

Honors World Literature: Summer Reading

The best way to become better at understanding what you read is simply to read more and more! Reading improves your comprehension and vocabulary while making you a better writer. In light of this, the English Department encourages students to spend time reading for pleasure during the school year and the summer.

This year, the English Department has chosen three summer reading books for incoming Honors World Literature students. Each student must read and annotate all assigned novels before school begins, using the guidelines Ms. Carnighan gave you. When you return, you will be writing an essay on one of them, completing a creative project and taking an objective test concerning the content of all three novels.

1. *Across A Hundred Mountains* – Reyna Grande

The phenomenon of Mexican immigration to the United States is one of the most controversial issues of our time. While it is often discussed in terms of the political and economic implications, Grande, with this brilliant debut novel and her own profound insider's perspective, puts a human face on the subject. Who are the men, women, and children whose lives are affected by the forces that propel so many to risk life and limb, crossing the border in pursuit of a better life? This is a stunning and poignant story of migration, loss, and discovery as two women -- one born in Mexico, one in the United States -- find their lives joined in the most unlikely way. -Goodreads

2. *Wild Ginger* – Anchee Min

Wild Ginger is only in elementary school when she is singled out by the Red Guards for having “foreign-colored eyes.” Her classmate Maple is also a target for prosecution. The novel chronicles these two girls maturing in Shanghai, China, in the late 1960s and 1970s, during the Cultural Revolution when Chairman Mao ruled absolutely and his followers took up arms in his name. Wild Ginger grows up to become a model Maoist, but her romantic love for a man named Evergreen soon places her in an untenable position with Maple – and ultimately, in one of mortal danger. – Goodreads

3. *Sister of my Heart* – Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Anju is the daughter of an upper-caste Calcutta family; her cousin Sudha is the daughter of the black sheep of the family. Sudha is as beautiful, tenderhearted, and serious as Anju is plain, whip-smart, and defiant. yet since the day they were born, Sudha and Anju have been bonded in ways even their mothers cannot comprehend. The cousins' bond is shattered, however, when Sudha learns a dark family secret. Urged into arranged marriages, their lives take sudden, opposite turns: Sudha becomes the dutiful daughter-in-law of a rigid small-town household, while Anju goes to America with her new husband and learns to live her own life of secrets. Then tragedy strikes them both, and the women discover that, despite the distance that has grown between them, they

have only each other to turn to. Set in the two worlds of India and America, this is an exceptionally moving novel of love, friendship, and compelling courage. --Goodreads

Summer Assignments:

1. *Across a Hundred Mountains:*

Interview someone who has immigrated to the United States. Use the following questions to guide your interview. Type your notes up in a two-to-three page summary. Use 14 point font and double space between lines. You may change your interviewee's name to protect his or her privacy. This is due the first day of class.

Personal Background:

1. From which country did you come? How many years did you live there and how many years have you lived in the U.S.?
2. Describe what your life was like before you came to the U.S.

The Process of coming to the United States:

1. Why did you decide to come to the U.S.? How long did it take you to think about it?
2. How did you choose California (or any other part of the U.S.) as your destination?
3. How did you prepare to come here, emotionally and financially?
4. How difficult was it to get here once you started your journey? How long did your journey take?
5. Were there any obstacles along the way?

Afterwards:

1. How did your life change after you arrived?
2. Are you happy now that you came here?
3. What is the greatest joy you have experienced while being in the U.S.? The greatest challenge?

2. *Sister of my Heart:* Choose *one* of the following creative projects to turn in. This is also due on the first day of class.

Choice 1: Create a replica of Sudha's wedding handkerchief that Sunil has kept hidden for many years.

Choice 2: Create a collage of magazine clippings and other types of images (pictures and words) to convey a message you think the novel is trying to portray. On the back of your collage, you must type and paste on an explanation about each the picture and how it relates to what you think the theme of the novel is.

Choice 3: Create a visual description of the items you believe Sudha would have brought with her to America. It can be in the form of an illustration or a collage.

3. **Wild Ginger:** In order to understand the life and times of Wild Ginger and Maple, please refer to Timeline of Modern Chinese History reprinted at the end of this document.

Choose **one** of the following prompts to develop into an essay (introduction with thesis, body paragraphs with topic sentences, concrete details, discussion and a concluding sentence as well as a conclusion) are required. *The first draft of the essay is due on the second day class meets.*

Choice 1: Maple is portrayed as a follower, and as expected in her society, she usually does whatever she is asked and avoids making decisions on her own. What are some examples of times when Maple actually takes control of a situation? What do these moments reveal about her character and her outlook on life?

Choice 2: Wild Ginger's sanity is repeatedly questioned. Do you think she is off-balance emotionally? If so, do you think she is driven insane by her surroundings and experience or is the cause something inside of her?

Choice 3: Wild Ginger proclaims that she strives to give up her human desires and dedicate herself fully to Mao. Is she being selfish or selfless? Is she offering her life to a cause or searching for recognition and acceptance? Support your statements by using specific examples from the novel.

Choice 4: Discuss the theme of fear in the novel as it relates to Maoist control and power. Is Wild Ginger's fearlessness a virtue? Or is it recklessness that leads to her downfall? Support your statements by using specific examples from the novel.

Appendix: Timeline of Modern Chinese History

1893

Mao Tse-tung is born.

1911

The Ch'ing Dynasty, which has held power since 1644, ends; the period of instability that follows, characterized by feuding warlords, lasts until 1927.

August 1912

The National People's Party, or Kuomintang, is founded.

1913

Jiang Ching, the future Madame Mao, is born.

1914

World War I begins; Japan seizes German holdings in Shantung Province.

1915

The Peking government recognizes Japan's authority over the Shantung territory, southern Manchuria, and eastern Inner Mongolia; Germany and Britain also lay claim to Chinese territory.

1917

China declares war on Germany.

1918

Peking signs a secret deal with Japan accepting Japan's claim to Shantung.

May 4, 1919

In response, massive student demonstrations against the Peking government take place.

July 1, 1921

The Chinese Communist Party founded, with Mao as one of its key members.

1925

Chiang Kai-shek becomes leader of the National People's Party.

1927

The Communist Party seizes control of the southeastern province of Kiangsi; Nationalist forces surround the province and institute a blockade; an estimated one million people die of starvation and disease.

October 1934

The Long March of 86,000 Communists from Kiangsi propels Mao Tse-tung to power.

July 1937

Japan invades China; Mao Tse-tung uses World War II and nationalistic fervor to further communism in China.

August 1945

World War II ends.

October 1, 1949

China's Independence Day. The People's Republic of China is established, and Mao Tse-tung is elected chairman.

February 1950

China signs the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union.

1953

China initiates its first Five-Year Plan, the Transition to Socialism.

1958–1960

The Great Leap Forward is marked by propaganda championing human willpower as the means to industrialization and economic growth.

1966–1976

The Cultural Revolution, led by Mao and the Red Guard, causes great suffering and unrest; the Gang of Four comprising Jiang Ching, Mao's wife; Chang Ch'un-ch'iao, a Shanghai Propaganda Department official; Yao Wen-yüan, a literary critic; and Wang Hung-wen, a Shanghai security guard — rises to power.

1971

Lin Piao, the leader of the People's Liberation Army and Mao's official successor, plots Mao's assassination, is exposed, and dies.

1976

Mao Tse-tung dies; Hua Kuo-feng succeeds him; Cho En-lai, premier of the People's Republic, dies.

1978

Teng Hsiao-p'ing, as head of the People's Republic, begins economic modernization.

1980s:

The Chinese government begins a series of economic reforms that lead to less government control of business and landownership. A new household responsibility system replaces a collective system, and the privatization of state enterprises contributes to China's economic growth.

1987: Western-style fast food is introduced in China—KFC opens its first store, and McDonald's will follow in 1991.

1989: Tiananmen Square protests conducted largely by students bring international attention to China. Military clashes with the protesters, who demand freedom and democracy, result in multiple deaths.

1990: China's biggest special economic zone launches in the suburbs of Shanghai at Pudong, designed to be China's new financial and commercial hub.

Jiang Ching dies.