

Summer Reading 2010

English 9 Honors

READ THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOOKS AND THE GUIDING QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING EACH BOOK.

Keep the questions at hand as you read and take notes, in the books, if they are yours, or on paper. **Answers to the questions SHOULD NOT be written out.** Guiding questions are just to help students with more effective comprehension.

Assessment – first full day of classes:

You will be asked to answer multiple choice questions regarding plot and to respond to short answer questions.

A SEPARATE PEACE (John Knowles)

ABSTRACT: Fifteen years after his graduation from the Devon School, a private prep school, Gene Forrester returns for a visit. Through a flashback, he tells the story of Phineas (Finny), his athletic, carefree roommate and their experiences at the school during World War II, when they were 16 years old.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Knowles was born in West Virginia in 1926. He grew up in a small coal-mining town. When he was 15, he left for school at Phillips Exeter Academy, an exclusive boarding school in New Hampshire. He found Exeter socially and academically challenging. He later went to Yale and also served for eight months in the Army Air Corps. The plot and setting of *A Separate Peace* were mostly inspired by his experiences at Exeter. After *A Separate Peace* he wrote eight other novels, but none was as successful as his first. (Source: Famous Authors, McDonald Publishing Company, 1998)

GUIDE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING: (These are to guide you toward possible themes; they do not have to be answered in writing.)

1. How does the setting in specific scenes complement or contrast with events or what is revealed about characters?
2. How do Brinker's and Finny's personalities relate to the winter session and the summer session respectively?
3. What is the symbolism of Finny's fall? Of the tree?
4. How do Finny and Gene complement each other? Is their codependence a healthy relationship?
5. How is the Devon School a microcosm of the world at war?
6. What is the significance of the title?

GODDESS OF YESTERDAY (Caroline B. Cooney)

ABSTRACT: At age 6, Anaxandra is taken from her parents by King Nicander to be a companion to his crippled daughter, Princess Callisto. Six years later, the island is sacked by pirates and Anaxandra is the only survivor. When Menelaus, King of Sparta, shows up and rescues her, she pretends to be Princess Callisto. Helen, Menelaus' wife, dislikes her and doesn't believe she is the princess. Anaxandra avoids trouble until Paris of Troy arrives and Sparta and Troy go to war (The Trojan War). Anaxandra must find the courage to save herself and appease the gods. (Source: Scholastic.com) "Characters from *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and Greek tragedy" appear in Anaxandra's tale. (Kirkus Reviews)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Caroline B. Cooney is the bestselling and award winning author of many young adult novels, including *The Face on the Milk Carton*. Born in Geneva, New York in 1947 and raised in Old Greenwich, Connecticut, she attended various colleges where she studied music, art and English. In *Goddess of Yesterday*, Cooney writes of the adventures of a courageous girl caught in the drama of The Trojan War.

GUIDE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING: These are to guide you toward possible themes or symbolism; **THEY DO NOT HAVE TO BE ANSWERED IN WRITING.**

1. Anaxandra often examines the names of people and places and their meanings. Think about the importance of names in this novel. How does Pleis's broken pronunciation "Calli Sto" symbolize Anaxandra's story? Why does her birth island have no name?
2. Consider the merchant's glass jar in Gythion. "It contained, but did not hide." How does this observation parallel Anaxandra's life? The merchant says that glass (breaks) more easily than hearts." What is symbolic about the moment the glass breaks?
3. There are other characters that are vulnerable. Consider the enslaved former queen Aethra. Also consider the implications of Helen's rejection of old loyalties to Menelaus and Sparta when she fiercely proclaims herself "Helen of Troy." How do Helen's and Aethra's changes attest to the resilience of human identity?
4. Helen commands attention; her power is irrefutable. Think about the many instances that prove her vast power, which seems to derive from her beauty, disposition, and half-god birthright. Compare this power to examples of male power in this novel.

5. **Cassandra, a prisoner in her own land, can see past, present and future. Consider why her omniscience and outspoken truths incite perhaps more fear than Helen's treachery. (Source: randomhouse.com/teachers)**