

## **Summer Reading Assignment for English III Honors Gulf High School -Mrs. Fuss**

Congratulations! You have enrolled in English III Honors! I look forward to working with you during the 2005-06 school year. As I'm sure you know, Honors is a challenging, academically rigorous adventure. You will begin your journey this summer by reading and completing some activities designed to enhance the material we will be covering during the regular school year.

I have selected several novels that have appeared on the best seller lists for you to consider. These books can be purchased at a book store or checked out of the public library. Many of these books can be found at used book stores or online at half.com. Certainly, you may borrow them from your friends and family, as well.

### **Part I**

Below is a list of books and a brief synopsis for each. Please select **one** to read:

#### **Amy Tan's *Bonesetter's Daughter***

##### **Synopsis:**

Set in contemporary San Francisco and in a Chinese village where Peking Man is unearthed, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is an excavation of the human spirit: the past, its deepest wounds, its most profound hopes. This is the story of LuLing Young, who searches for the name of her mother, the daughter of the famous Bonesetter from the Mouth of the Mountain. The story conjures the pain of broken dreams, the power of myths, and the strength of love that enables us to recover in memory what we have lost in grief.

#### **Isabelle Allende's *Daughter of Fortune***

##### **Synopsis:**

Born into a 19th-century society that values birthright above character, Eliza Sommers is at a startling disadvantage. An orphan of unknown heritage, Eliza is raised in the British colony of Valparaíso, Chile, by the Victorian spinster Rose Sommers and her brother Jeremy. She is not even sure how she arrived at the Sommers household—only that she is lucky enough to be cared for, educated, and even loved by her adopted family. So when Eliza exhibits the signs of a first love, the women in her life come to her "rescue," certain that this adolescent passion will lead to trouble.

#### **Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha***

##### **Synopsis**

The strikingly pretty child of an impoverished fishing family, Chiyo is taken to faraway Kyoto and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house where she is renamed Sayuri. Initially reluctant, Sayuri must finally invent and cultivate an image of herself as a desirable geisha in order to survive in Gion's cruel hierarchy. Through her eyes, we are given a backstage view of the ancient and secretive geisha district, Gion, and of the lives of the women who learn and practice the rigorous arts of the geisha.

#### **Sue Monk Kidd's *Secret Life of Bees***

##### **Synopsis**

Set in the American South in 1964, the year of the Civil Rights Act and intensifying racial unrest, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* is a powerful story of coming-of-age, of the ability of love to transform our lives, and the often unacknowledged longing for the universal feminine divine. Addressing the wounds of loss, betrayal, and the scarcity of love, Kidd demonstrates the power of women coming together to heal those wounds, to mother each other and themselves, and to create a sanctuary of true family and home. Isolated on a South Carolina peach farm with a neglectful and harsh father, fourteen-year-old Lily Owens has spent much of her life longing for her mother, Deborah, who died amid mysterious circumstances when Lily was four years old. To make matters worse, her father, T. Ray, tells Lily that she accidentally killed her mother.

Once you've selected a book from the list above, you will need to complete the following discussion questions. You have two options on how to complete these.

1. You may find that some of your friends (or family members) would like to read some of these titles. You may video tape or tape record a book chat, using the discussion questions as your guide. You may set this up any way you like bearing in mind that you must be actively participating in the discussion. There should be no doubt that you've read the book based on your discussions. All questions must be answered during the "chat". This could prove to be a lot of fun. Your video tape or audio tape will be submitted for a grade.

**OR**

2. You will need to purchase a composition notebook to "journal" your responses to the questions relating to your novel. These notebooks are the black and white "retro-looking" ones. Please do not use spiral or full sized notebooks. They are cumbersome and fall apart. Your responses to each question should be written in well developed paragraphs, citing examples from the text to support your answers. Please write in blue or black ink!!! NO pencil please.

Discussion Questions for each novel can be found at the back of this assignment sheet.

## **Part II**

You will also need to purchase or borrow a copy of **Carl Hiaasen's *Stormy Weather***.

Hiaasen is a graduate from University of Florida and resides in South Florida where he writes for *The Miami Herald*.

### **Synopsis**

Two honeymooners wake up early and brace themselves for a spectacle they won't be watching from the sidelines. A seductive con artiste stumbles into a scam that promises more cool cash than the lottery. A shotgun-toting mobile home salesman is about to close a deal with disaster. A law school dropout will be chasing one Gaboon viper, a troop of storm-shocked monkeys, and a newfound love life, while tourists by the thousands bail from the Florida Keys. We're now entering the hurricane zone, where hell and hilarity rule.

Please be aware that this is a satirical piece and there is **adult content** in this novel. If you or your folks are uncomfortable with this, please consider reading **Carl Hiaasen's *Hoot***.

### **Synopsis**

Unfortunately, Roy's first acquaintance in Florida is Dana Matherson, a well-known bully. Then again, if Dana hadn't been sinking his thumbs into Roy's temples and mashing his face against the school-bus window, Roy might never have spotted the running boy. And the running boy is intriguing: he was running away from the school bus, carried no books, and—here's the odd part—wore no shoes. Sensing a mystery, Roy sets himself on the boy's trail. The chase introduces him to potty-trained alligators, a fake-fart champion, some burrowing owls, a renegade eco-avenger, and several extremely poisonous snakes with unnaturally sparkling tails.

For Part II, you will need to journal in a composition notebook (black & white retro...you may use the same one you used in completing Part I if you'd like). Each time you read you will need to log the experience. You may have 100 entries or 4 as long as you 1) write a brief summary of actions or events in the pages that you've read and 2) a personal comment on the content. In addition, the questions for Carl Hiaasen's novel must be addressed at some point in your entries. Please write in blue or black ink.

Reader's Journal questions can be found at the back of this assignment sheet, as well.

All assignments will be due sometime during the second week of school. A date will be announced the first day of school.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

for: ***Bonesetter's Daughter***

1. Memory plays an important role in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. How is Ruth's life affected by her childhood memories? How do LuLing's memories affect her behavior around Ruth?
2. How does LuLing attempt to convey the difficulties of her formative years to Ruth? Does she succeed? Why/why not? In the constant sparring between Ruth and LuLing, who do you think is at fault?
3. Much of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* revolves around superstition. How does this aspect of Chinese culture affect LuLing's actions? Is Ruth superstitious? Does she realize that she is manipulating her mother as a child?
4. Why does Ruth try so hard to distance herself from her Chinese heritage?
5. Why does Ruth lose her voice once a year on August 12th? In what way does Ruth "regain" her voice by the end of the novel?
6. How does Ruth use her professional talents to her advantage? In what way does her job stifle her ability to communicate? Are there any inherent advantages of Ruth's uncanny ability to "spin gold out of dross"?
7. How is LuLing affected by the family curse? How does she react when she learns of her mother's true identity? In your opinion, was it wrong for Precious Auntie to keep this secret from her daughter? Why does Precious Auntie keep this information from LuLing for so long?
8. What is the significance of Ruth's learning the family name at the end of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*? What does Ruth learn about her name that helps change her opinion of her mother?
9. How does LuLing rebel against Precious Auntie? Is Ruth similar to LuLing in this respect? What are the consequences of Ruth's insolence in her teenage years? Whose rebellion causes more lasting results?
10. What does Ruth learn about her mother and about her own cultural heritage that helps to mend her strained relationship with Art, as well as with Fia and Dory?

for ***Daughter of Fortune***:

1. Eliza thinks that the facts of her birth don't matter: "It is what you do in this world that matters, not how you come into it," she claims. Ta Ch'ien, on the other hand, cannot imagine "his own life apart from the long chain of his ancestors, who not only had given him his physical and mental characteristics but bequeathed him his karma. His fate, he believed, had been determined by the acts of his family before him." How do these different beliefs determine the way

Tao Chi'en and Eliza make decisions about their lives? What are your own feelings about ancestry and self-determination?

2. Eliza grows up under the influence of a number of strong individuals--Mama Fresia, Rose, Jeremy Sommers and his brother, John. What does she learn from each of people? How do their differing philosophies contribute to Eliza's experience of the world? How do *they shape her personality*?

3. In 19th century Chile, a married woman could not travel, sign legal documents, go to court, sell or buy anything without her husband's permission. No wonder Rose doesn't want to get married! How would the lives of the women you know be different under those conditions? What are the consequences in a society that limits the freedoms of a segments of its citizens?

4. What do you think Allende means by referring to Eliza as a "daughter of fortune?" How are the different definitions of the word "fortune" significant in Eliza's story and the novel as a whole?

5. How is Tao Chi'en a "son" of fortune? What are the crucial turning points in his life, and where do they lead him? To what extent is he responsible for his own good and bad fortunes?

6. "At first the Chinese looked on the foreigners with scorn and disgust, with the great superiority of those who feel they are the only truly civilized beings in the universe, but in the space of a few years they learned to respect and fear them." writes Allende about the arrival of Western peoples into Hong Kong. How is this pattern of suspicion, fear, and resigned acceptance repeated throughout the novel? How does Allende illustrate the confusion of clashing cultures in Valparaiso, on board Eliza's ship, and in California? Do you think people of today are more tolerant of other cultures than they were 150 years ago?

7. While Eliza is vulnerable in California because of her sex, Tao Chi'en's prospects are limited because of his race. How do both characters overcome their "handicaps?" What qualities help them make their way in a culture that is foreign and often unwelcoming?

8. What do details such as Mama Fresia's home remedies and her attempts to "cure" Eliza of her love for Joaquin, or Tao Chi'en's medical education and his habit of contacting his dead wife say about the role of the spiritual in the everyday life? Must the spiritual and the secular remain separate? What about the spiritual and scientific worlds?

9. How have the novel's characters - Rose or Jacob Todd, for instance - managed to create opportunities out of the obstacles they've faced? What do you think Allende is saying about the role that fate plays in our lives, and about our capacity to take control over our own destinies? How are we all sons or daughters of fortune?

for ***Memoirs of a Geisha***:

1. "The afternoon when I met Mr. Tanaka Ichiro," says Sayuri, "really was the best and the worst of my life" [p. 7]. Is Mr. Tanaka purely motivated by the money he will make from selling Chiyo to Mrs. Nitta, or is he also thinking of Chiyo's future? Is he, as he implies in his letter, her friend?

2. In his letter to Chiyo, Mr. Tanaka says "The training of a geisha is an arduous path. However, this humble person is filled with admiration for those who are able to recast their suffering and become great artists" [p. 103]. The word "geisha" in fact derives from the Japanese word for art. In what does the geisha's art consist? How many different types of art does she practice?

3. Does Sayuri have a better life as a geisha than one assumes she would have had in her village? How does one define a "better" life? Pumpkin, when offered the opportunity to run away, declines [p. 53]; she feels she will be safer in Gion. Is her decision wise?

4. How does Sayuri's status at the Nitta okiya resemble, or differ from, that of a slave? Is she in fact a slave?

5. Are Mother and Granny cruel by nature, or has the relentless life of Gion made them what they are? If so, why is Auntie somewhat more human? Does Auntie feel real affection for Sayuri and Pumpkin, or does she see them simply as chattel?

6. Does the way in which the Kyoto men view geisha differ from the way they might view other women, women whom they might marry? What are the differences? How, in turn, do geisha view men? Is the geisha's view of men significantly different from that of ordinary women?

7. As the older Sayuri narrates her story, it almost seems as though she presents Chiyo and Sayuri as two different people. In what ways are Chiyo and Sayuri different? In what ways are they recognizably the same person?

8. Pumpkin believes that Sayuri betrayed her when she, rather than Pumpkin, was adopted by the Nitta okiya. Do you believe that Sayuri was entirely blameless in this incident? Might she have helped to make Pumpkin's life easier while they were in the okiya together? Or has Pumpkin's character simply been corrupted by her years with Hatsumomo and the entire cruel system that has exploited her?

9. Sayuri senses that she shares an en, a lifelong karmic bond, with Nobu [p. 295]. How might a Western woman express this same idea?

10. During Sayuri's life, Japan goes through a series of traumas and unprecedented cultural change: the Great Depression, the War, the American Occupation. How do the inhabitants of Gion view political events in the outside world? How much effect do such events have upon their lives? How aware are they of mainstream Japanese culture and life?

for *The Secret Life of Bees*:

1. Were you surprised to learn that T. Ray used to be different, that once he truly loved Deborah? How do you think Deborah's leaving affected him? Did it shed any light on why T. Ray was so cruel and abusive to Lily?
2. Had you ever heard of "kneeling on grits"? What qualities did Lily have that allowed her to survive, endure, and eventually thrive, despite T. Ray?
3. Lily's relationship to her dead mother was complex, ranging from guilt to idealization, to hatred, to acceptance. What happens to a daughter when she discovers her mother once abandoned her? Is Lily right—would people generally rather die than forgive? Was it harder for Lily to forgive her mother or herself?
4. Lily grew up without her mother, but in the end she finds a house full of them. Have you ever had a mother figure in your life who wasn't your true mother? Have you ever had to leave home to find home?
5. What compelled Rosaleen to spit on the three men's shoes? What does it take for a person to stand up with conviction against brutalizing injustice? What did you like best about Rosaleen?
6. Had you ever heard of the Black Madonna? What do you think of the story surrounding the Black Madonna in the novel? How would the story be different if it had been a picture of a white Virgin Mary? Do you know women whose lives have been deepened or enriched by a connection to an empowering Divine Mother?
7. Why is it important that women come together? What did you think of the "Calendar Sisters" and the Daughters of Mary? How did being in the company of this circle of females transform Lily?
8. May built a wailing wall to help her come to terms with the pain she felt. Even though we don't have May's condition, do we also need "rituals," like wailing walls, to help us deal with our grief and suffering?
9. How would you describe Lily and Zach's relationship? What drew them together? Did you root for them to be together?
10. Project into the future. Does Lily ever see her father again? Does she become a beekeeper? A writer? What happens to Rosaleen? What happens to Lily and Zach? Who would Zach be today?

**The Reader's Journal for Carl Hiaasaen's *Stormy Weather or Hoot***

Use the following journal prompts as you journal each time you read. Remember that you must 1) write a brief summary of the actions or events in the pages you

read and 2) a personal comment on the content. At some point in your journaling, you will need to address the following questions in your entries:

1. What emotions did you feel as you read? (Today's reading made me angry. I felt confused when I read my book today. etc...)
2. What memory does your reading bring to mind? (Is there an incident in your own life that the book makes you remember?)
3. What do you think of the main character(s)? Why do you like or dislike him or her?
4. What values of the characters do you like and dislike? How do they compare with your value system?
5. What do you believe to be the most important passage in the book? Copy it and explain its importance.
6. Did this work make you laugh? Cry? Cringe? Smile? Cheer? Explode? Explain your reaction.
7. Did you like the way the book ended? Why or why not?
8. What character would you like to be in this book? What personality traits of this character would you like to acquire? Explain.
9. Do you think this book is a good one? Why? (Mention the way the book is presented and written as well as the story itself.)
10. To which of your friends would you recommend this book? (Be specific) What do you believe would be appealing to your friend in the book? Explain.