Guiding Questions for Upper School Summer Reading Books

Grade 9: English IV and Honors English IV.

*Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah

1. In sharing his story, Trevor Noah shares the stories of many of his family members, including how the meanings of their names were reflected in their lives. His mother’s name, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah, means “She Who Gives Back.” His grandfather, Temperance Noah, was anything but temperate, but his nickname “Tat Shisha”, which translates loosely as “the smokin’ hot grandpa”, was a perfect fit. What insights does Noah’s story offer about the ways that identity is both assigned and chosen?

2. Noah describes, with hilarious detail, an incident that happened when he was home alone with his great-grandmother (Koko) and didn’t want to use the outhouse. Which incidents, friends, or family members described in *Born a Crime* are most memorable to you and why?

3. Noah and his mother lived in a variety of neighborhoods over the years. How does racial segregation affect the daily lives of young Trevor and his mother? What connections can you identify between the challenges in transportation and housing faced by Noah’s family and those faced by people living in poverty in racially segregated communities in the U.S. and Canada today?

Grade 10: English V and Honors English V.

*Persepolis, Part 1* by Marjane Satrapi

1. What happens when you challenge cultural expectations? What sacrifices are worth making to preserve your freedom and individuality? Which are not and why?

2. Find an illustration within the story that represents a major idea or theme within the book. What theme does it represent? How does this illustration show this theme?

3. What is Marji’s definition of a hero? Who are some of her heroes? Are there any specific characteristics that these characters share or that define them as heroes?

Grade 11: Am. Lit and AT: Civil Discourse.
**Educated** by Tara Westover

1. What does being “educated” mean to Westover and to you?

2. What did you learn about American culture, particularly in regards to the intersection of social class, religion, and gender?

3. What aspects of Westover’s writing allowed her to develop her commentary on family and education? Pay close attention to what moments stay with you and how and why Westover’s writing sustains your attention.

**Grade 12: Senior Writing Seminar.**

**On Writing** by Stephen King

1. What role did Stephen King’s childhood play in his evolution as a writer? Did your childhood experiences influence your desire to write? If not, what influences the way you write and the content you create?

2. What advice on writing do you take away most from this book. Provide a few different examples. How can you apply his wisdom and techniques to your own individual writing?

**Grade 12  AT: Consumer Culture.**

**Frankenstein** by Mary Shelley

1. Before reading the novel, write down all your preconceptions about who or what Frankenstein is and how you have come to hold these preconceptions.

2. Shelley’s Dr. Frankenstein and the Monster both produce and consume many different ideologies. As you read this narrative, consider what ideologies these two characters produce/consume and which one(s) Shelley affirms at the novel’s close? As you read, keep a running list of all the ideologies that Shelley addresses in the novel and where these novels are represented and by whom/what.

3. How and to what end does Shelley represent gender, particularly in terms of domesticity and motherhood?
4. How has consumer culture allowed Frankenstein/the Monster to live on?

5. After you have read the novel, write down what Frankenstein represents in our current consumer culture?

Grade 12: Becoming Philosopher Kings.

_The Republic, Book IV_ by Plato

1. Plato claims that only philosopher-kings are qualified to exercise political authority over others. What do you think he means? Do you think he’s right?