



The Spire School Summer 2022 Humanities Assignment has been designed to provide students with the opportunity to further develop their reading, writing and analytical skills over the summer. The goal is for each student to select two assignments from any of the three subject areas and conduct a close reading and then complete the tasks associated with the text. We have included diverse texts that are fiction and non-fiction. Please be prepared to submit your work prior to August 30th.

If you have any questions pertaining to the summer assignment, please email:

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ENGLISH ACTIVITIES
Reading: <i>Recommended for students going into 9th Grade</i>

[On Keeping a Notebook](#) by Joan Didion
[About Joan Didion](#)

Response:

1. Didion admits that she has to study her own notebook entry to discover its meaning. What does the fact suggest about her purpose for keeping a notebook?
2. Why does Didion begin and end the essay with the same statement?
3. What is Didion's argument on keeping a notebook?
4. Has modern technology changed the ways in which people write so as to make notebooks and journals a thing of the past? Do people save their thoughts and reflections online? Discuss the relevance of Didion's essay in our electronic age?
5. Keep a journal of your choice for a week. Re-read it. Do you feel the same about keeping a journal as Didion? Explain. (ex. Food journal, activity journal, etc.)

Recommended for students going into 10th Grade

Reading:

[Reading to Write](#) by Stephen King

Response:

Answer either question #4 or #5 provided at the end of the reading (page 236).

4. Write a piece inspired by King's essay. It can be about writing, if you are passionate about that, or about some other pursuit - academic, creative, or neither. Try to include elements inspired by King's essay: tell a story or two about yourself, offer observations about something important to that pursuit (maybe one that others might overlook), and convey the sense of dedication that King conveys in "Reading to Write."
5. In urging aspiring writers to turn off their television when exercising so they might use that time for reading, King calls TV "the glass teat" (par 11). Write a response informed by research on contemporary television, which argues that writers have something to learn from television. How might you argue that TV is not a glass teat but a source of information about the world, as well as a place where good writing can also be found?

Recommended for students going into 11th Grade

Reading:

[Pre-Game](#) by Dave Zirin

Response:

1. What does Zirin mean when he claims that athletes "are a part of this world" (par. 8)?
2. In what way could people think athletes are not a part of this world?
3. What does it mean for Zirin that they are?
4. Rather than presenting both sides disinterestedly, Zirin takes a strong position in "Pre-Game." How does he take that position?
5. List five or six ways in which he presses his point. Does he argue from evidence and proof or through use of rhetoric, or some combination of the two?

Recommended for students going into 12th Grade

Reading:

["Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Spaces"](#) by Brent Staples

Response:

1. What does Staples mean by his final sentence: "It is my equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country."

2. Staples argues that black males are perceived as threatening public space. Is gender the main variable? In other words, is a man-of any race-likely to be perceived as a threat when he is in a public space, such as a street or mall? Can you identify any current events to support your position?
3. Write a letter to Staples in which you challenge him for making stereotypical assumptions about women's reactions similar to those assumptions he accuses women of making about his intentions.

HISTORY ACTIVITIES

Appropriate for students going into 9th Grade

Reading:

Letter From the Birmingham Jail <https://letterfromjail.com/>

by Martin Luther King Jr.

Consider the catalyst for this Letter ([Public Statement](#) by Eight Alabama Clergymen)

Notes:

- King is an outsider
- He and his followers should negotiate for change rather than demonstrate
- Their actions are "untimely": and
- There is no justification for breaking the law

Response:

1. Martin Luther King Jr. claims in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" that "It is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their unjust posture, but...groups tend to be more immoral than individuals". Defend, challenge, or qualify King's argument.
2. What is King's argument?
3. Write your own definition of just versus unjust laws and explain a set of circumstances that you believe would warrant civil disobedience.

Appropriate for students going into 10th Grade

Reading:

[Civil Disobedience](#) by Henry David Thoreau

Notes:

"It is not desirable," wrote Thoreau, "to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right." Many have been influenced by Thoreau's distinction between what is law and what is right (moral), including Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, President John F. Kennedy, and Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas.

Response:

Your task is to choose an example from history or current events in which a law was seen to conflict with what was right. Develop an oral argument that might be used in a mock trial to defend someone who has violated such a law. You might investigate war protests, civil rights struggles, police brutality, or other events as directed by your teacher. Divide your argument into three parts: state the law, explain why it is not moral, and offer a solution to resolve the conflict between the law and morality: should the law be abolished or should it be rewritten, and if so, how? (americainclass.org)

Appropriate for students going into 11th Grade

Reading:

[A Modest Proposal](#) by Jonathan Swift (with historical context information)

[A Modest Proposal](#) by Jonathan Swift (with author background information)

Response:

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1. How does Swift want the reader to view the speaker?
2. In response to a contemporary issue, write your own modest proposal.

Appropriate for students going into 12th Grade

Reading:

["Paranoid Style of Policing"](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Response:

1. Coates begins his article with a comparison between the way his father handled a dispute involving a young man, and the way police handled a dispute. What about this opening do you find compelling (or not compelling)? What is the point of starting with this comparison? If Coates were reading this out loud, what tone of voice would he use? What emotion comes through in the way he writes?
2. In his very last sentence Coates again contrasts what it means "to govern" rather than "simply rule". What does this difference mean to you? When someone "governs" where does power come from? When they "rule" where does power come from?
3. Coates is arguing against police brutality, but what larger points is he making about the effects of police brutality and lack of accountability?
4. #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter send a fairly clear and simple message, but that message is affected by their context. BlackLivesMatter was formed in response to recent police shootings of black men (including Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner and others). AllLivesMatter was formed in response to BlackLivesMatter.
 - a. How does that context add additional meaning to these simple messages? How does it make them more complex or more complicated?
 - b. Why do people fight over these hashtags that (at face value) seem to promote similar ideas?

SPANISH ACTIVITIES

Appropriate for students going into Spanish II

Activity:

Research the following three artists and create a slideshow presentation that includes a brief biography of each artist and samples of their work. You should have a minimum of 5 slides for each artist and his/her work. Artists: Frida Kahlo, El Greco, and Diego Velazquez.

Appropriate for students going into Spanish III

Reading:

[Only Daughter](#) by Sandra Cisneros

Response:

1. Research the roles of women in Latin America. Discuss whether Cisneros's is in favor of or against these traditional roles.
2. Rewrite the story translating the English portions of the text into Spanish, and the Spanish portions into English.

Appropriate for students going into Spanish IV

Reading:

[Myth of the Latin Woman](#) by Judith Ortiz-Cofer

Response:

1. What does Ortiz Cofer imply by using the phrase “The Myth of the Latin Woman”? What examples of such mythologizing does she offer and to what end? Cite the text as needed to support your explanation.
2. Throughout her essay, Ortiz-Cofer refers to a number of different identities she might claim as an important part of her character: being female, Puerto Rican, American, Latina, an Island-person, a scholar, Catholic, and, of course, author. Which of these do you think she emphasizes most in the essay and how?
3. What argument is Ortiz-Cofer making here about identity as it relates to stereotypes?

Appropriate for students going into Spanish V

Reading:

[How to Tame a Wild Tongue](#) by Gloria Anzaldua

[Gloria Anzaldua Biography](#)

[More about Gloria Anzaldua](#)

[Art: Frida Khalo](#)

Notes:

- Anzaldua argues against any type of “borderland” that is based on race, gender, class, and culture.
- Note Khalo’s determination to wear traditional dress as a political statement

Response:

1. As a reader, how do you react when you first encounter the Spanish passages? How does your level of Spanish fluency affect this reaction?
2. The text is written in Spanish and English-forces her readers to be bilingual-translates only part of the time. Is this distracting for a non Spanish speaker?
3. Viewing Frida Khalo’s bio and art, what connections can you make between Anzaldua’s essay and Khalo’s mission?