

English 12

Summer Reading Assignment 2017

Part 1

In order to prepare for English 12 you are required to read *Parable of the Talents* by Octavia Butler as well as write your personal essay for the College Common Application. These assignments must be brought to your English class on the first full day of classes in September and will count toward your first quarter grade.

The assignments will be graded as follows:

- The *Parable of the Talents* assignment will count as a project grade. Projects account for 25% of your overall grade.
 - In addition you will be quizzed on *Parable of the Talents*. Quizzes account for 15% of your overall grade.
 - Your personal essay will be counted as a project grade as well, for this will be an ongoing assignment.
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Parable of the Talents

This book is a continuation of the novel previously read *Parable of the Sower*. The narrator's, Lauren Olamina, love is divided among her young daughter, her community, and the revelation that led Lauren to found a new faith that teaches "God Is Change". But in the wake of environmental and economic chaos, the U.S. government turns a blind eye to violent bigots who consider the possible existence of a black female leader a threat. And soon Lauren must either sacrifice her child and her followers -- or forsake the religion that can transform human destiny.

After you have read this novel, please complete **one** of the following:

This assignment will be presented to the class and must be a visual presentation (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) Your presentation to the class must be approximately 7-10 minutes long or conducted of a minimum of 18 slides.

1. Create a visual presentation about literary elements found in the novel. Include a brief summary of **plot**, an explanation of **themes**, description of the **setting** and an analysis on 4 characters of your choice. (Minimum of 10 literary elements) Be creative with your presentation and be sure to include your perception of the book.
2. Compose a visual presentation about the novel's genre Science-Fiction as well as the topic previously discussed, Afrofuturism. How does the novel exemplify these subjects?
3. Present to the class your analysis on the novel and its connection to the religious parable it is named after.

Part II: Summer Writing Assignment

Write your college essay using one of the prompts below. The essay should be 650 to 800 words, use proper grammar and have correct spelling. It must be handed in the first day of class.

Please remember you may easily email me or Mr. Giordano during your summer vacation should you need any help during the writing process. Also keep in mind your essays are confidential and would not be shown to classmates, or other teachers.

2017-2018 Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. [No change]
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? [Revised]
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome? [Revised]
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution. [No change]
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. [Revised]
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more? [New]
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design. [New]

Among the more than 800,000 unique applicants who submitted a Common App during the 2015-2016 application cycle, 47% chose to write about their background, identity, interest, or talent - making it the most frequently selected prompt; 22% chose to write about an accomplishment, 17% about a lesson or failure, 10% about a problem solved, and 4% about an idea challenged.

Sample Essays

No Food Can Compare

“You want pasta for breakfast? You eat so much pasta you’ll turn into spaghetti,” my grandmother responded with a smile after I told her that I wanted pasta for breakfast. “Are you sure you don’t want pancakes or cereal?” She knew my answer. This wasn’t new, getting teased about my pasta addiction. I didn’t really care. Pasta was my way to experiment, my way to be a kid. I enjoyed that there were unlimited possibilities, I could blend sauces, add spices, cheese, make my own dish. For me, no two bowls were alike. The tanginess of a marinara sauce, the smooth creaminess of an alfredo sauce, the sharp spice of arrabiata that would dance on my

palate. Twirling spaghetti around my fork, scooping off sauce from the bottom of my bowl, no food could compare. Still, my family insisted, "How about you try a hamburger, rice and beans, chicken, pork chops?" They knew the answer. At that time, around when I was seven or eight, about ninety percent of my meals were pasta. They didn't understand. I thought I was doing what they were saying, trying new things. I was just doing it my own way. I was looking for the perfect bowl of pasta, going to different restaurants, trying different recipes and combinations. Looking back I see that my pasta pursuit was somewhat single minded, but at the time it didn't feel that way. I didn't think there was anything wrong with enjoying and experimenting with my favorite food. Even though it seemed odd, it made me happy. My family eventually gave in. I remember on at least two occasions receiving pasta presents. My aunt gave me a twelve pack, variety box of pasta from Italy and my grandmother, a quart of special marinara sauce from her local Italian market. I now have a wide range of foods and cuisines I enjoy, but to my family I will always be the same little kid who would gleam ear to ear when a bowl of pasta was placed in front of him. It was difficult for me to leave the comfort of pasta and all it meant to me. It was something that I wanted to hold on to, a part of my childhood and a piece of my identity with my family. They loved me for being the pasta kid; I didn't want that to change. Even now at seventeen years old, pasta is still my favorite. Now it's more than just about the taste and searching for the perfect dish. A warm bowl of pasta brings back the warm family memories. There's nothing better than being surrounded by your loved ones, sharing a laugh and reminiscing with people that love and care for whom you are. That's why there's nothing like a bowl of pasta

Family

"Happy birthday!" "Feliz cumpleaños!" "Kol sana wa enta tayyab!" After my family sings me happy birthday in English, Spanish, and Arabic, I blow out the candles on my cake amidst thunderous cheers that reverberate throughout the five boroughs of New York City. My birthday celebrations, likened by my friends to United Nations assemblies, feature my one, cohesive, yet ever so dissimilar, family, stepping out of their respective Ecuadorian and Egyptian roles to further thrust upon me their expectations. Some would fold under this pressure, but I embrace this trust. While they have not always been able to put me in optimal positions, it has all congregated to a driving force in my cultured and diverse mind. My never ending quest to achieve success for my family began at a young age, through my trips to Ecuador and Egypt. I not only grew fond of their eloquent languages, but of their modest values. On my first trip to Ecuador as a toddler, my Uncle Guillermo was found dead in an alley one morning, no cause, no explanation. Instead of shielding me from the forlorn passing of one of my heroes, my relatives used this as an opportunity to develop my value for awareness. They told me that Guillermo's death was linked to his severe alcoholism. He had been afflicted for decades, all while selling away the family's possessions to fuel his addiction. He, like many from the impoverished, drug ridden country, knew no better. Some would view a traumatizing event like this as an excuse to end up along a similar path, but it immediately ingrained in me the farsighted principles that I maintain to this day. There are no excuses for me to approach education halfheartedly, for I have witnessed the malevolent effects of ignorance. When my grandma, Anisa Saad, told me that she views my future with the same reverence that she views the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, I

finally realized how delicate my actions are. I knew that making something out of myself meant just as much to my family as it did to me. The Egyptian Revolution was the first time since 1981 that Egyptians had a voice. As they overthrew President Hosni Mubarak, they created an irrevocable identity. They proved that regardless what comprises your past or your background, your impact on the world is only what you make of it. My grandma told me that all she could think about as she cast her vote in the first ever democratic election was that she was changing the world. She said that if a 78 year old widow living with 3 of her children and a bad back could change the world, a prioritized pupil with a keen understanding of different societies has boundless potential. In New York City, the quintessential hub of culture, I found it easier to expand on my expectations and values. I am most people's culturally passionate friend rather than the kid whose ethnicity is indeterminable. I am a New Yorker's idea of a New Yorker; an assiduous product of the "melting pot". No idea is too farfetched to believe, no goal too unattainable. With my grandma's words in mind, I face any problem that the Concrete Jungle throws at me. I seek to make sure the Salazar's of Ecuador and the Badran's of Egypt finally have significant names in the world. I want to blow out my birthday candles with a family proud that I made it, not hoping that I do.

Shelves One through Five

Pushed against the left wall in my room is a curious piece of furniture. Initially, it was a six foot tall and three foot wide red oak bookcase. Strangely, as the five shelves began to fill with books, the dimensions of the bookcase slowly evolved into a looking glass. Now, years later, my reflection is almost complete: each bookshelf cradles the stories of my life. Shelf One is the base, and rightfully so. It contains my building blocks. Among the bright covers and large lettered titles lie countless fairy tales, fables, and legends. My Indian heritage mixes with my American lifestyle as the spines interchange from gifts from my father's father to Barnes and Noble bought, creating a cocktail of the morals I grew up on. The heroes in my childhood storybooks were my teachers, driving me to my own heroic actions of enthusiastic community service, whether it was volunteering at the Parks and Recreation center or serving at the Special Olympics. As I grew out of the innocence of Aesop's Fables, I developed a ravenous hunger for words. I wanted to read as much as I could, absorbing each book that changed my way. Shelves Two and Three sag with the weight of the dialogues that satiated my hunger. Everything ranging from the science fiction of A Wrinkle in Time to the ridiculous amusement of The Big Friendly Giant to the horrors of Columbine gathers in those shelves. Here is the embodiment of my curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Here is the explanation for my desire to do more, learn more, and see more. My parents aided these passions, constantly introducing me to new cultures and new places. Our travels all over the country and the world taught me the importance of adaptability and an open mind. With these characteristics, I am always able to communicate to whomever I speak to, regardless of their language or culture. Shelf Four is the stinging slap I received from reality in my early teens. No longer could I spend all my time trying out the delicious foods at this new restaurant or learning from the displays at the rare exhibit. Now my weekends were filled with daunting math textbooks, designed to help me conquer the beast of numbers. While Shelf Four

holds the memories of slogging through countless hours of math, it also displays my development of a logical and rational mind. This is where I grew the qualities of being a strong leader. Now, well versed in the feeling of failure, I am also educated in perseverance and success. I use these experiences to help those who come my way. I am able to connect with others easily because I am willing to share the trials I have faced, and the knowledge I have gained from them. Looking to the very top, Shelf Five waits patiently. It is partially filled with an assortment of articles from The Economist, New York Times, and Washington Post, all of which highlight my love for the political sciences, fostered by the debate team. Alongside those, stacked neatly, are aerospace engineering papers, about plasma propulsion, pork chop plots, and Hohmann transfers. They feature my fascinations with physical science and innovation for the future. Countless college brochures, scribbled on with notes and reminders, complete the first half of this top shelf, and they are the present. Now, standing in the front of a bookcase, I find that I am completely content. I can see myself with a simple, yet comprehensive clarity, like staring into a mirror. Though Shelf Five is unfinished, it is no less hopeful or less promising than the previous four. Soon, I will fill this shelf with the ideas that will further define who I am. I will look upon this shelf in the future with a sense of wholeness, because I know that this bookshelf is me.