IB 12 Language A: Literature Summer Assignment (2019)

In a nutshell:

- Read Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*
- Compose 10 discussion questions for *In Cold Blood*
- Revise your selected Works In Translation (WIT) essay. Your options: *Candide, The Stranger, The Stranger, Aya: Life in Yop City; Due 9 September 2019*
- Complete draft of your personal statement aka College Application Essay; Due 13 September 2019

Reading TIME!!

Get yourself a copy of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*. This book is easily accessible but I recommend you getting a copy that you would feel comfortable writing in. Annotations are optional but highly recommended. Either way here are my tips for your annotations:

1. **Reading and Annotating:** While not unanimous, a large majority selected to read Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, a text that I find very interesting for the psychological impact it had on its writer and for influencing non-fiction writing to come, particularly in the true crime genre. A quick disclaimer: many find the opening of the novel pretty dry, and the truth is that it takes a while for the story to pick up, but please stick with it.

   **Please read the book in its entirety.** We will spend quite a bit of time dealing with it, and it will be the non-fiction text that you will have to know for your Interactive Oral Commentary (IOC) in the winter. As the IB assessment will not happen until a much later date, the annotations may be a great idea to help you get a grasp of the novel. Also, the book has a lot of prairie descriptions, which may be quite dry, but the book does get cinematically interesting so just hang in there.

   **As you read, please annotate the text. Again annotations are optional but highly recommend.** If you buy your own copy, please feel free to write in it. If you borrow a copy or do not feel comfortable writing in your book, use post-it notes to write out your annotations. You will be given a reading check quiz on one of the earlier days of school. Full ownership of a book only comes when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it is by annotating. Additionally, it keeps you awake—not merely conscious—but wide awake. It complicates your thinking and understanding of the work if your annotations are meaningful and documenting your reactions helps you remember the thoughts you have regarding the book.
As you annotate, please be hyper-aware of the writing style and writing techniques that Capote uses. If you are not a pro at annotating, please keep the following in mind:

- It is helpful if you make phrase or sentence long summaries at the end of each chapter to let you know where to look to find information in the future.
- Use different colors, highlighters, ways of underlining information relating to different characters. Constantly ask yourself how much you sympathize with all the various individuals that are introduced. I like to use emoji type of faces to show my sympathy or lack thereof as the plot unfolds.
- This is non-fiction so constantly have a running commentary in which you evaluate the credibility of the writer, the collection of information, the research process, and the motivation of everyone involved.
- Highlight beautiful sentences in bright yellow.
- Write comments in the margins that show connections that you are making between moments in the text, this text and others works you have been exposed to, your psychological analysis, your perspective on the setting and time of the work.
- Below, you will find some ideas that might be worth tracking as you read:
  - America as Eden (What does this novel say about America as Eden? How is America portrayed?)
  - Capote’s use of fictional elements (e.g. foreshadowing, description, character, description, etc.) to draw the reader into a non-fiction account
  - Capote as reporter: analyze the narrator
  - The non-obvious characters (e.g. the town of Holcomb as a character, the house, etc.)
  - The differences between Perry and Dick
  - Think about the double meaning of the title. Keep asking yourself what is this book really about?
  - Reality vs. illusion (look at people's perceptions, media influences, etc.)
  - Nature vs. nurture \(\rightarrow\) where does evil come from?
  - Dynamics of family life; to what extent do families shape individuals
  - Classical ancient Greek tragedy myths \(\rightarrow\) murder, vengeance, justice
  - The desire to escape/run away
  - The making of monsters
- Of course jot down anything you don’t understand or are puzzled by. Perhaps we can come back and respond to it.
Writing Discussion Question Time

Writing Discussion Questions: The critical mind is a questioning mind. After you read Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, you will need to compose 10 discussion questions. Please do not search for them on the internet. Come up with your own. I will be coming up with my own too, and I will also check them for originality. I do not want them to be opinion questions (i.e. Do you think it was fair that Capote favored some individuals but not others?) or factual questions (i.e. What happened after Dick met Perry in prison?) Please use the following types of questioning to develop your own:

2 Novel Analysis Questions: This is the most general discussion question category. For this category, try to notice patterns, or connections between scenes, characters, or ways the author may describe a particular object. You will have to make those observations first and then phrase a question that asks others to also realize this connection exists, and then to interpret or explicate that relationship. Be very critical in coming up with these and stay close to events and actions in the text. An example of this type of question might be “I noticed that dialogue was often used as the primary source of exposition every time so-and-so was plotting a misdeed. What does this type of characterization show about that particular character?” You may also choose to look at the style of the writer more generally and pose questions about that. For example, “What is the effect of the rapid switching of scenes?” or “Why wait until the conclusion to make reader sympathize with that particular character?”

2 Theme-focused questions: Pick a theme that you think Capote was trying to develop, and frame a question that helps us examine several specific moments in the text through the lens of that theme. For instance, assuming that one of the themes in *Romeo and Juliet* is the destructive nature of love, then a question that you develop can be something like this: Romeo ended up killing Tybalt because Tybalt killed his friend Mercutio. Is filial love or the love between friends just as destructive as romantic love?

2 Rhetorical Analysis questions: Look at the style of writing of one passage. Pick 2 short passages that you like and phrase a question in which you ask someone to consider the effect and the impact of the writing choices the author made. For example, how does the focus on landscape descriptions affect the sympathetic portrayal of so-and-so?

2 Synthesis questions: Think of something else that you may have heard, read about, or watched that you think your discussion partner(s) may be familiar with, or be able to understand if you explain it to them and ask a questions that uses comparison as a form of complicating our understanding of the text or of drawing insightful connections. For example, using the Netflix documentary *The Making of a Murderer* to draw connections with the way false narratives may be constructed that expose underlying sentiments or issues with *In Cold Blood*.

2 Real World Connections: Develop two questions that connect the work we are studying with our “real” world. Develop questions that help us analyze controversial events, topics, issues that often plague us about our world and society.
**PERSONAL STATEMENT TIME!!**

Please write and upload a personal statement unto. More will be said upon your arrival at school, but please have a workable draft with you. Refer to materials we have discussed about in class regarding common errors to avoid and types of scenarios to explore. See attachments and resources on Edmodo. I am aware that it is a rough draft but please try to polish it as much as possible. Do not wait until the last minute, since that might lead you to come up with a very generic and rushed answer. Look deeply inside and draw inspiration from the literary greats to make your writing human and inspiring.

---

**Narrative Essay Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exceptional</th>
<th>Capable</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content and Insight</strong></td>
<td>Essay contains exceptional insights and complex ideas. The writer demonstrates a deep, fresh understanding of the subject. Commentary is perceptive, thorough, and effective. Provides relevant, substantial, concrete and genuine examples that clearly support the central argument.</td>
<td>Essay contains some insights. The writer demonstrates an adequate understanding of the subject, but some ideas could have been explored further or taken out. Commentary is purposeful with some degree of specificity. Provides reasonable and predictable examples that develop the central argument.</td>
<td>Main argument of the essay is simplistic. The paper may be contradictory or too broad, rather than making a single point. Commentary is minimally relevant, repetitive, or frequently too broad. Some examples are useful but others may not illustrate the main point. Examples may need further development.</td>
<td>Main argument of the essay is limited or unclear. Commentary is superficial and undeveloped. Provides few or irrelevant examples to support an undeveloped or unclear central argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The arrangement of examples and commentary (in narrative and exposition) enhances the writer’s central argument. Ideas and arguments progress logically and effectively and clearly connect to the main thesis. All parts of the essay contribute to a single overall argument.</td>
<td>The organization of commentary and examples helps to convey the writer’s central argument. Most parts of the essay contribute to a single argument, but there may be some extraneous details or commentary.</td>
<td>The organization of commentary and examples cloud the writer’s central argument; some rearrangement would help. There are several areas of the essay that do not relate to the main insight. There may be some areas that are contradictory.</td>
<td>The organization is ineffective in revealing a central argument. Paragraphs don’t clearly connect to one another. The essay is often contradictory, without intending to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td>Shows exceptional awareness of audience, control of voice, variety in sentence structure, sophisticated word choice, and smooth transitions. All stylistic elements are consistent with the purpose of the essay.</td>
<td>Shows awareness of audience, control of voice, some variety in sentence structure and word choice with some smooth transitions. Most stylistic elements are consistent with the purpose of the essay.</td>
<td>Shows inconsistent awareness of audience, simplistic word choice, little variety in sentence structure, and limited use of transitions. Voice may be inconsistent. Stylistic elements don’t work consistently with the purpose of the essay.</td>
<td>Shows limited awareness of audience, minimal or incorrect word choice, little or no variety of sentence structure, and few or no transitions. Few stylistic elements are consistent with the purpose of the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Free from errors in grammar, usage, and the conventions of written English. All aspects of format are presented correctly.</td>
<td>May have a few errors in grammar, usage, and the conventions of written English; these errors do not cause confusion. Some aspects of format are presented correctly.</td>
<td>May have errors in grammar, usage, or the conventions of written English; these errors may lead to some confusion. Some aspects of format presented correctly.</td>
<td>May have a variety of repeated errors in sentence structure, grammar, usage, and the conventions of written English; these errors often cause confusion. Few aspects of format presented correctly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>