

Summer Reading Assignment

Eng 10 A InverPrep

Introduction to College Reading and Writing

Created by

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and amended by

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Summer Reading Assignment

Book Letters

Book letters are letters you write about what you are reading. They are a very important part of Eng 10 A InverPrep and count toward your grade. During the summer, you need to read one book from the book list and write a letter to your new high school English teacher (Ms. Traeger). You should be able to find these books at your local public library or a local bookstore. Ask a librarian if you need help locating a book, because he or she can probably find a copy at another library. Get your book soon because you want to have plenty of time to read and write your letter. Remember, in order to become a better reader, you need to read, read, read!

Please use the format on the next page to help you organize your letter. This will help you develop the habit of turning in papers in a college format. Notice how there is only a very short summary (a paragraph), and the rest of the letter is about what the writer was thinking while reading. Book letters ARE NOT book reports, so please don't just summarize the plot. Always write in your own words.

Below are some ideas you can write about.

- Relate what is happening in the book to something in your own life.
- Discuss what you have learned while reading the book.
- Discuss the problems characters are facing.
- Discuss the feeling you experience while reading.
- Discuss the difficulty of the book.
- Discuss things that confused you.
- Discuss how the author's perspective compares with what you already know or believe.
- Discuss whether you would recommend this book to a friend and why (or why not).
- Write about something that surprised you in the book and why it surprised you.

Here are some suggestions for starting paragraphs in your letters:

- I wonder... because...
- I began to think about...
- I like the idea of...
- I know the feeling of...
- I noticed...
- I was surprised when... because...
- I thought...
- If I had been...
- Why did...?
- What if...?
- I remember when...
- If I were _____ (a character), I would... because...

YOUR FIRST BOOK LETTER IS DUE ON THE FIRST FULL DAY OF SCHOOL.

Book letter format:

*Word-processed *Double-spaced *Times New Roman 12-point font *500 or more words

Student Name

Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya

English 10A Book Letter

June 20, 2018

Dear Ms. Traeger;

I chose to read *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya because my friend Nancy recommended it to me saying it was sort of like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which I really enjoyed. After reading it, I can see the similarities because both of them take place around the same time in history (1930's/1940's) and the main character is a young kid who witnesses violence and grows up in a small town.

Bless Me, Ultima is about Antonio, who grows up in New Mexico in the years after WWII. Ultima is his grandmother who comes to live with the family early in the book. Antonio's mother is Catholic, but Ultima practices a more traditional religion and some people think she's a witch.

There's a scene in the book that was actually so scary that I had to put it down. This doesn't happen to me very often when I'm reading. Antonio went with Ultima to remove an evil spirit from a relative who had been placed under a curse. The description was just gross! The evil was described as a giant hairball that the cursed man threw up. It took me a while to realize when I was reading it that this was an exorcism because, yes, before that it said people thought Ultima was a *bruja*, but I thought that meant she was just misunderstood like Boo Radley. I was surprised that she had real powers. I guess that shows I don't really believe in witches. Everything else in the book is realistic, so I wonder if other people really do believe in witches and that evil can be an object. I've never met someone who does.

Even though I'm not very similar to Antonio, I understood how he felt about his dad. In the

book, Antonio's dad is more of a cowboy who likes living out on the land in the country and his mom insists they live near town so the kids can go to school and church. My dad would rather be walking in the woods hunting deer than about anything else in the world, but he goes to work in a suit and tie every day because he has to provide for the family. Like Antonio, I can tell my dad is sacrificing for us and we can see our dads are sad sometimes. I guess sadness is part of being a responsible dad. I admire this about my dad, especially when I see some of my friends' dads have just taken off and left the family rather than stick around. I think if you love your family, you stay, even if you have a job you hate.

OK, on a happier note, I also thought the book was pretty funny in some spots. There's a Christmas pageant scene with all the little kids goofing around that made me laugh. I like when books can be both serious and funny -- like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, too! -- because sometimes you just have to lighten up. I don't see my friends much in the summer, so I liked that the book made me laugh.

I would recommend this book to people who are pretty good readers (it's kind of long and there are a lot of characters). Some people might not be ok with the witches (like the people who can't read *Harry Potter* because of magic), but I liked it a lot.

Sincerely,

[Student Signature]

Student name typed below signature.

On the next page is the rubric (scale) I use to grade book letters:

Score: ____/20

CONTENT (I can tell you read the book actively and really "got into" it)	Very thoughtful, shows serious reflection. Discusses several ideas from the book. At least one connection to your life. Proper length: 500 or more words 15 PTS	Some thought was put into the assignment. Discusses a few ideas from the book. Mostly a summary. No connection to your life. A little too short: 250-400 words 10 PTS	Very little thought or reflection. Discusses only one point from the book. A summary. Too short: Less than 250 words 5 PTS
FORMAT (You followed the assignment.)	12 pt. Times New Roman, double spaced, word-processed, written as a letter (incl. signature). Includes course information. 2 PTS	One part of the format is missing. 1 PT	Two or more parts of the format are missing. 0 PTS
MECHANICS/ ORGANIZATION (You spent time organizing and proofreading your work.)	Very few errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Each paragraph has a topic sentence. Ideas are well-organized. 3 PTS	A few errors, but they don't interfere with the meaning. Pretty well-organized. 2 PTS	More than 10 errors. Poorly organized. No paragraphs. 0 PTS

Some final thoughts:

Please choose a book that is appealing to you, and not too difficult. If you need to look up several words on a page, then the book is too challenging, and you won't enjoy reading it.

Keep looking until you find just the right fit. If there is a book you'd like to read that is not on the list, you need to get it approved by me first. Just send me an email (address below) and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. I am very flexible about which book you read; the most important thing is that you spend time reading.

We will be writing more book letters during the first and second trimesters, so consider the summer assignment excellent practice.

I am happy to answer any questions that come up as you are working on your assignment. Please use the email address below. I look forward to working with you in the fall.

Ms. Heather Traeger, English teacher
Rosemount High School
Heather.Traeger@district196.org

FAMILY THEMES

The First Part Last

Angela Johnson

Experience the struggle—and joy—as a teen comes to grips with his new role as a parent.

Book of Unknown Americans

Christina Henriquez

The lives of a group of Spanish-speaking immigrants who live in the same apartment building mix in interesting ways. There's teenage romance, family tension and tragedy in this new novel.

Road Song

Natalie Kusz

True story of a family that packed up their car in 1969 and headed for Alaska. They ended up 100 miles from Fairbanks with temperatures of -60 when disaster struck.

Where the Heart Is

Billie Letts

For 17-year-old Novalee Nation, seven months pregnant, the phrase "home is where your history begins" has a special meaning. Leaving Novalee instead finds herself abandoned in front of a Wal-Mart. Giving birth to the "Wal-Mart baby" turns her into a local celebrity.

I'll Give You the Sun

Jandy Nelson

Brother and sister twins, Noah and Jude, were extremely close as children, until a tragedy and adolescence split them apart. Family, love and survival are themes in this novel that shifts narration between the twins.

Where'd You Go, Bernadette?

Maria Semple

When her eccentric mother goes missing, 15 year old Bee has to figure out where she is by reading emails, documents and secret correspondence. A book that's both funny and emotional.

The Round House

Louise Erdrich

Something terrible happens to (13 year old) Joe's mom early in the book, causing Joe and his dad to work together to seek justice for her. The book takes place on an Ojibwe reservation in North Dakota in the late 1980s.

SPORTS

In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle

Madeline Blais

A non-fiction account about a Springfield, Massachusetts high school girls' basketball team.

Basketball Diaries

Jim Carroll

A poet and musician looks back on his troubled high school years in New York when, as a promising athlete, he got involved with the wrong crowd and became addicted to drugs

Hate Mail from Cheerleaders

Rick Reilly

A collection of sports-related essays from an award-winning *Sports Illustrated* columnist. *Publisher's Weekly* notes that some essays are tear-jerking, but "most are laugh-out-loud funny."

Outcasts United: The Story of a Refugee Soccer Team that Changed a Town

Warren St. James

A non-fiction book about the coach and players of a boys soccer program in Clarkston, Georgia. The coach and players are all immigrants and refugees from around the world and they have to figure out how to work and play together in order to win and survive.

TOUGH TIMES AND ADVENTURES

Warriors Don't Cry

Melba Beals

This is the true story of the author's 1957 junior year in high school when she became one of nine students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

After the Fire: a True Story of Friendship and Survival

Robin Fisher

The book follows freshman roommates, badly burned in the January 2000 Seton Hall University dorm fire, as they recover and rebuild their lives. What is it like for a carefree, handsome young man to be suddenly disfigured and to lose his youthful sense of invincibility?

The Endurance

Caroline Alexander

Setting sail as WWI broke out the ship Endurance hoped to become the 1st to cross the Antarctic. This non-fiction account tells of how the ship was trapped in the ice pack and broke apart thus leaving the expedition trapped.

Hole in My Life

Jack Gantos

A true story about a young man who turned to the drug trade to pay for college tuition. The book opens from his jail cell as he describes what brought him there. A tale of adventure and the making of a writer.

The Price of Stones: Building a School for My Village

Twesigye Jackson Kaguri

Despite moving to the US and receiving a university education, Kaguri does not forget his home country of Uganda which has been ravaged by AIDS. This book shows the power of just one person.

The Road From Coorain

Jill Ker Conway

Fascinating story of a young girl from the outback of Australia who fights for her education and against many odds ends up as the first woman president of Smith College, one of America's premier colleges for women.

They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky

Benson & Alephonsion Deng and Benjamin Ajak

Across Sudan, between 1987 and 1989, tens of thousands of young boys took flight from the massacres of Sudan's civil war. This is three boys' account of that unimaginable journey.

Desert Flower

Waris Dirie and Cathleen Miller

Waris was born into a traditional Somali family. At twelve, she fled an arranged marriage to an old man and traveled alone across the dangerous Somali desert to Mogadishu -- the first leg of an emotional journey that would take her to London as a house servant, and eventually to America.

Sold

Patricia McCormick

Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut on a mountain in Nepal. Lakshmi's stepfather says she must leave home and take a job to support her family. Lakshmi journeys to India and arrives at "Happiness House" full of hope. But she soon learns the unthinkable truth: she has been sold into prostitution.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Song of Achilles.

Madeline Miller

A fictionalized account of the classical Greek stories leading up to and including the War in Troy, focusing on the Petroclus, the closest friend of the great warrior Achilles.

Blood of Strangers: Stories From Emergency Medicine

Frank Huyler

This is really a series of short essays rather than a lengthy book, each written with their own flair and personality. Some of

them are shockers, some are thinkers, some are just plain "day in the life of" stories.

Firehouse

David Halberstam

Halberstam interviewed the families of twelve New York City firefighters who never returned on 9/11. This is a portrait of the men and their dedication to their work.

The Plain Truth

Jodi Picoult

A cynical city lawyer travels into an Amish community to defend a teenager on charges of murder. Written by an author known for thoughtful, surprising stories.

A Short History of the Girl Next Door

Jared Reck

The story traces the friendship of a high school- aged boy and girl who have lived across the street from each other since they were kids. With both humor and sensitivity, the author captures how childhood relationships shift and change.

The Hate U Give

Angie Thomas

The title comes from a famous Tupac lyric. The main character in this book, Starr, lives in a poor black neighborhood but attends a wealthy suburban private school. After her friend is killed, there are a lot of conflicting opinions from people both communities, but Starr must figure out what she truly believes and what she's willing to stand up for.

11/22/63

Stephen King

A small-town high school teacher finds a way to travel back in time and change the course of history. Can he stop the assassination of President John F. Kennedy? It's written by one of the great horror/thriller writers of our time, so don't let the book's size intimidate you.

Ghosts of War: The True Story of a 19-Year-Old GI

Ryan Smithson

Smithson experienced the events of 9/11 while in high school and responded by enlisting in the Army Reserve after graduation. He married his high school sweetheart before being deployed to Iraq.

OTHER LIVES, OTHER CULTURES

Before We Were Free

Julia Alvarez

Alvarez draws on her own cousins' and friends' experiences to tell the political story through the eyes of Anita, whose father is involved in a plot to assassinate the dictator and bring democracy to the Dominican Republic.

Funny in Farsi

Firoozeh Dumas

In short, humorous vignettes, the author recounts her family's immigration to the U.S. from Iran and the resulting challenges. Her descriptions of American culture and her experiences with school, TV, and language could be the observations of anyone new to this country.

A Step from Heaven

An Na

When four-year-old Young Ju Park first hears the word, Mi Gook- Korean for "America"- she is sure that they mean "Heaven." But when the family moves to California the following year, she finds the transition from life in Korea far from easy.

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures

Anne Fadiman

The true story of a Hmong family whose daughter is diagnosed with epilepsy. This non-fiction book captures some history and culture of the Hmong people while telling the story of how culture influences our perspectives. It's a long, complicated book, but if you're interested in Hmong culture or medicine, you'll be fascinated.