

Multi-Cultural Literature Summer Reading Selections, Fall 2009-Spring 2010

Choose any book from the list below to read this summer. Only one book total is required.

1000 Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini
Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel
Ties the Bind, Ties the Break by Lensey Namioka
Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden
They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky by Benjamin Ajak, Benson Deng, Alephonsian Deng, and Judy Bernstein

Abstracts

100 Splendid Suns (Hossieni)

The stories of Mariam and Laila, two women from Afghanistan, begin independent of one another even as they live a few doors apart in Kabul. When a bomb falls on Laila's home, killing her parents, she is taken in by Mariam and her husband Rasheed, one of the most evil incarnate characters in the modern novel. Mariam was married to him when she was fifteen. Laila is nearly the same age and Rasheed is in lust toward her, pushing aside Mariam. It is difficult to accept that some of what Westerners perceive as "evil" is Rasheed acting consistently in accordance with a century's old Afghani tradition.

Like Water for Chocolate (Esquivel)

The book is divided into twelve sections named after the months of the year. Each section begins with a recipe of some sort, involving Mexican foods. The chapters outline the preparation of each dish and ties it to an event in the protagonist's life. Young Tita de la Garza, the novel's protagonist, is fifteen at the start of the events in the story, which take place in the era of the Mexican Revolution. She lives with her iron-fisted mother, Mama Elena, and her older sisters Gertrudis and Rosaura, on a ranch near the Mexico-US border.

Ties that Bind, Ties that Break (Namioka)

It is about a girl named Ailin who grew up in China in 1911. In that time, all girls of good families had to have their feet bound. Ailin begs to be allowed to keep her feet unbound, and her father allows it. *Ties that Bind, Ties that Break* is the story of Ailin's life with unbound feet and how following your heart sometimes means becoming an outcast.

Memoirs of a Geisha (Golden)

The novel is told from the point of view of Nitta Sayuri, a retired geisha in her seventies, living in the Waldorf Towers in New York City. She is interviewed by Jakob Haarhuis, a professor at New York University, who is credited as the story's translator, although he is a fictional character himself. This is apparently a reference to Golden's interviewing of a retired geisha as part of his research for the novel. The story is told in a flashback format, with continuous references to the time between Sayuri's career and the time she is being interviewed. She also periodically explains different aspects of geisha life and their choices women make between love and survival.

They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky (Ajak, Deng, Deng, Bernstein)

This is a memoir about three young boys trying to escape and survive in Sudan, Africa during a time when war and genocide ravaged the country side. They boys talk about their struggles in both Africa when they were escaping rebel factions and fighting for their lives, and in America trying to assimilate to a culture not their own and fighting for acceptance.

***Summer reading assignments for this class will be handed out the first week of school.