comments and opinions from people with degrees and experience in literary criticism who can back you up.)

Important Note: Please remember that the internet is a visual medium and your site should reflect that focus. The only page I expect to be way more text than graphics is the Criticism page. Otherwise, be careful with the proportions. Just be sure it's friendly to the eye, doesn't seem intimidating to a potential viewer/reader. Also, you DO NOT have to publish your site online. You can simply build the site and place it on a CD. NO FLASH DRIVES because I don't have that much room on my computer.

Magazine – Create a magazine that reflects the characters, issues/themes, and culture of the novel you read. Besides an appropriately related and creative title and cover, your magazine should include:

- **An Interview** with one of the main characters from the novel (15 to 20 questions).

- **One News Story** written about one of the events in the book (This doesn't have to be a main event. It can background element that you take a dig into.)
- **One Advertisement** that you create for a real product that reflects both the story and the appropriate time period (i.e. Don't create an ad for an iPod if the story is set in the 1920's.)
- **One 400-word Column** where you write your opinion about one of the issues addressed in the novel. Please remember all magazines have a visual element to them so don't leave it out.

Non-Fiction – If you read one of the non-fiction pieces, please choose one of the following assignments to complete by August 10.

Video Documentary – Create a video documentary that chronicles the problems and people addressed in the book as well as possible solutions. Your video should include:

- **Video Diaries** where you respond to different chapters/events in the book
- **Interview(s)** with a person (or people) affected by the issue(s) addressed in the book
- **Supplementary** images, videos, and/or news footage that both shed light on the problem and possible solutions. **Be sure to give credit to the source of any video or news footage not shot by you.**

Exploration Journal – Write a journal that includes:

- **Personal Responses** – one response for every two chapters
- **One Research Based Response** where you include information, statistics, and opinions from credible sources to support your thoughts (Think of this as a short research paper where you use research to support our opinion/response.)
- **One Interview** with a person affected by the issue(s) addressed in the book.

CAUTION: Do not select the assignment you think will be the easiest but rather the one you think you are best equipped to complete. (This means if you don't know a thing about web design or using web design software, you might not want to choose the web site. If you don't have access to a video camera or video editing software, then the documentary is out of the question.) I do not expect "professional" quality here folks, but I do expect products that reflect the effort, consideration, forethought, depth, and importance this kind of assignment deserves.

Good Luck. Oh, and I should have my blog set up by the end of June. You can post comments, questions, and concerns at www.heathgibson.com. I will try as much as possible to respond in a timely manner.