

AP Literature Summer Reading Assignment

Texts:

- *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster
- *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Summer reading serves as an opportunity to restart your academic critical thinking skills before school starts and to think about works of literature as carefully constructed pieces of art with something to say. This summer, you are required to read two books: *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster and *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. You will also have a substantial assignment that integrates your reading of both books. So please have them read before you come to school in August, and complete the assignment described below.

Please read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* FIRST because it will be used as a foundation for your reading and study of *Purple Hibiscus*. If you read either book early in the summer, please be prepared to reread or study them just before school starts. You will be tested over details in the books and be doing close literary analysis of *Purple Hibiscus* when we start class in August.

- **All of this work below is due on the first day of class.**
- **Additionally, during the first week of school, you will have a quiz over the summer assignment and readings.**

If you do not complete the summer reading, your grade will be in jeopardy on the first day of school!

How to Read Lit . . . is an introduction to the study of literature which reads quite easily and uses numerous literary examples to make its points.

Adichie is a Nigerian writer, and *Purple Hibiscus* is a coming-of-age novel about a 15-year-old girl named Kambili who has a complicated and abusive father. The book takes place with the background of Nigerian political unrest of the 1990's. It also addresses the conflict between traditional Igbo (ee-boh) culture and Western culture in a post-colonial society.

You will find it useful to maintain a list of all the character names and relationships as you read. They're not difficult, but sometimes unfamiliar names are harder to remember and follow. Also, you should write down questions you have about either book as you read so you can ask when you return to school. Nothing is too trivial. It's better that you ask than that you let it go.

Complete the tasks described below for the included chapters of *How to Read Lit . . .* (the remaining chapters will be addressed when you return to school). Your responses should include specific references to both books to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter as it applies to a relevant aspect of *Purple Hibiscus*. **Each answer should be a minimum of six complete sentences (but many of the tasks will require more). Label each task according to chapter number and/or title. There should be a total 15.**

**Even though you do not have an assignment for each chapter
YOU WILL BE TESTED ON EVERY CHAPTER.**

PROMPTS:

Introduction: How'd He Do That?

How do memory, symbol, and pattern affect the reading of literature? How does the recognition of patterns make it easier to read complicated literature? Discuss a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbol or pattern. (This one is general, and you do not need to use *Purple Hibiscus*).

Chapter 2: Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

Compare two different meals from *Purple Hibiscus*, and apply the ideas of Chapter 2 to your comparison. Explain how Foster's ideas about analysis help make the meals meaningful.

Chapter 3: Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires

What are the essentials of the vampire story? Explain how Papa Eugene might be considered a vampire.

Chapter 10: It's More than Just Rain or Snow

Discuss the importance of two scenes involving weather in *Purple Hibiscus*; do not simply state how it affects the plot, but what the depiction of the weather says to the reader about the scenes' feeling and meaning.

Chapter 11: ...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence

Summarize the types of violence that Foster presents in *How to Read Lit . . .* Next, present examples of two kinds of violence found in *Purple Hibiscus*, and discuss how the effect on the reader is different for each form.

Chapter 12: Is That a Symbol?

After presenting Foster's primary attributes of symbols, discuss two symbols from *Purple Hibiscus* and what they represent for the reader.

Chapter 13: It's All Political

Assume that Foster is correct that "it is all political." Use his criteria to discuss how Adichie connects the personal and the political in the novel. Consider the political unrest in the novel itself, and how the novel portrays western colonialism. Consider also how political unrest affects characters' ordinary lives.

Chapter 14: Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too

Apply the criteria on page 119 to Jaja in *Purple Hibiscus*. Evaluate the degree to which he can be seen as a Christ figure. Is there another character who also might be seen as a Christ figure? Why or why not?

Chapter 16: It's All About Sex...

Chapter 17: ...Except Sex

The key ideas from these chapters are that "scenes in which sex is coded rather than explicit can work at multiple levels and sometimes be more intense than literal depictions" (141), and ". . . these scenes mean something more than what's going on in them. It's true in life as well, where sex can be pleasure, sacrifice, submission, rebellion, resignation, supplication, domination, enlightenment, the whole works" (150-1). Even though no actual sex happens in *Purple Hibiscus*, discuss a scene or two in which the novel suggests sexuality or sexual tension and how these scenes might be meaningful for the reader.

Chapter 18: If She Comes Up, It's Baptism

Think of a "baptism scene" from *Purple Hibiscus*. (This is not a literal baptism, and it could well be ironic.) How does the scene depict baptism, and how does the experience affect the character(s) involved?

Chapter 19: Geography Matters...

(Be sure to use Foster's criteria!) Describe at least two aspects of the geography in *Purple Hibiscus* you find important, and explain how they contribute to the reader's understanding of the novel.

Interlude: One Story

Write your own definition for an archetype. Then identify two potentially archetypal characters from *Purple Hibiscus* and discuss the ways, according to Foster, that these characters might be considered archetypal.

Chapter 21: Marked for Greatness

Chapter 22: He's Blind for a Reason, You Know

Chapter 23: It's Never Just Heart Disease...

Chapter 24: ...And Rarely Just Illness

These count as TWO TASKS: Choose two characters from *Purple Hibiscus* (one for each written task) who might be relevant to the explanation in any of the four chapters above (choose two different chapters, please). Explain how each character meets the criteria of his or her chapter, and explain how this contributes meaning to the novel.

Chapter 26: Is He Serious? And Other Ironies

Select a significant instance of irony in *Purple Hibiscus*. What makes it ironic? How does the irony affect the reader's sense of its significance and meaning? (We're looking for you to show that you genuinely understand irony.) You may discuss a scene or episode that you've already discussed above, as long as you focus on the irony here.

Reminders:

- Make sure you are citing your textual evidence
- Type in clear sentences
- Read BOTH BOOKS ENTIRELY
- USE PROPER GRAMMAR
- Questions? Email me @ agallegos@stbernardhs.org

