

Senior Seminar/Advanced Language
Summer Reading and Writing Assignment
Manlius Pebble Hill School
June 2017
Mr. Montas

Welcome to Advanced Language and Composition! (Most of the time, I call this class “Senior Seminar.”) I hope you’re having a great summer so far, and I am excited to teach this class in September. Your summer assignment has three parts; the first part concerns reading and writing about a book of your choice, the second concerns writing about stuff you do, and the third part concerns your Senior Thesis Project (don’t be afraid).

Part 1: Read and annotate one of the books below, and then complete the following writing assignment: Find and read two reviews of your book (use the internet) and write a three-page essay that explains whether you agree or disagree with the two reviews of your book. Your essay must be in 12-point Times font, and double-spaced with one-inch margins. This assignment is due the first day that you have class (including the first day of school). You may choose another book to read, but you must clear it with me.

Beth Buelow, *The Introvert Entrepreneur: Amplify Your Strengths and Create Success on Your Own Terms*. 272 pages.

Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant* (novel). 336 pages.

Ha Jin, *Waiting* (novel). 308 pages.

Steven Johnson, *How We Got to Now: Six Innovations That Changed the World*. 320 pages.

Paul Kalanithi, *When Breath Becomes Air*. 256 pages.

Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus* (novel), 512 pages.

Nina Riggs, *The Bright Hour: A Memoir of Living and Dying*. 320 pages.

Bethlehem Shoals, *Free Darko Presents: The Undisputed Guide to Pro Basketball History*. 224 pages.

Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. 381 pages.

Sarah Vowell, *Lafayette in the United States*. 288 pages.

Part 2: Write two short essays for the *New York Times* Summer Reading Contest (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/27/learning/the-eighth-annual-new-york-times-summer-reading-contest.html>) or respond to two of the activities listed in the Make Your World a Better Place grid at the end of this document. Each response should be about five hundred words (roughly a page-and-a-half) in length. Email your responses to me as you complete them (fmontas@mph.net). With the *New York Times* contest, you can submit one entry per week, so don’t leave it until the last week of the summer. With the Make Your World a Better Place activities, simply write about what you did and how you felt about it.

Part 3 concerns the STP, which has an important change. While you will still need to conduct a significant amount of research on your topic, you will have several options to demonstrate the understanding and insight you gained from researching and thinking about your subject. In short, you may still write a research paper if you want to, but you will have several other options: research paper, a website (e.g., a book or online exhibition that demonstrates your learning), a short documentary (about eight minutes in length), a TED talk (no notes, at least twenty minutes long, before a large audience), a museum exhibition (for which you'll have to find an appropriate space), a business plan, a performance with program notes, or notes for your pieces in end-of-year art show. (If there is another way you think you can demonstrate your mastery of your subject, feel free to ask me about it over the summer.) With these options in mind, make preliminary notes that in response to the following questions: Which of these options will pursue? How will you complete it by the end of March? What will your month-to-month progress look like? What will you need to complete it? Bring these notes with to the first day of class.

If you have any questions about these assignments, don't hesitate to get in touch with me (fmontas@mph.net or by text at 315 263 2231).

Have a great summer!

MAKE YOUR WORLD A BETTER PLACE — SUMMER 2017

Try to accomplish as many of these activities as you can, and have fun doing so!

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| Offer to help someone who won't ask for help, and actually help that person. | Read a book aloud to someone at least five years younger or fifty years older than you. | Write to your congressional representative about an issue that matters greatly to you. | Do someone else's household chore(s) without being asked and without expecting anything in return. |
| Cook a meal or make a dessert for a friend or your family to make them happy. | Sort out belongings that you no longer need and give them to charity. | Watch two films from the American Film Institute (AFI) Top 100 Movies list, one of which must be in black and white.* | Lie on the grass and gaze at the clouds or stars or both. |
| Write a letter to the editor of a local or national publication. | Make a list of all the positive things that you can be thankful for and write thank you notes or letters to the appropriate people. | Read a book or some stories or some poems by an author from a country you've never visited or can't locate on a map. | Think about something you've complained about at home, at school, in your neighborhood, or somewhere else. Now do something about it. |
| Learn to play a song on a musical instrument you don't already play. | Do something with someone you love but don't talk to very much. | Watch the news and share stories that you think need more attention. | Turn off your online presence and avoid social media for three days. |
| Grow something you can eat and share it with others. | Learn a poem or a passage of writing (including a speech) by heart. | Have a conversation in a language you don't speak at home. | Handwrite a letter to someone special and mail it. |

*This list is available at <http://mphaplang.blogspot.com> or <http://mphseniorseminar.blogspot.com>.