

## Hillgrove High School English Department Honors World Literature Pre-Course Reading 2017-2018

To help establish the necessary foundations and facilitate initial classroom instruction for both honors and AP level classes, each student is required to complete a pre-course reading assignment prior to the start of their English class next year. This reading requirement is different than traditional summer reading in that the text(s) will be an integral part of the semester curriculum, specifically the first unit of study. There will be multiple graded assignments based on the assigned pre-course reading rather than one stand-alone assessment of your reading. **It is imperative that students have a copy of the required text the FIRST week of the semester.** Teachers will provide more information regarding curriculum implementation of these texts at the start of the class.

### **Reading Assignments**

*Read the assigned text for the Honors World Literature course you are taking in the 2017-2018 school year **before** the start of the semester. Additional assignments and/or guidance for your reading are provided on the following pages.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> Grade Honors World Literature and Composition**

*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

Students are to do the following:

- Read the information provided on Aristotle's Definition of a Tragic Hero
- Read *Things Fall Apart* – as you read:
  - Consider how Okonkwo fits Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero
  - Select textual evidence to illustrate how Okonkwo meets or does not meet each criteria.
- Compile these in a chart or other typed document. Be prepared to turn this in for use on an assessment.

\*\*See next page for Aristotle's Definition of a Tragic Hero

## Aristotle's Tragic Hero

Aristotle's ideas about tragedy were recorded in his book of literary theory titled *Poetics*. In it, he has a great deal to say about the structure, purpose, and intended effect of tragedy. His ideas have been adopted, disputed, expanded, and discussed for several centuries now.

The following is a summary of his basic ideas regarding the tragic hero:

1. The tragic hero is a character of noble stature and has greatness. This should be readily evident in the play. The character must occupy a "high" status position but must ALSO embody nobility and virtue as part of his/her innate character.
2. Though the tragic hero is pre-eminently great, he/she is not perfect. Otherwise, the rest of us--mere mortals--would be unable to identify with the tragic hero. We should see in him or her someone who is essentially like us, although perhaps elevated to a higher position in society.
3. The hero's downfall, therefore, is partially her/his own fault, the result of free choice, not of accident or villainy or some overriding, malignant fate. In fact, the tragedy is usually triggered by some error of judgment or some character flaw that contributes to the hero's lack of perfection noted above. This error of judgment or character flaw is known as *hamartia* and is usually translated as "tragic flaw". Often the character's *hamartia* involves *hubris* (which is defined as a sort of arrogant pride or over-confidence).
4. The hero's misfortune is not wholly deserved. The punishment exceeds the crime.
5. The fall is not pure loss. There is some increase in awareness, some gain in self-knowledge, some discovery on the part of the tragic hero.
6. Though it arouses solemn emotion, tragedy does not leave its audience in a state of depression. Aristotle argues that one function of tragedy is to arouse the "unhealthy" emotions of pity and fear and through a *catharsis* (which comes from watching the tragic hero's terrible fate) cleanse us of those emotions. It might be worth noting here that Greek drama was not considered "entertainment," pure and simple; it had a communal function--to contribute to the good health of the community. This is why dramatic performances were a part of religious festivals and community celebrations.

### TRAGIC HEROES ARE:

- BORN INTO NOBILITY:
- RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN FATE
- ENDOWED WITH A TRAGIC FLAW
- DOOMED TO MAKE A SERIOUS ERROR IN JUDGEMENT

### EVENTUALLY, TRAGIC HEROES

- FALL FROM GREAT HEIGHTS OR HIGH ESTEEM
- REALIZE THEY HAVE MADE AN IRREVERSIBLE MISTAKE
- FACES AND ACCEPTS DEATH WITH HONOR
- MEET A TRAGIC DEATH

### FOR ALL TRAGIC HEROES

- THE AUDIENCE IS AFFECTED BY PITY and/or FEAR