

To: Honors English II Students
Subject: Summer Reading & Essential Questions

During our course, we will explore several essential questions, designed to focus your study and ensure enduring understandings. You already have the knowledge and judgment to answer any and all of these questions based on prior experiences, opinions, and readings. However, these summer assignments will solidify, alter, or enhance your responses to these essential questions. Essential questions are provided for your consideration as you read one of the novels listed below. These questions serve as a preface for thematic based units in the upcoming year.

Essential Questions

Under what circumstances does the truth set you free?

What does it mean to have integrity allowing us to overcome challenges?

Are divisions artificial? What defines/causes someone to be an outcast?

What does it mean to conform to the expectations of others? What are the benefits and costs of conformity?

What are the costs and benefits of making impulsive decisions?

Choose one of the following Summer Reading selections:

- Peter Hamill's *Snow in August* is set in 1940s Brooklyn, New York. Michael Devlin, an Irish Catholic altar boy, who adores comic books and Captain Marvel, befriends Rabbi Hirsh. As they share exchanges about baseball and Yiddish, they form an unlikely alliance and deal with an insidious evil overtaking their community.
- Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* focuses on generational misunderstandings among four mothers and their daughters. Tan highlights the great disparity between the Chinese and American cultures.
- Susan Vreeland's *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* moves from the present to the past linking the value of Vermeer's painting to each of its custodians.
- Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* recounts the harrowing journey of 16-year-old Pi Patel as he drifts on a raft in the Pacific for 227 days along with his only companion, Richard Parker, a Bengal Tiger.
- *Monster* written by Walter Dean Myers is a story told through the eyes of Steve Harmon, a black teenager who struggles as he is on trial for felony murder.

Your task:

Write a two-page, double-spaced response where you address a connection between the novel of your choosing and one of the essential questions. This response should be organized with multiple paragraphs: an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. You need to include several pieces of textual evidence (properly cited

based on MLA 8) to support your ideas. I am not looking for a specific number of quotations but do keep in mind the more support you have for your ideas, the better the argument.

You have the choice to approach this assignment in any way that you see fit. The guidelines are broad in order for you to make that decision. This is helpful, for me, when it comes to gauging the type of writer/reader you are.

This assignment is due during the first week of school and is a testament to you as a student. Avoid waiting until the night before to start thinking about this assignment and do your best!