

## 2011-2012 AP Language and Composition – Summer Reading Assignment

**A block – Ms. Browne [paulaabrowne@yahoo.com](mailto:paulaabrowne@yahoo.com)**

**B block – Ms. Oliveira [poliveira@newbedfordschools.org](mailto:poliveira@newbedfordschools.org)**

**D block – Ms. Costa [ccosta0179@comcast.net](mailto:ccosta0179@comcast.net)**

We are looking forward to working with you in the fall. We want you to be prepared to engage in conversation about not only theme, but also the rhetorical structure of the books you read during the summer. As you are an AP student we are asking you to stretch your intellect by reading three books this summer:

### **Ms. Browne's list:**

*You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* by Deborah Tannen and *Stiff: The Curious Life of Human Cadavers* by Mary Roach the third book to be chosen by you from the following:

1. This Land is Their Land-Barbara Ehrenreich
2. Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America –Barbara Ehrenreich
3. The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong To Get Ahead --David Callahan
4. A Whole New Mind - Daniel Pink
5. Outliers – Malcolm Gladwell
6. The Tipping Point – Malcolm Gladwell

### **Ms. Costa's & Ms. Oliveira's list:**

*Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the Evil Empire* by Eric Schlosser and *Stiff: The Curious Life of Human Cadavers* by Mary Roach the third book to be chosen by you from the following:

1. You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation by Deborah Tannen
2. Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America – Barbara Ehrenreich
3. The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong To Get Ahead - David Callahan
4. A Whole New Mind - Daniel Pink
5. Outliers – Malcolm Gladwell
6. The Tipping Point – Malcolm Gladwell

The activities that accompany the books will lead you to deeper understanding of the texts, to formulating good questions, and to developing original responses to the ideas you encounter. Don't wait until the last minute to read three books. Plan to complete the reading and responses over time. If you wait until the last hour to work on this, you will not be able to do this work. You will be required to submit a "Reading Journal." We strongly favor a composition book for recording your responses to the reading (both to the questions posed in the assignment and your personal responses). This journal will reflect your thoughts and questions as you read and will serve as a source from which to draw those ideas you wish to develop in your response essay later. There are four parts to the assignment. The first and second parts are on, *Stiff: The*

*Curious Life of Human Cadavers* the third is on your book chosen from the list, and the fourth part is on *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the Evil Empire.*”

## **Part I – Rhetorical Analysis**

**Text:** *Stiff: The Curious Life of Human Cadavers*

**Understanding Nonfiction:** As discussed in the introduction to the summer reading, you will have to approach the texts we read this year differently than you have in the past, particularly the works of non-fiction. You will find that as you delve more deeply into the ideas and possible purposes and techniques of the authors, you may begin to identify more closely with the book and find yourself more engaged in the reading. The reason is that as your understanding of the author and his or her viewpoints grows, the book will take on a richer, more meaningful role in your life.

In order to help you learn this way of looking at a text, you should consider the following questions as you read and after you read, **Please record your thoughts and responses to the following questions in your reading journal:**

1. In her introduction to *Stiff*, Mary Roach remarks that "death makes us helplessly polite." Why is it that we're compelled to use polite language when discussing death? Why are we often afraid to discuss it in the way Roach has done here?
2. Roach discovered that students in anatomy classes tend not to enjoy touching and smelling cadavers, even though they relish the opportunity to study them. Does this surprise you? Why might someone want to work with cadavers?
3. Could one remain more psychologically and emotionally balanced in their dealings with cadavers by humanizing them, as Roach frequently does, or by objectifying them? Explain.
4. Roach describes the smell of a decomposing human: "It is dense and cloying, sweet but not flower-sweet. Halfway between rotting fruit and rotting meat." But modern embalming methods allow us to present odorless, good-looking corpses at funerals. Has modern mortuary science made death more aesthetically pleasing?
5. Dennis Shanahan, who investigated the grisly human wreckage of downed TWA Flight 800, told Roach that the hardest thing about examining Flight 800 was that most of the bodies were relatively whole. He said, "Intactness bothers me much more than the lack of it." Why might he feel this way? Do you agree or disagree?
6. Many research studies that make use of cadavers raise questions about maintaining the dignity of the deceased. For example, a ballistics study might involve decapitating a cadaver or shooting one in the face—all for the sake of gathering data to ensure that innocent civilians who are hit in the face with nonlethal bullets won't suffer disfiguring fractures. Do you think that the humanitarian benefits of experimenting on cadavers can outweigh any potential breach of respect for the dead? Why or why not? For what chemical are cadaver dogs trained to smell?
7. The heart, cut from the chest, can keep beating on its own for as long as a minute or two. This, Roach says, reflects centuries of confusion over how exactly to define death. Have modern scientific experiments on cadavers helped us to pinpoint the precise moment when life ceases to exist and all that's left is a corpse? Explain.
8. Roach says, "On a rational level, most people are comfortable with the concept of brain death and organ donation. But on an emotional level, they may have a harder time accepting it." Some organ recipients even worry that they will take on certain characteristics of their donors. What might this say about how we link the physical human body to the human soul?
9. In Chapter 10, Roach takes us on a grand tour of cannibalism across cultures. She's compelled by the idea that economics accounts for why people throughout history have never dined regularly on

each other. Humans, she says, turn out to be lousy livestock, because you have to give them more food to feed them than you'd gain in the end by eating them. How do you react to this idea?

10. In Chapter 11, Roach journeys to an island in Sweden, where a forty-seven-year-old biologist-entrepreneur has made a business of producing compost from cadavers. This business has major corporate backing and an international patent, and mortuary professionals in many countries, including the United States, are interested in representing the new technology. Do you think that the "human compost movement" could gain traction where you live?

11. Roach concludes that "it makes little sense to try to control what happens to your remains when you are no longer around to reap the joys or benefits of that control." Do you agree with her?

12. In the Introduction, the author separates cadavers and dead bodies from the concept of a living person. How do you feel about this separation? Are a dead body and a living body different ethically?

13. Some chapters seemed more "icky" than others, in terms of subject matter. Did you skip any chapters, or browse only, due to subject matter? Which ones?

14. Did you find the author's dry humor helpful or disturbing during your reading?

15. Were you surprised to learn that cadavers are used in so many different areas and kinds of research? How do you feel about that? Which area of research surprised you the most?

16. The author talked about objectification of human corpses. Do you think most people who work with or around corpses objectify them? If you work with mice, rats, or other living organisms in your research, do you objectify them?

17. Before each chapter, Roach includes a photo that represents the content of the following chapter in some way. What did you think of the inclusion of these photos?

18. At the end of the book, Roach discusses the process she has gone through to decide whether or not to donate her body. What did you think of her including this personal touch?

21. What does the author mean when she says, "Death, it doesn't have to be boring"?

22. Describe a moment when the author concealed their dread behind a veil of humor.

23. What was going through Mary Roach's mind when she was attending the University of Tennessee's "Body Farm"?

24. How are cadavers, as Roach describes, "superheroes"?

25. What is Pseudoscience? How does Roach use it in the book?

## **Part II – Response Essay**

Once you have read *Stiff: The Curious Life of Human Cadavers* write a response to the prompt that follows, using the data, the ideas, and the questions you have recorded in your reading journal to support your stance toward the statement. Your essay should be between 600-800 words and should be typed (double-spaced, 12 point, Times)

Roach concludes that "it makes little sense to try to control what happens to your remains when you are no longer around to reap the joys or benefits of that control." Do you agree with her? Give examples of Roach's possibilities for the final disposition of her body. In the end, what did she decide to do, if she is brain dead, or just plain dead? Did reading this book affect your own plans for burial?

**This essay should be completed and attached to an e-mail which must be sent to Ms. Browne, Ms. Costa & Ms. Oliveira no later than August 15. Please send the essay to all 3 of us and label what block you have your AP English Class. Our e-mail addresses are listed at top of document. We hope to read and respond to the essays early in September, so it is important**

**that we receive them no later than 8/15. Also feel free to email any of us with any questions or fears you may have about the summer assignments or the class in general!**

**Part III - Ms. Costa - Close reading of *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the Evil Empire***

As you read the book, you should keep a dialectical Journal. “Dialectical” means “conversational” – so a dialectical journal is a conversation, between you and the text. The dialectical journal has three key components: citation, passage (should include direct text evidence, but may also include summarization), and the reader’s commentary on this passage. Passages should come from throughout the text, and commentary should be thought-provoking and personal (suggested length: 4-6 pages). The point of this is to demonstrate to your teacher that you THINK as you read, and for you to track your own thoughts through the progress of the book. Your dialectical journal should be typed, and will be due on the first day of school. Read in a highly interactive way, identifying aspects of the author’s purpose and style as well as your own responses to the ideas in the book. You should use your reading journal to record important details, observations, opinions, and questions. There are no specific questions to answer. We will collect your journals at the beginning of class in September and review them to ascertain how deeply and actively you engaged with the text. Go to <http://www.sdcoe.net/score/actbank/tdia.htm> for a sample of how a dialectical journal is done.

**Part III –Ms. Browne - Close reading of *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* by Deborah Tannen**

As you read the book, you should keep a dialectical Journal. “Dialectical” means “conversational” – so a dialectical journal is a conversation, between you and the text. The dialectical journal has three key components: citation, passage (should include direct text evidence, but may also include summarization), and the reader’s commentary on this passage. Passages should come from throughout the text, and commentary should be thought-provoking and personal (suggested length: 4-6 pages). The point of this is to demonstrate to your teacher that you THINK as you read, and for you to track your own thoughts through the progress of the book. Your dialectical journal should be typed, and will be due on the first day of school. Read in a highly interactive way, identifying aspects of the author’s purpose and style as well as your own responses to the ideas in the book. You should use your reading journal to record important details, observations, opinions, and questions. There are no specific questions to answer. We will collect your journals at the beginning of class in September and review them to ascertain how deeply and actively you engaged with the text. Go to <http://www.sdcoe.net/score/actbank/tdia.htm> for a sample of how a dialectical journal is done.

**Part IV – Close Reading of Chosen Book**

As you read the book, you should keep a dialectical journal. “Dialectical” means “conversational” – so a dialectical journal is a conversation, between you and the text. The dialectical journal has three key components: citation, passage (should include direct text evidence, but may also include summarization), and the reader’s commentary on this passage. Passages should come from throughout the text, and commentary should be thought-provoking and personal (suggested length: 4-6 pages). The point of this is to demonstrate to your teacher that you THINK as you read, and for you to track your own thoughts through the progress of the book. Your dialectical journal should be typed, and will be due on the first day of school. Read in a highly interactive way, identifying aspects of the author’s purpose and style as well as your own responses to the ideas in the book. You should use your reading journal to

record important details, observations, opinions, and questions. There are no specific questions to answer. We will collect your journals at the beginning of class in September and review them to ascertain how deeply and actively you engaged with the text. Go to <http://www.sdcoe.net/score/actbank/tdia.htm> for a sample of how a dialectical journal is done.

***JOURNALS must be completed and ready to turn in on the first day of the class and you must have a copies of your books with you on the first day of school. You will also be required to have: a flash drive for the semester, a three ring binder for your portfolio and class materials and handouts, and notebook designated for the class. See you in September!!***