

Summer Reading Assignment for Rising Seniors

Westfield High School, Chantilly, Virginia

Select **one book** to read independently. Type a summary sheet and be prepared to share your summer reading in a small group discussion. The summary sheet should include the following four sections: a concise plot summary, a thoughtful reader's response, a discussion of a favorite passage that includes a cited quotation from the book, and a recommendation. A sample summary sheet is provided here.

Guidelines for choosing books:

- Choose titles from any genre.
- Make age-appropriate choices.
- Remember the academic environment in which you will present your books.
- Feel free to select a "classic" book, but refrain from re-reading a required book from a previous English course. (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Animal Farm*, *Night*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men* should NOT be read.)
- Visit the school or public librarian; she can assist you in making selections.

Objectives of Summer Reading:

- To encourage independent book selection, reading, and thinking.
- To provide a forum for discussion of self-selected literature.
- To practice oral communication skills in a small-group format.
- To practice summary and evaluation of self-selected reading materials.
- To evaluate individual and group performance and participation.

Grading System:

You will receive a grade for the written component of your summer reading, the typed book-talk summary sheet. You may also receive points for participation in a discussion group in English 12.

- **Typed** summary sheet & participation in a small group discussion : Up to 30 points or the equivalent of one homework grade

Extra Credit:

You may earn extra credit for reading an additional book over the summer and preparing a second summary sheet!

Sample Book Talk Summary Sheet

Iman A. Student
English 12, WHS

Tan, Amy. *The Hundred Secret Senses*. New York: Ivy Books, 1995.

ISBN # 0-8041-1109-X

Summary:

Kwan, the narrator's half sister, arrives from China to join the Yee family following the family patriarch's death. Kwan is nothing like anyone in the Yee family expects, but she works hard find a place for herself in everyone's hearts. The sisters struggle with their relationship throughout the story, and each sister views the other from a "foreign" (Chinese or American) perspective. Kwan is both innocent and worldly, and her 'Yin eyes' (her dual perspective) serves her on two continents.

Reading Response:

Having thoroughly enjoyed Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*, I was eager to jump into *The Hundred Secret Senses*. The story wasn't as riveting, in my opinion, as the previous stories were; however, the relationship between Kwan and her sister Olivia was something I could understand. (I have three sisters of my own!) I was touched by Tan's portrayal of the irrepressible Kwan; I feel that all the characters are rendered vividly. Tan's characters have such distinct voices, which always keeps my attention. I also learned a great deal about China and Chinese culture, a large part of all of Amy Tan's books.

Favorite Passage & Reason:

One of my favorite passages occurs in "Chapter 2" when the author writes, "We used to sit in the courtyard and I would teach her the names of things, as if she were a small child. And just like a small child, she learned eagerly, quickly. Her mind wasn't rusted shut to new ideas. She wasn't like the Jesus Worshippers, whose tongues were creaky old wheels following the same grooves" (Tan 48). Some may feel that as a Christian I might be offended by this passage, but I know she is speaking of those who blindly follow what others tell them instead of knowing and acting on their own faith. Tradition is fine, but one should know why one is following tradition; don't just do it for tradition's sake alone. Also, like the young girl, I feel I have an open mind and am receptive to new ideas. If one has the mind of a child, one has a zest for learning new things, creating a life of exploration and growth.

Recommendation:

Readers who might enjoy *The Hundred Secret Senses* include anyone who likes Tan's other novels, anyone interested in China or who is of Chinese origin, or anyone who struggles to love a sister. Because there are many adult themes and adult situations, I recommend the book to older students, perhaps ages 16+, and adults. Much of the book takes place when Olivia is an older teenager, and older teens will be able to relate to her situation. I caution potential readers who are easily spooked or who do not like to read about ghosts to shy away from *The Hundred Secret Senses*.