

## 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* (132 pages, intermediate reading level)– 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, 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.

*A Long Way Gone\** (218 pages, all reading levels)-- Ishmael Beah This gripping story by a children's-rights advocate recounts his experiences as a boy growing up in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, during one of the most brutal and violent civil wars in recent history. Beah, a boy equally thrilled by causing mischief as by memorizing passages from Shakespeare and dance moves from hip-hop videos, was a typical precocious 12-year-old. But rebel forces destroyed his childhood innocence when they hit his village, driving him to leave his home and travel the arid deserts and jungles of Africa. After several months of struggle, he was recruited by the national army, made a full soldier and learned to shoot an AK-47, and hated everyone who came up against the rebels. The first two thirds of his memoir are frightening: how easy it is for a normal boy to transform into someone as addicted to killing as he is to the cocaine that the army makes readily available. But an abrupt change occurred a few years later when agents from the United Nations pulled him out of the army and placed him in a rehabilitation center. Anger and hate slowly faded away, and readers see the first glimmers of Beah's work as an advocate. Told in a conversational, accessible style, this powerful record of war ends as a beacon to all teens experiencing violence around them by showing them that there are other ways to survive than by adding to the chaos.

*The Road from Coorain\** (all reading levels)-- Jill Ker Conway Conway spent her first 11 years in the windswept grasslands of Australia, where her father owned 30,000 acres of arid land. Though his ability to understand the land was extensive, an eight-year drought finally defeated him, and he committed suicide. A few years later, Conway's oldest brother died in an automobile accident. The two deaths plunged her mother into depression. Out of this tale of hard work, drought, and sorrow, Conway emerges with character and personal strength. From the University of Sydney, she went on to study history at Harvard and eventually became the first woman president of Smith College. This inspiring book tells in full the details of her life and thoughts up to the time she left for America.

*Boy: Tales of Childhood* (all reading levels)-- 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.

*Don't Let's Go To the Dogs Tonight\** -- (intermediate reading level) Alexandra Fuller Pining for Africa, Fuller's parents departed England in the early '70s while she was still a toddler. They knew well that their life as white farmers living in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time) would be anything but glamorous. Living a crude, rural life, the author and her older sister contended with "itchy bums and worms and bites up their arms from fleas" and losing three siblings. Mum and Dad were freewheeling, free-drinking, and often careless. Yet they were made of tough stuff and there is little doubt of the affection among family members. On top of attempting to make a living, they faced natives who were trying to free themselves of British rule, and who were understandably not thrilled to see more white bwanas settling in. Fuller portrays bigotry (her own included), segregation, and deprivation. But judging by her vivid and effortless imagery, it is clear that the rich, pungent flora and fauna of Africa have settled deeply in her bones. Snapshots scattered throughout the book enhance the feeling of intimacy and adventure. A photo of the author's first day of boarding school seems ordinary enough- she's standing in front of the family's Land Rover, smiling with her mother and sister. Then the realization strikes that young Alexandra is holding an Uzi

(which she had been trained to use) and the family car had been mine-proofed. This was no ordinary childhood, and it makes a riveting story thanks to an extraordinary telling.

*All Creatures Great and Small* (all reading levels)— James Herriot Take an unforgettable journey through the English countryside and into the homes of its inhabitants-- four-legged and otherwise-- with the world's best-loved animal doctor. For over 25 years-- since *All Creatures Great and Small* was first published-- readers have delighted to the storytelling genius of James Herriot, the Yorkshire veterinarian whose fascinating vignettes brim with the wonder of life, animal and human. Whether struggling mightily to position a calf for birthing, or comforting a lonely old man whose beloved dog and only companion has died, Herriot's heartwarming and often hilarious stories of his first years as a country vet perfectly depict the wonderful relationship between man and animal-- and they intimately portray a man whose humor, compassion, and love of life are truly inspiring.

*Flame Trees of Thika* – (sophisticated reading level) Elspeth Huxley In 1913, at the age of six, Elspeth Huxley accompanied her parents from England to their recently acquired land in Kenya, "a bit of El Dorado my father had been fortunate enough to buy in the bar of the Norfolk hotel from a man wearing an Old Etonian tie." The land is not nearly what its seller claimed, but Elspeth's parents are undaunted and begin their coffee plantation. Her mother, a resourceful, adventurous woman, "eager always to extract from every moment its last drop of interest or pleasure," keeps an eye on Elspeth's education but also allows her extensive freedom. Through Elspeth Huxley's marvelous gift for description, early twentieth-century Kenya comes alive with all the excitement and naive insight of a child who watches with eyes wide open as coffee trees are planted, buffaloes are skinned, pythons are disemboweled, and cultures collide with all the grace of runaway trains. With a free-wheeling imagination and a dry wit, she describes the interactions of Kikuyus, Masais, Dutch Boers, Brits and Scots, mixing rapid-fire descriptions with philosophical musings.

*My Brother\** (intermediate reading level)— Jamaica Kincaid A successful writer now living in Vermont with her husband and two children, Kincaid is called back to her West Indian home on Antigua where her youngest brother, Devon, is dying of AIDS. They never knew each other well because she went to the United States when she was 16 and he was three. During Devon's last year she visits Antigua frequently to help her mother nurse him. Yet her brother is only part of the memoir. Much of the book concerns Kincaid's continued and troubled relationship with her domineering and manipulative mother. Kincaid's flat tone and sharp diction intensifies the words as memories interweave with present happenings, making this compelling reading.

*Cockeyed\** (all reading levels)— 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.

*West with the Night* (sophisticated reading level)— Beryl Markham An exceptional autobiography filled with a strong spirit, fascinating events, and beautiful words. Beryl Markham was raised by her father on a large farm in

British East Africa in the early twentieth century; as a child she preferred spear hunting with the native Muranis to her school lessons. At seventeen, when her father lost their farm and went to Peru, she chose to stay in Africa and began a highly successful career as a race horse trainer. In her twenties she gave up horses and started flying airplanes, becoming the first woman in East Africa to be granted a commercial pilot's license, then the first woman to fly the Atlantic from east to west. Lyrically and philosophically, *West With the Night* covers each of these parts of her life. Beryl Markham writes hunting stories filled with danger and tension, then turns and discusses the different qualities of silence or what it is like to fly alone over water for forty hours.

*Sold* \* (all reading levels) - 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 girl's 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.

*Angela's Ashes*\* (intermediate reading level)– Frank McCourt Despite impoverishing his family because of his alcoholism, McCourt's father passed on to his son a gift for superb storytelling. He told him about the great Irish heroes, the old days in Ireland, the people in their Limerick neighborhood, and the world beyond their shores. McCourt writes in the voice of the child, with no self-pity or review of events, and just retells the tales. He recounts his desperately poor early years, living on public assistance and losing three siblings, but manages to make the book funny and uplifting. Stories of trying on his parents' false teeth and his adventures as a post-office delivery boy will have readers laughing out loud. Young people will recognize the truth in these compelling tales; the emotions expressed; the descriptions of teachers, relatives, neighbors; and the casual cruelty adults show toward children. Readers will enjoy the humor and the music in the language.

*Teacher Man*\* (intermediate reading level)- 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* (sophisticated reading level)– 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*.

*A Room of One's Own* (sophisticated reading level)– Virginia Woolf This long essay about society and art and sexism is one of Woolf's most accessible works. Woolf, a major modernist writer and critic, takes us on an erudite yet conversational--and completely entertaining--walk around the history of women in writing, smoothly comparing the architecture of sentences by the likes of William Shakespeare and Jane Austen, all the while lampooning the chauvinistic state of university education in the England of her day. She concluded that to achieve their full greatness as writers women need a solid income and privacy.

### **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)...