

Summer Reading for AP European History

Sophie's World by Jostein Gaarder -- Berkeley Books: New York

Available at Amazon, and Barnes and Nobles for about \$8-\$12.00. Used copies are available for less on Half.com. Also available at most public libraries.

Assignment rationale: This book is an entertaining novel -- some call it a mystery novel. So why are we reading it over the summer for a European History class? First, the novel introduces us to the European philosophical tradition, which has guided the actions of Europeans throughout history. Secondly, you are all gifted and mature students, and the questions that Western philosophy addresses are very much the questions that many of you are wrestling with (or have already wrestled with). There is no space in any other course to explore these questions in detail. However, there IS space and time in AP European History. In fact, nearly every historical figure that appears in Sophie's World has appeared on past AP Euro exams. Finally, high school and college students report having "enjoyed" this book more than any other summer reading book that I could assign for this course.

Test on Sophie's World: This is an open-notes TEST during the first week of classes. (You can use only your own handwritten notes...see last page of this handout.)

Read the first 15 chapters (pages 3-184) of Sophie's World and complete the assignment at the same time. Read all of these questions first to have a clearer purpose for reading. Keep this paper and take notes as you read. Trying to read the book first and then do this assignment will end in disaster, I assure you. You can use your journal or any written notes when you take the test on Sophie's World. Also, discussions about the book with your peers will help you to clarify your thinking.

Advice about reading: Give yourself a good three weeks to read and complete this assignment. If there is a particular concept or idea that is "over your head," make a NOTE of it and write down a particular QUESTION and page number. We will discuss all specific questions that you have before we take the test. However, "I didn't understand chapter 7" is not a specific enough question for an AP level class. Instead, ask questions like "did anyone understand the Enlightenment concept of Deism?"

The OPEN NOTES TEST – how to take NOTES for it

Since you will be writing enough over the summer, your open notes test will be almost entirely matching, true-false, and multiple choice. If you read the book and take some notes on the following, you should do well. The test is not designed to trick you: it is designed to give everyone full credit for having spent time reading the book and taking notes. Also if you email me your notes and questions by July 31st, I will include some of your questions if they are done correctly. Therefore, the best "cheat sheet" you could make (to use on the open-notes test) would include a basic understanding of the following:

A. The major philosophers discussed in Sophie's World

Example questions and answers:

1. Which major philosopher said there was a "basic tension between man and society?"

He said that man's natural "drives and needs" always run into conflict with "the demands of society." answer: Freud

2. True or False: Socrates believed that the key to happiness was following your conscience. answer: True

B. The major time periods of philosophy discussed in Sophie's World:

The Ancient Greeks (first 12 chapters)

The Rise of Christianity (the 'Two Cultures' chapter)

The Middle Ages (chapter named after this)

Example questions:

1. During which period was the philosophy of "deism" popular? answer: Enlightenment
2. Which philosophical school expressed "alienation in a world without meaning?"
answer: Existentialism
3. Which period was famous for people seeking out "flamboyant self expression" while others sought "seclusion" and prayer? Baroque

If you have any questions about the assignment or the book, you can email me at earellan@pasco.k12.fl.us over the summer.

I hope you enjoy your summer and I look forward to having you in class next year.

-Ms. Arellano