

English IV

English IV, Advanced English IV, Honors IV and Advanced Placement Literature and Composition IV

Summer Reading Assignment

Clearview Regional High School District develops its curriculum in order to best serve the district's mission and meet the subject-area benchmarks established by NCLB and other local, state and national criteria for curriculum development. We recognize that adolescence through young-adulthood is a time when students of the same age are at different maturity levels, so the selection of materials is undertaken with care and deliberation. The English Department selects literary texts that reflect a diversity of perspectives, are age-appropriate, are high quality literature and are useful to fulfill the district's mission and the course's benchmarks. Parents are encouraged to investigate the texts explored by their children; we urge parents to take an active role in helping our students to develop admiration for the elegance and richness of human expression.

Recognizing that not all works are appropriate for all students, texts identified with an (*) contain mature or sensitive language or issues; parents or guardians may wish to preview texts prior to student participation.

OBJECTIVE: Students will read and be able to articulate the purpose and structure of a memoir; then, be able to consider events in their own lives that contribute to their uniqueness. These understandings will form the basis for a college essay grounded in the framework of an effective, engaging personal narrative.

All students must read the following book:

Larry Smith, *Not Quite What I Was Planning*, HarperCollins, 2008. Paperback, \$12.00 (list price) ISBN 0061374050.

Both used and new copies of this book are available from Amazon.com. Barnes and Noble's online store, BN.com, has used copies. The Deptford Barnes and Noble store will do what it can to keep the book in stock over the summer.

Students in English IV and Advanced English IV must choose one of the following books; AP Literature and Composition and Honors English IV students choose two:

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly – Jean-Dominique Bauby On December 8, 1995, at the very beginning of a weekend with his 10-year-old son, Bauby, editor-in-chief of the world's most famous fashion magazine, *Elle*, suffered a massive stroke. When he emerged from coma more than a month later, his mind was perfectly clear, but he could move only his left eyelid. So he remained until his death on March 9, 1997. In the interim, however, with the help of an alphabet arranged in the order of the letters' frequency in French (e occurs most frequently and so appears first) and recited until Bauby signaled the desired letter with a blink, Bauby dictated, letter by letter, the 28 tiny personal essays of this book. They demonstrate indisputably Bauby's irrepressible love of life. Although trapped as if in a diving bell by his situation, "my mind takes flight like a butterfly," he says, and he ranges through memories, dreams, and reflections, keeping his wits sharp. Never maudlin or religious, his observations

become inspirational, in the manner of much literature about enduring physical adversity, only after they have impressed us--just like good "regular" literature--with their author's strength, affability, curiosity, and gusto.

Boy: Tales of Childhood – Roald Dahl Teenage Dahl fans will be enthralled by his autobiographical stories, which have the drama and macabre humor of his fiction, as bright and bizarre, as daring and delightful as any made-up adventure he ever described. Dahl's upbringing was, by any standard, eccentric. In *Boy*, the first of his two autobiographical titles, he details many of his more unusual boyhood adventures, such as almost losing his nose in a car accident, the "Great Mouse Plot" of 1924, and boarding school antics in prose that will leave readers laughing out loud.

*Cockeyed** – Ryan Knighton Knighton, who teaches at Capilano College in Vancouver, started going blind in his teens, and in this hilarious and unsentimental yet moving memoir, he tells what it was like to lose his eyesight. He was born in the early 1970s, grew up in British Columbia and by 1987 was showing signs of poor vision. He began losing his sight early enough that the time frames of his coming-of-age and his coming-of-blindness overlap. Milestones such as his first driving experiences and his first relationships with girls, which would have been ordinary for other teenagers, were anything but for him. As he moved into adulthood, he also moved further into sightlessness, yet he turns the story into something so bracing that it reads like a travelogue—you can't wait to know where he's going next, whether it's to attend college in Vancouver, teach English in South Korea or get married. Wit can be a weapon, but can also be a kind of walking stick; being so gifted clearly guided Knighton long before anything began to happen to his eyes. Luckily for his readers, he was also gifted with a different kind of care and clear-sightedness, never stumbling into the maudlin. His book is an invitation to take a journey that no reader should refuse, to see life through another lens.

*Sold **– Patricia McCormick As this heartbreaking story opens, 13-year-old Lakshmi lives an ordinary life in Nepal, going to school and thinking of the boy she is to marry. Then her gambling-addicted stepfather sells her into prostitution in India. Refusing to be with men, she is beaten and starved until she gives in. Written in free verse, the girls first-person narration is horrifying and difficult to read. The spare, unadorned text matches the barrenness of Lakshmi's new life. She is told that if she works off her family's debt, she can leave, but she soon discovers that this is virtually impossible. When a boy who runs errands for the girls and their clients begins to teach her to read, she feels a bit more alive, remembering what it feels like to be the number one girl in class again. When an American comes to the brothel to rescue girls, Lakshmi finally gets a sense of hope. An author's note confirms what readers fear: thousands of girls, like Lakshmi in this story, are sold into prostitution each year. Part of McCormick's research for this novel involved interviewing women in Nepal and India, and her depth of detail makes the characters believable and their misery palpable.

*Teacher Man** – Frank McCourt This final memoir in the trilogy that started with *Angela's Ashes* focuses almost exclusively on McCourt's 30-year teaching career in New York City's public high schools, which began at McKee Vocational and Technical in 1958. His first day in class, a fight broke out and a sandwich was hurled in anger. McCourt immediately picked it up and ate it. All McCourt wanted to do was teach, which wasn't easy in the jumbled bureaucracy of the New York City school system. Pretty soon he realized the system wasn't run by teachers but by sterile functionaries. As McCourt matured in his job, he found ingenious ways to motivate the kids: have them write "excuse notes" from Adam and Eve to God; use parts of a pen to define parts of a sentence; use cookbook recipes to get the students to think creatively. A particularly warming and enlightening lesson concerns a class of black girls at Seward Park High School who felt slighted when they were not invited to see a performance of *Hamlet*, and how they taught McCourt never to have diminished expectations about any of his students. McCourt throws down the gauntlet on education, asserting that teaching is more than achieving high test scores. It's about educating, about forming intellects, about getting people to think.

Reading Lolita in Tehran – Azar Nafisi Literature professor Nafisi returned to her native Iran after a long education abroad, remained there for some 18 years, and left in 1997 for the United States, where she now teaches at Johns Hopkins. Woven through her story are the books she has taught along the way, among them works by Nabokov, Fitzgerald, James and Austen. She casts each author in a new light, showing, for instance, how to interpret *The Great Gatsby* against the turbulence of the Iranian revolution and how her students see Daisy Miller as Iraqi bombs fall on Tehran Daisy is evil and deserves to die, one student blurts out. *Lolita* becomes a brilliant metaphor for life in the Islamic republic. The desperate truth of *Lolita's* story is... the confiscation of one individual's life by another, Nafisi writes. The parallel to women's lives is clear: we had become the figment of someone else's dreams. A stern ayatollah, a self-proclaimed philosopher-king, had come to rule our land.... And he now wanted to re-create us. Nafisi's Iran, with its omnipresent slogans, morality squads and one central character struggling to stay sane, recalls literary totalitarian worlds from George Orwell's *1984* to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Assignment:

MEMOIR – a **memoir** is a piece of autobiographical writing, usually shorter in nature than a comprehensive autobiography. The memoir, especially as it is being used in publishing today, often tries to capture certain highlights or meaningful moments in one's past, often including a contemplation of the meaning of that event at the time of the writing of the memoir. The memoir may be more emotional and concerned with capturing particular scenes, or a series of events, rather than documenting every fact of a person's life (Zuwiyya, N. 2000).

After reading the books, you are to do the following:

Practice:

- Purchase a “marble” composition notebook, set aside specifically for this class. Title this assignment “Entry #1: Mini-Memoir.”
- Based on the above definition, identify and write down quotes in the memoir(s) you read that illustrate the characteristics of a memoir, as outlined in the definition.
- Summarize the memoir(s) you read in a six-word “mini-memoir” (similar to the ones you read in *Not Quite What I was Planning*). Keep in mind, there is no single, correct response to this exercise.

The Personal Memoir Site:

- Brainstorm in your journal all the events you can remember from your life that were either very important to you in positive ways, or very important to you in a negative way.
- Talk to other members of your family to get ideas, help you remember events from when you were younger, and to help fill in the details that might have been forgotten.

- Select the event, or series of related events, that seems most interesting to you right now.
- Brainstorm again but in more detail, trying to recall names, places, descriptions, voices, conversations, things, and all the other details that will make this turn into an interesting memoir.
- Work at this notetaking stage for a few days, until you feel you've got it all down on paper.
- Using the above definition, the quotes you identified from the memoirs you read, and the notes you took in **Your Own Personal Memoir**, *write your own six word mini-memoir*.
- *Complete the attached questionnaire using specific, vivid details and language*. This is necessary for the work you will do when you return to school.

If you have any questions about this assignment, please contact one of the following:

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Six-Word Memoir Questionnaire...*complete with as much information as possible.*

I am:

My Six-Word Memoir is:

Description of me at the time...

Physical:

Emotional (Frame of mind):

Intellectual (Where I was in my education and/or academic development):

What am I Remembering? Detail the events, issues, and specifics of the events described in YOUR Six-Word Memoir (puberty, parents' divorce, middle school years, etc.).

How would people have described me at the time? Specify who would have described you in these ways...

What did I learn from this experience/time period/event?

Who am I today?

Photo of me @ the time of the memoir (optional)...