

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Advanced English Summer Reading 2017

### REQUIRED:

*Chasing Lincoln's Killer* by James Swanson (See attached assignment)

*Watership Down* by Richard Adams (See attached assignment)

### ***Chasing Lincoln's Killer, James L. Swanson***

Students often associate Abraham Lincoln with three things: he wore a tall hat, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and he was assassinated. The murder of Lincoln, whom most historians consider one of the country's most important presidents, had major consequences for our nation and for the Reconstruction period that followed the Civil War.

Abraham Lincoln's killer, John Wilkes Booth, was a Maryland native born in 1838 who remained in the North during the Civil War despite his Confederate sympathies. As the conflict entered its final stages, he and several associates hatched a plot to kidnap the president and take him to Richmond, the Confederate capital. However, on March 20, 1865, the day of the planned kidnapping, Lincoln failed to appear at the spot where Booth and his six fellow conspirators lay in wait. Two weeks later, Richmond fell to Union forces. In April, with Confederate armies near collapse across the South, Booth came up with a desperate plan to save the Confederacy.

Learning that Lincoln was to attend Laura Keane's acclaimed performance of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., on April 14, Booth—himself a well-known actor at the time—masterminded the simultaneous assassination of Lincoln, Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William H. Seward. By murdering the president and two of his possible successors, Booth and his co-conspirators hoped to throw the U.S. government into disarray and inspire the South to continue the war, despite the recent surrender at Appomattox.

John Wilkes Booth's premeditated attack was a carefully orchestrated plot involving at least eight other participants. The fact that President Lincoln was shot while enjoying a show at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, leaves students wondering how it could have happened. A week earlier General Lee had surrendered to General Grant. The nation was finally looking forward to peace. Yet out of the shadows came Booth to kill the president.

Students exploring this type of turning point in American history are frequently frustrated by a lack of understanding of the event. While comprehensive answers may never be available to explain how these crimes could have taken place, we can examine the circumstances surrounding them to gather a partial understanding of why they happened.

**Answer the following questions (numbered, with questions, typed) in complete sentences and in a way that shows your knowledge of the book. Your answers should be YOUR work, and only your work.**

1. Why did Booth's plan transition from a kidnapping to an assassination?
2. How did Booth's career as an actor influence his plan for the assassination and help him escape?
3. Booth had two primary accomplices in this plot. Who were they, what was their job, and did they succeed? Why or why not?
4. Did the assassin's original escape plan go as planned? Support your answer with an explanation with textual evidence and details.
5. How were the Garretts duped into helping John Wilkes Booth and David Herold? In the end, how did they end up aiding the Union troops in their pursuit of these most wanted outlaws?
6. Describe the capture scene of Booth and Herold. What happened? Who was involved? Result?

Are you a visual learner? Want to see a movie that's related to this book? Consider watching one of the following:

- *Killing Lincoln*, narrated by Tom Hanks
- *Lincoln*, Steven Spielberg
- *The Conspirator*, Robert Redford
- Youtube.com has several long videos from reputable sources about Lincoln and the assassination

## ***Watership Down*, Richard Adams**

Is *Watership Down* just a book about bunnies? On the surface, yes, but as is the case in all allegories, it is quite possible that Richard Adams was discussing more than just a tale about rabbits on a journey.

*Watership Down* tells the story of a group of rabbits who are forced from their warren. In this story, Hazel (who is NOT a girl), our protagonist, has a little brother named Fiver (his name is pronounced “five- er” ...like the number five). Fiver has horrific — and as later events prove, accurate — visions of the destruction of their home warren at Sandleford, but Hazel can't convince their Chief Rabbit to pay attention to his “crazy” brother, so he persuades a few of his friends to join him in leaving their homes to escape the impending doom. Of the ones who join Hazel and Fiver, the ones of note are Bigwig, one of the community's Owsla (a sort of Royal Guard), and Blackberry, who is, by the standards of their tribe, a mechanical genius. For instance, he is the only rabbit to even come close to understanding basic physics... like, for instance, “floating on water.” Caution is a way of life for these rabbits because death is a moment-to-moment possibility.

Hazel quickly realizes that the group's survival will require problem-solving and teamwork, and thus, he becomes the leader of the group, with a particular talent for bringing out the best in his followers and earning their loyalty in return. Under Hazel's leadership, the rabbits begin their journey from Sandleford to Watership Down.

### **Assignment:**

1. **TABLE:** Most people agree that “two heads are better than one,” so to speak. The rabbits seem to believe this is true as well. Many tasks are accomplished by using the strengths and skills of many different rabbits, not just that of “the leader.” Consider the following characters: Hazel, Dandelion, Blackberry, Bigwig, Fiver, Blackavar, Captain Holly, and Kehaar. Identify each character's special strength or skill. Explain how each character uses that strength or skill to help the group as a whole. Provide any scenes when the character uses that strength or skill to help the group.
  - a. Format: Create a table with four columns and eight rows. In the first column, type out the names of the eight characters. In the second column, identify the strengths or skills each character brings to the group. In the third column, explain how each character uses that particular strength or skill to help the group. In the fourth column, list the scenes when that character utilizes that strength or skill.

Example:

Character	Strength / Skill	Explanation	Scene
Hazel			
Dandelion			
Blackberry			
Bigwig			
Fiver			
Blackavar			
Captain Holly			
Kehaar			
Woundwort	The use of violence ensures order in his warren	By creating a warren built on rules and order, Woundwort is able to ensure the survival of the Efrafan residents. Because he knows where each of his rabbits are at all times due to his silflay schedule, he reduces the risk of elil sneaking past the wide patrol and taking any of his rabbits. The rabbits of Efrafa may have had to sacrifice some rights, such as freedom and choice, but they were protected by a fierce and vicious leader who guarded them from outside threats. However, if there was any dissension among the rabbits of Efrafa, General Woundwort used violence to strike fear in his subjects and retain his authority, as seen with the punishment of Blackavar.	<p>After his mother died, he discovered a small warren where he killed his way to the top of the leadership.</p> <p>He tortures Blackavar to show people what comes of breaking the rules.</p>