

## Summer Reading Assignment for English III Honors Gulf High School

Congratulations! You have enrolled in English III Honors! I look forward to working with you during the 2016-17 school year. As I'm sure you know, Honors is a challenging, academically rigorous adventure. You will begin your journey this summer by reading and completing some activities designed to enhance the material we will be covering during the regular school year.

I have selected several novels that have appeared on the best seller lists for you to consider. These books can be purchased at a book store or checked out of the public library. Many of these books can be found at used book stores or online at half.com. Certainly, you may borrow them from your friends and family, as well. **In total, you will be reading two (2) novels and completing the work for each. Both assignments will be due the first Friday of the first week of school.**

### Part I

Below is a list of books and a brief synopsis for each. Please select **one** to read:

#### ***Amy Tan's Bonesetter's Daughter***

##### **Synopsis:**

Set in contemporary San Francisco and in a Chinese village where Peking Man is unearthed, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is an excavation of the human spirit: the past, its deepest wounds, its most profound hopes. This is the story of LuLing Young, who searches for the name of her mother, the daughter of the famous Bonesetter from the Mouth of the Mountain. The story conjures the pain of broken dreams, the power of myths, and the strength of love that enables us to recover in memory what we have lost in grief.

#### ***Isabelle Allende's Daughter of Fortune***

##### **Synopsis:**

Born into a 19th-century society that values birthright above character, Eliza Sommers is at a startling disadvantage. An orphan of unknown heritage, Eliza is raised in the British colony of Valparaíso, Chile, by the Victorian spinster Rose Sommers and her brother Jeremy. She is not even sure how she arrived at the Sommers household—only that she is lucky enough to be cared for, educated, and even loved by her adopted family. So when Eliza exhibits the signs of a first love, the women in her life come to her "rescue," certain that this adolescent passion will lead to trouble.

#### ***Arthur Golden's Memoirs of a Geisha***

##### **Synopsis:**

The strikingly pretty child of an impoverished fishing family, Chiyo is taken to faraway Kyoto and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house where she is renamed Sayuri. Initially reluctant, Sayuri must finally invent and cultivate an image of herself as a desirable geisha in order to survive in Gion's cruel hierarchy. Through her eyes, we are given a backstage view of the ancient and secretive geisha district, Gion, and of the lives of the women who learn and practice the rigorous arts of the geisha.

## **Ayana Mathis's *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie***

### **Synopsis:**

In 1923, fifteen-year-old Hattie Shepherd flees Georgia and settles in Philadelphia, hoping for a chance at a better life. Instead, she marries a man who will bring her nothing but disappointment and watches helplessly as her firstborn twins succumb to an illness a few pennies could have prevented. Hattie gives birth to nine more children whom she raises with grit and mettle and not an ounce of the tenderness they crave. She vows to prepare them for the calamitous difficulty they are sure to face in their later lives, to meet a world that will not love them, a world that will not be kind. Captured here in twelve luminous narrative threads, their lives tell the story of a mother's monumental courage and the journey of a nation. Beautiful and devastating, Ayana Mathis's *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie* is wondrous from first to last—glorious, harrowing, unexpectedly uplifting, and blazing with life. An emotionally transfixing page-turner, a searing portrait of striving in the face of insurmountable adversity, an indelible encounter with the resilience of the human spirit and the driving force of the American dream.

Once you've selected a book from the list above, you will need to complete the following discussion questions. You have two options on how to complete these.

1. You may find that some of your friends (or family members) would like to read some of these titles. You may video tape or tape record a book chat, using the discussion questions as your guide. You may set this up any way you like bearing in mind that you must be actively participating in the discussion. There should be no doubt that you've read the book based on your discussions. All questions must be answered during the "chat". This could prove to be a lot of fun. Your video tape or audio tape will be submitted for a grade.

**OR**

2. You will need to purchase a composition notebook to "journal" your responses to the questions relating to your novel. These notebooks are the black and white "retro-looking" ones. Please do not use spiral or full sized notebooks. They are cumbersome and fall apart. Your responses to each question should be written in well developed paragraphs, citing examples from the text to support your answers. Please write in blue or black ink!!! NO pencil please.

Discussion Questions for each novel can be found at the back of this assignment sheet.

## **Part II**

You will also need to purchase or borrow a copy of **Carl Hiaasen's *Stormy Weather***. Hiaasen is a graduate from University of Florida and resides in South Florida where he writes for *The Miami Herald*.

### **Synopsis**

Two honeymooners wake up early and brace themselves for a spectacle they won't be watching from the sidelines. A seductive con artiste stumbles into a scam that promises more cool cash than the lottery. A shotgun-toting mobile home salesman is about to close a deal with disaster. A law school dropout will be chasing one Gaboon viper, a troop of storm-shocked monkeys, and a newfound love life, while tourists by the

thousands bail from the Florida Keys. We're now entering the hurricane zone, where hell and hilarity rule.

Please be aware that this is a satirical piece and there is **adult content** in this novel. If you or your folks are uncomfortable with this, please consider reading **Carl Hiassen's Scat**.

## **Scat**

### **Synopsis**

Bunny Starch, the most feared biology teacher ever, is missing. She disappeared after a school field trip to Black Vine Swamp. And, to be honest, the kids in her class are relieved. But when the principal tries to tell the students that Mrs. Starch has been called away on a "family emergency," Nick and Marta just don't buy it. No, they figure the class delinquent, Smoke, has something to do with her disappearance. And he does! But not in the way they think. There's a lot more going on in Black Vine Swamp than any one player in this twisted tale can see. And Nick and Marta will have to reckon with an eccentric eco-avenger, a stuffed rat named Chelsea, a wannabe Texas oilman, a singing substitute teacher, and a ticked-off Florida panther before they really begin to see the big picture. That's life in the swamp, kids.

For Part II, you will need to journal in a composition notebook (black & white retro...you may use the same one you used in completing Part I if you'd like). Each time you read you will need to log the experience. You may have 100 entries or 4 as long as you 1) write a brief summary of actions or events in the pages that you've read and 2) a personal comment on the content. In addition, the questions for Carl Hiassen's novel must be addressed at some point in your entries. Please write in blue or black ink.

Reader's Journal questions can be found at the back of this assignment sheet, as well. All assignments will be due sometime during the second week of school. A date will be announced the first day of school.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for Part I**

**Find your novel and consider these questions.**

Please be aware that this discussion guide may contain spoilers!

for: ***Bonesetter's Daughter***

1. Memory plays an important role in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. How is Ruth's life affected by her childhood memories? How do LuLing's memories affect her behavior around Ruth?

2. How does LuLing attempt to convey the difficulties of her formative years to Ruth? Does she succeed? Why/why not? In the constant sparring between Ruth and LuLing, who do you think is at fault?

3. Much of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* revolves around superstition. How does this aspect of Chinese culture affect LuLing's actions? Is Ruth superstitious? Does she realize that she is manipulating her mother as a child?

4. Why does Ruth try so hard to distance herself from her Chinese heritage?
5. Why does Ruth lose her voice once a year on August 12th? In what way does Ruth "regain" her voice by the end of the novel?
6. How does Ruth use her professional talents to her advantage? In what way does her job stifle her ability to communicate? Are there any inherent advantages of Ruth's uncanny ability to "spin gold out of dross"?
7. How is LuLing affected by the family curse? How does she react when she learns of her mother's true identity? In your opinion, was it wrong for Precious Auntie to keep this secret from her daughter? Why does Precious Auntie keep this information from LuLing for so long?
8. What is the significance of Ruth's learning the family name at the end of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*? What does Ruth learn about her name that helps change her opinion of her mother?
9. How does LuLing rebel against Precious Auntie? Is Ruth similar to LuLing in this respect? What are the consequences of Ruth's insolence in her teenage years? Whose rebellion causes more lasting results?
10. What does Ruth learn about her mother and about her own cultural heritage that helps to mend her strained relationship with Art, as well as with Fia and Dory?

for ***Daughter of Fortune***:

1. Eliza thinks that the facts of her birth don't matter: "It is what you do in this world that matters, not how you come into it," she claims. Ta Ch'ien, on the other hand, cannot imagine "his own life apart from the long chain of his ancestors, who not only had given him his physical and mental characteristics but bequeathed him his karma. His fate, he believed, had been determined by the acts of his family before him." How do these different beliefs determine the way Tao Chi'en and Eliza make decisions about their lives? What are your own feelings about ancestry and self-determination?
2. Eliza grows up under the influence of a number of strong individuals--Mama Fresia, Rose, Jeremy Sommers and his brother, John. What does she learn from each of people? How do their differing philosophies contribute to Eliza's experience of the world? How do *they shape her personality*?
3. In 19th century Chile, a married woman could not travel, sign legal documents, go to court, sell or buy anything without her husband's permission. No wonder Rose doesn't want to get married! How would the lives of the women you know be different under those conditions? What are the consequences in a society that limits the freedoms of a segments of its citizens?
4. What do you think Allende means by referring to Eliza as a "daughter of fortune?" How are the different definitions of the word "fortune" significant in Eliza's story and the novel as a whole?

5. How is Tao Chi'en a "son" of fortune? What are the crucial turning points in his life, and where do they lead him? To what extent is he responsible for his own good and bad fortunes?
6. "At first the Chinese looked on the foreigners with scorn and disgust, with the great superiority of those who feel they are the only truly civilized beings in the universe, but in the space of a few years they learned to respect and fear them." writes Allende about the arrival of Western peoples into Hong Kong. How is this pattern of suspicion, fear, and resigned acceptance repeated throughout the novel? How does Allende illustrate the confusion of clashing cultures in Valparaiso, on board Eliza's ship, and in California? Do you think people of today are more tolerant of other cultures than they were 150 years ago?
7. While Eliza is vulnerable in California because of her sex, Tao Chi'en's prospects are limited because of his race. How do both characters overcome their "handicaps?" What qualities help them make their way in a culture that is foreign and often unwelcoming?
8. What do details such as Mama Fresia's home remedies and her attempts to "cure" Eliza of her love for Joaquin, or Tao Chi'en's medical education and his habit of contacting his dead wife say about the role of the spiritual in the everyday life? Must the spiritual and the secular remain separate? What about the spiritual and scientific worlds?
9. How have the novel's characters - Rose or Jacob Todd, for instance - managed to create opportunities out of the obstacles they've faced? What do you think Allende is saying about the role that fate plays in our lives, and about our capacity to take control over our own destinies? How are we all sons or daughters of fortune?

for ***Memoirs of a Geisha***:

1. "The afternoon when I met Mr. Tanaka Ichiro," says Sayuri, "really was the best and the worst of my life" [p. 7]. Is Mr. Tanaka purely motivated by the money he will make from selling Chiyo to Mrs. Nitta, or is he also thinking of Chiyo's future? Is he, as he implies in his letter, her friend?
2. In his letter to Chiyo, Mr. Tanaka says "The training of a geisha is an arduous path. However, this humble person is filled with admiration for those who are able to recast their suffering and become great artists" [p. 103]. The word "geisha" in fact derives from the Japanese word for art. In what does the geisha's art consist? How many different types of art does she practice?
3. Does Sayuri have a better life as a geisha than one assumes she would have had in her village? How does one define a "better" life? Pumpkin, when offered the opportunity to run away, declines [p. 53]; she feels she will be safer in Gion. Is her decision wise?
4. How does Sayuri's status at the Nitta okiya resemble, or differ from, that of a slave? Is she in fact a slave?
5. Are Mother and Granny cruel by nature, or has the relentless life of Gion made

them what they are? If so, why is Auntie somewhat more human? Does Auntie feel real affection for Sayuri and Pumpkin, or does she see them simply as chattel?

6. Does the way in which the Kyoto men view geisha differ from the way they might view other women, women whom they might marry? What are the differences? How, in turn, do geisha view men? Is the geisha's view of men significantly different from that of ordinary women?

7. As the older Sayuri narrates her story, it almost seems as though she presents Chiyo and Sayuri as two different people. In what ways are Chiyo and Sayuri different? In what ways are they recognizably the same person?

8. Pumpkin believes that Sayuri betrayed her when she, rather than Pumpkin, was adopted by the Nitta okiya. Do you believe that Sayuri was entirely blameless in this incident? Might she have helped to make Pumpkin's life easier while they were in the okiya together? Or has Pumpkin's character simply been corrupted by her years with Hatsumomo and the entire cruel system that has exploited her?

9. Sayuri senses that she shares an en, a lifelong karmic bond, with Nobu [p. 295]. How might a Western woman express this same idea?

10. During Sayuri's life, Japan goes through a series of traumas and unprecedented cultural change: the Great Depression, the War, the American Occupation. How do the inhabitants of Gion view political events in the outside world? How much effect do such events have upon their lives? How aware are they of mainstream Japanese culture and life?

for ***The Twelve Tribes of Hattie***:

1. Hattie is, by any measure, a complicated, difficult woman. Did you love her, hate her, find it difficult to have sympathy for her? Is she a good mother? Why or why not?

2. Why do you suppose the author chose to have Philadelphia and Jubilee die in the novel's first chapter? The novel moves backward and forward in time. What function is served by showing us this loss at the outset? How does this serve the novel and inform our understanding of Hattie?

3. "In Georgia the preacher had called the North a New Jerusalem. The congregation said he was a traitor to the cause of the southern Negro. He was gone the next day on a train for Chicago. Others, too, were going, disappearing from their shops and their fields. All of those souls, escaped from the South, were at this very moment glowing with promise in the wretched winters of the cities of the North. Hattie knew her babies would survive. Though they were small and struggling, Philadelphia and Jubilee were already among those luminous souls, already the beginning of a new nation." Discuss this passage in relation to the novel's themes. In fact, Hattie is mistaken here; her babies do not survive. What does this say about the provenance of the new nation of which she speaks?

4. Six perceives his spiritual gifts as an affliction, entangled with his physical suffering, and likens his moments of communion to seizures and fits. "What was grace if it came

on him like a seizure that left him as frail and hurting as he had been before its visit? His experience of God was a violent surge he couldn't control...if he'd known how to pray, Six would have asked God to take his gift away." Elsewhere, he describes himself as a "ruined instrument" of God. What is your understanding of Six's spirituality? Does he have the power to heal? How do

5. In one of the novel's most dramatic and revealing chapters, Hattie leaves August with the older children and escapes with baby Ruthie (then called Margaret) and her lover, Lawrence. How did this make you feel? Were you hoping she would stay with Lawrence or go back to August and the children?

6. "Lawrence understood her. It seemed to him that every time he made one choice in his life, he said no to another. All of those things he could not do or be were huddled inside of him; they might spring up at any moment, and he would be hobbled with regret. He pulled to the shoulder of the rode and held her. She was a beating heart in his hand." What is at stake in this moment, for each of them?

7. What do you learn in the chapter called "Ruthie" about August as a husband? As a father? As a man?

8. Does August change throughout the course of the novel? Do you feel differently about him at the novel's end than at the beginning?

9. In one of the novel's climactic moments, Hattie and Lawrence bump into each other in a department store, and she discovers that Lawrence is romantically entangled with her daughter Bell. Why does Bell seduce Lawrence? What does she hope to achieve? What, if anything, does she learn about herself after her mother discovers her affair?

10. Reread the novel's final paragraph. Is this a happy ending or a heartbreaking one? Resigned, or hopeful? Did you feel differently about Hattie in the novel's last lines? Has she changed?

## **Part II: The Reader's Journal for Carl Hiaasaen's** **Stormy Weather or Scat**

Use the following journal prompts as you journal each time you read. Remember that you must 1) write a brief summary of the actions or events in the pages you read and 2) a personal comment on the content. At some point in your journaling, you will need to address the following questions in your entries:

1. What emotions did you feel as you read? (Today's reading made me angry. I felt confused when I read my book today. etc...)
2. What memory does your reading bring to mind? (Is there an incident in your own life that the book makes you remember?)
3. What do you think of the main character(s)? Why do you like or dislike him or her?

4. What values of the characters do you like and dislike? How do they compare with your value system?
5. What do you believe to be the most important passage in the book? Copy it and explain its importance.
6. Did this work make you laugh? Cry? Cringe? Smile? Cheer? Explode? Explain your reaction.
7. Did you like the way the book ended? Why or why not?
8. What character would you like to be in this book? What personality traits of this character would you like to acquire? Explain.
9. Do you think this book is a good one? Why? (Mention the way the book is presented and written as well as the story itself.)
10. To which of your friends would you recommend this book? (Be specific) What do you believe would be appealing to your friend in the book? Explain.