

Honors English II, Summer Reading Study Guide

Welcome 10th graders! I am very excited to get to meet and know you this year.

Your summer reading is *Animal Farm* by George Orwell AND *Cry the Beloved Country*, by Alan Paton. You must have these novels complete before our first day of classes and must bring a novel with you to class for the assessment week 1. Don't wait until last minute to read!

Below you will find some guiding reading questions which should help you with annotating the novel- these questions are not required written work and the answers will not be "handed in," however, they will help you focus on important content and think critically about the text you are reading.

Some form of some of these questions will make up your final summer reading assessment in August for this novel.

Note: You have chosen a rigorous Honors class. Expectations for preparedness, reading on time, and understanding of the text are high. I fully expect every student to be prepared to discuss, write about, and share about these novels on the first day of class.

Blessings, and I will see you soon!
-Mrs. Johnson

Animal Farm Essential Questions:

1. What is an allegory? What is the purpose of allegory?
2. What are some examples of symbolism in *Animal Farm*?
3. How do authors use literature to critique historical people and events? How does George Orwell do this in *Animal Farm*?
4. What is propaganda? How is language (and propaganda) used to influence or manipulate various characters in this book?
5. What does it mean to be free? Are true freedom and equality attainable? Does this novel support your answer- use examples from the text to answer yes or no.
6. What are the responsibilities of those in power? What happens when power is taken advantage of? How do we see this in the novel?
7. What are the dangers of being a "follower"? What happens when people blindly follow others? How do we see this play out in the novel?
8. Who are the main characters in this novel and what role do they play in the story's progression and outcome?

Notes on novel background and author:

- Orwell once wrote: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism" (Orwell, "Why I Write"). This purpose shines through in *Animal Farm*, as its central theme is a warning against the political corruption of people in power, and the human tendency to manipulate others (often through language/rhetoric and propaganda) for their own gain. Orwell directly criticizes Stalin's Soviet Union, but he also critiques totalitarianism in general. Text Structure: The structure of *Animal Farm* is cyclical. It starts and ends with totalitarian leaders who oppress the lower, working class. Although much happens in the middle, the purpose of the cyclical structure is to show that totalitarianism (disguised as a socialist pursuit for "equality") regimes will always leave their people oppressed, manipulated, and worse off than before. The author uses third-person omniscient narration.
- Real World Connections: Many of the characters and plot events in *Animal Farm* represent real people and events from the Russian Revolution. Additionally, the themes, including the dangers of totalitarianism, political corruption, abuse of power, and the importance of independent, critical thought are very relevant in the world today.

Cry, The Beloved Country Information:

- This novel is set in pre-apartheid South Africa (apartheid was the legal segregation of blacks and whites in South Africa that existed from 1948-1994). The novel recounts the story of Stephen Kumalo, a poor Zulu pastor, and his son Absalom. Kumalo's journey takes him from his simple village home in Natal to Johannesburg, South Africa, a sprawling city rife with racial injustice. There, as he searches for the truth about his son, Kumalo develops the capacity for hope.
- *Cry, The Beloved Country* is a great story, but you might find it a bit more challenging to read. The style of the novel is different from what you're used to – it's poetic at times, using minimal punctuation and no dialogue indications. Give it a chance; the novel is beautifully written and not to be rushed through.

Pay close attention to the language of the novel, how it's written, and consider the following:

1. How does the use of figurative language and the style of the novel help us to understand the separate realms of the blacks and whites in South Africa and the racial injustice that permeates the country?
2. What does Stephen Kumalo's journey of discovery, both physical and spiritual, tell us about dignity and the human spirit?
3. How does the story resemble the biblical parable of the prodigal son? How does it mirror another biblical parable, Absalom? What is the significance of Kumalo's son being named Absalom? Where else does the Bible inform the story?
4. There are many paradoxes in this novel: a priest's son commits murder; a white man who fights for the dignity of South African blacks is senselessly murdered; the father of the murdered son helps the father of the son who murdered to keep a disintegrating native tribe together. How do you reconcile these paradoxes? How do they contribute to the richness of the story? Why might Paton have made this choice?
5. How does apartheid manifest itself in *Cry, the Beloved Country*? Describe or characterize the separate worlds inhabited by blacks and whites. Where do black and white lives touch?
6. Throughout the story, Kumalo experiences the absence of God and momentary losses of faith. He suffers through periods where it feels as if God has deserted him. What other characters experience the absence of God? Does Kumalo ever experience the presence of God? If so, when? Is God basically absent or present in Paton's novel? If so, in what way does God manifest Himself?
7. The last few sentences Arthur Jarvis wrote before his death are: "The truth is that our civilization is not Christian; it is a tragic compound of great ideal and fearful practice, of high assurance and desperate anxiety, of loving charity and fearful clutching of possessions." Where in this novel do we see a split between high ideals and narrow self-interest? Do the characters embody one or the other, or are they morally mixed? Do you think what Jarvis feels applies to present-day South Africa? If so, how? If not, how have things changed?