

**EHS Gifted & Talented Academy  
Foundations of World Literature  
Summer Reading Assignment**

**OVERVIEW**

Summer reading is an integral part of the English curriculum of the EHS Gifted & Talented Academy. Its purpose is to help students prepare for the challenges of the academic year ahead. World Literature students are asked to read one book chosen from the list below.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (CHOOSE ONE)**

***The Alchemist*** – Paulo Coelho (1988)

*Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy, yearns for something more, and soon undertakes a journey filled with magic, dreams, and secret treasure. Along the way he encounters obstacles and omens as he seeks to fulfill his Personal Legend. Yet beneath the surface story lies another, deeper story of ancient wisdom: learning to follow one's heart. NOTE: This novel is available free online, and is also available in Spanish as El Alquimista.*

***The Housekeeper and the Professor*** -- Yoko Ogawa (2009)

*The professor, a brilliant mathematician, suffered a traumatic head injury and now lives with only eighty minutes of short-term memory. The housekeeper, a single mother with a ten-year-old son, is hired to care for the professor. Though he cannot hold memories for long, the professor's mind is still alive with elegant equations from the past which reveal an as yet unknown world to both the housekeeper and her son. The professor is capable of discovering connections between the simplest of quantities -- like the housekeeper's shoe size -- and the universe at large, drawing their lives ever closer and more profoundly together, even as his memory slips away.*

***Sea Monsters*** -- Chloe Aridjis (2019)

*Set in Mexico during the tumultuous 1980s, this novel tells the story of seventeen-year-old Luisa, who leaves home one day with Tomas, a boy she hardly knows. She soon finds herself living among the beach community in Oaxaca, surrounded by other outcasts and dropouts, all of whom have a story to tell. At the Playa Zipolite (Beach of the Dead), Luisa searches for a missing troupe of Ukrainian dwarfs as well as someone – anyone – who will "promise, no matter what, to remain a mystery."*

**ASSESSMENT**

In addition to the close reading of the summer reading text, students are encouraged, but not required, to annotate the text and to take notes on what they've read. Annotations and note-taking are intended to move students deeper into the text, shifting the focus away from mere summary, and into analysis.

This may be done in one of several ways: in the margins of the text itself (if students own the book), on Post-It (sticky) notes, or in a separate notebook. Guidelines for one method of note-taking are printed on the back of this sheet. Students should plan to bring their annotations, notes, and a copy of the summer reading text to our first class meeting.

In the fall, students will work in small groups to discuss and reflect on the book they've read. After discussion (approximately one week into the semester), students will write a formal argumentative essay. The essay prompt will require students to take a position on a topic related to the text, and to use specific evidence drawn from the text to support their claim/position.

Please address questions or concerns to the instructors at [lisasmith@u-46.org](mailto:lisasmith@u-46.org) or [sallylennon@u-46.org](mailto:sallylennon@u-46.org).

*This assignment (and all summer assignments for all classes) is posted to the EHS IB Academy website at <https://ehsgiftedacademy.weebly.com/>.*

**EHS Gifted & Talented Academy  
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Note-Taking/Reading Response Journal**

**RATIONALE**

Academy students are expected to take an active role in their high school education. This includes being responsible for the completion of the Summer Reading Assignment. Throughout the year, assigned readings will be the basis of daily class discussion and activities. Thus, students who choose not to do the reading and take notes on what they've read will be at a severe disadvantage.

**OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT**

Respond informally in writing to each of the prompts below. Students are encouraged to add their own original ideas/responses. Try to comment on each prompt for each chapter, section, or night's reading.

- **SYNOPSIS:** In 1-2 sentences, summarize the action of each chapter/section.
- **REACTIONS:** Write down your reaction to the night's reading. If you're intrigued by certain statements or situations or attracted to particular characters or issues, include in your statement a description of why you feel this way.
- **CONNECTIONS:** What does the reading make you think of? Does it remind you of anything or anyone? Make connections with other texts, concepts, or historic events. What similarities do you see?
- **QUESTIONS:** What confuses you about a particular passage? Try beginning, "I wonder why..." or "I'm having trouble understanding how..." or "It perplexes me that..." or "I was surprised when ...."
- **AGREE / DISAGREE:** On what action (or inaction), or about what issues do you agree or disagree? Support your ideas with references to the text. Try arguing with the author. Think of your journal as a place to carry on a dialogue with the author.
- **QUOTES:** Write down striking words, images, phrases, or details. Speculate about them. Why did the author choose them? What do they add to the work? Why did you notice them?

*These guidelines are adapted from a handout from the Bard College Language and Thinking Program.*