



Rolling Meadows High School
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Dr. David R. Schuler
Superintendent

Eileen M. Hart
Principal

May 2016

Dear Student:

Our records indicate that you are enrolled in Honors World Literature next year. In order to prepare for a rigorous year in the sophomore honors program, you need to spend part of your summer reading from a list of selected titles. As honors English students, you will need to read two works this summer: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini and *The Geography of Genius* by Eric Weiner. You are required to complete two assignments for each book and they are due upon your return next school year. Failure to complete these assignments may jeopardize your success in class.

Please feel free to contact the school with any questions you may have regarding your summer reading. The phone number is (847) 718-5674.

Have a safe and restful summer. We look forward to having you in class.

Sincerely,

Peter Mikulak

Alicia Rafacz

Honors World Literature and Composition
Summer Reading Assignment
2016

Respond to **two** of the prompts. Each response should be a page in length minimum, in MLA format, and thoughtfully answer the questions. When you are asked to evaluate, you may use your personal experience or observation along with textual evidence.

1) Throughout the book, the author makes a point that geniuses are made, not bred. They are nurtured by their culture in which they thrive, so there is the connection between the setting and innovation. Discuss what evidence he uses to prove his point. Evaluate how convincing is his argument.

2) Examine how the author answers the question he addresses in his book, Is there a reason why certain places in history had so many geniuses? You can focus on the results of the research that he presents or his own experiences of the places he visits. What are his answers to this question and do you agree with them?

3) In his search for the answers, the author takes a trip through different parts of the world, from Athens, through Florence, Vienna, Edinburgh, Calcutta, and ending in Silicon Valley. His book is in part a private travel log. Discuss how the author uses humor to highlight geniuses in all these places and forward his argument that it is local unique circumstances that gave rise to the most creative ideas.

4) Do you agree with the author's statement that "It takes a village to raise a child; it takes a city to raise a genius." What evidence does he use to convince you? If you disagree, point to the weakness of his argument and discuss why he has not convinced you.

5) The author writes, " We only hire applicants for jobs once we've determined they are a perfect fit. We only assign tasks to those who have already demonstrated they can perform that same exact task. We treat risk not as a noble venture, a dance with the universe, but as something to be avoided at all costs, or at least reduced to a decimal point. And we wonder why we're not living in another renaissance?" Discuss how this quote relates to a larger theme of the book that genius does not arise from planning but is rather an accident.

6) "We are at our most creative when we have something to push against. Creativity does not require perfect conditions. In fact, it thrives in imperfect ones." Discuss how this quote relates to the author's larger argument that competition is a prerequisite to creativity. Be sure to explain how he proves this statement to be true.

Respond to **two** of the prompts. Each response should be a page in length minimum, in MLA format, and thoughtfully answer the questions. When you are asked to evaluate, you may use your personal experience or observation along with textual evidence.

1) The phrase “a thousand splendid suns,” from the poem by Saib-e-Tabrizi, is quoted twice in the novel – once as Laila’s family prepares to leave Kabul, and again when she decides to return there from Pakistan. It is also echoed in one of the final lines: “Miriam is in Laila’s own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns.” Discuss the thematic significance of this phrase.

2) Mariam’s mother tells her: “Women like us. We endure. It’s all we have.” Discuss how this sentiment informs Mariam’s life and how it relates to the larger themes of the novel.

3) Growing up, Laila feels that her mother’s love is reserved for her two brothers. “People,” she decides, “shouldn’t be allowed to have new children if they’d already given away all their love to their old ones.” How does this sentiment inform Laila’s reaction to becoming pregnant with Rasheed’s child? What lessons from her childhood does Laila apply in raising her own children?

4) At several points in the story, Mariam and Laila pass themselves off as mother and daughter. What is the symbolic importance of this subterfuge? In what ways is Mariam’s and Laila’s relationship with each other informed by their relationships with their own mothers?

5) One of the Taliban judges at Mariam’s trial tells her, “God has made us different, you women and us men. Our brains are different. You are not able to think like we can. Western doctors and their science have proven this.” What is the irony in this statement? How is irony employed throughout the novel?

6) The driver who takes Babi, Laila, and Tariq to the giant stone Buddhas above the Bamiyan Valley describes the crumbling fortress of Shahr-e-Zohak as “the story of our country, one invader after another... we’re like those walls up there. Battered, and nothing pretty to look at, but still standing.” Discuss the metaphorical import of this passage as it relates to Miriam and Laila. In what ways does their story reflect the larger story of Afghanistan’s troubled history?

7) While the first three parts of the novel are written in the past tense, the final part is written in present tense. What do you think was the author’s intent in making this shift? How does it change the effect of this final section?

Grade

100 points will be awarded for completion of these two assignments. You will not be assessed for “correctness.” Your answers will give the instructor an opportunity to evaluate how carefully you have read the texts and serve as a writing sample, but you will be given full credit for effort no matter how effective or accurate your answers are. Please be sure to include textual evidence in all of your responses.