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English 11: American Literature
Summer Reading

This summer, please read *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg.

You should be able to find inexpensive copies at local used book stores or from websites such as www.amazon.com, ebay.com, or addall.com. Local library systems have several copies available to borrow as well. It is perfectly acceptable to use an ebook reader. An audio version is available for those who find that listening increases their comprehension.

There is a movie based on this novel. It is *not* the same as the novel. You need to actually read the book.

Note on the content: This novel occasionally contains racial slurs reflective of its time period, and I want to acknowledge that these terms are not acceptable and can be painful to read. Since the novel presents, in the words of one scholar, “a challenge to the Jim Crow bipartition of society,” in addition to providing other important discussion topics about the American experience, it is valuable to read as an introduction to American literature. My students last year all recommended that I keep this as a summer reading choice, and I am following their lead in asking you to read it as well.

Work related to the novel:

1. Choose ONE:

Take notes on the novel OR participate in Google classroom online discussion as you read the book over the summer.

If you choose online discussion, you should record your observations at least once per 50 pages. That is how the discussion forums will be divided. Please read the instructions below carefully to have a sense of what I am looking for.

If you take notes, they should reflect your thoughts on the entire novel from beginning to end. While typed notes are acceptable, handwritten notes have been proven to aid in retention of information. Effective notes are written in sentence fragments, not complete sentences. Because of the length of the novel, you should produce several pages of notes. Students who have done the best job with this usually have at least ten pages and often have more. Handwritten notes will *not* be graded for grammar or spelling.

Instructions:

- a. Do *not* just write a synopsis/summary. I know what happens. I want to know what you think about what happens.
- b. Focus on *your thoughts and reactions* to the story. Think about the events, characters, themes, format, and language of the novel. What are you thinking about? What are your feelings? Both intellectual *and* emotional responses are welcome and encouraged.
- c. Make connections. Do the events/characters/settings remind you of anything in your own life? In the world around you? In movies, songs, other books?
- d. Record quotations. If a sentence (or a few sentences) seem important to you, write it down with your *thoughts* about why it is important. You will need quotes to write your paper.
- e. Ask questions. It is okay to be confused.
- f. Record vocabulary words that are unfamiliar to you.

Advice:

- This book does not have traditional chapters. Instead, it is organized by time and place. It has two different timelines, so you will want to pay attention to the dates at the start of each chapter to help you keep track of which story you are hearing about.
- I will be able to tell if you plagiarize the notes/responses because they will not follow the guidelines. Please do not plagiarize.
- It might help for some of you to draw. Illustrations are encouraged.

2. Write a short analytical paper (600 words minimum). The paper should
 - a. be in MLA format;
 - b. include a strong thesis statement, introduction, body (which will include your observations and ideas), and conclusion;
 - c. contain examples that prove the points you make, including *at least two* relevant quotes from the book as evidence

Possible topics (email me over the summer for approval of a different topic):

- A. Which theme (or themes) discussed in the novel is most important to you? (This could be either any “moral” you find in the novel, or a topic/issue that it discusses.) What does the novel seem to say about these themes? Do you think these themes are still relevant in America today? Explain your answer using specific examples from the novel and from the world, including at least two quotes from the novel that are used to prove your point.
- B. The novel is not written in chronological order and features different perspectives, including excerpts from newspapers. What do you notice about how these different sections relate to each other? What are the effects, positive or negative, of using this structure instead of a traditional, chronological story? Use specific examples from the book to explain your position, including at least two quotes from the novel that are used to prove your point.

- C. Is Idgie's storyline or Evelyn's the "main" story? (Alternately: Is the main story something else entirely?) What relationship do the stories have to each other (if any)? What would be lost if one or the other were not a part of the novel?

The essay should be uploaded to www.turnitin.com using the following class information:

Class ID: 25248585
Password: dragons512

Notes can be submitted through email or turned in hard copy. Students who complete the work in Google Classroom will be graded on their work through that platform.

All work is due before or at the beginning of your first appearance in class.

Have a great summer. I look forward to working with you in the fall. If you have any problems or questions, please email me for assistance.

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