

1 The Assignment

For our final unit you will read a choice book and participate in a weekly discussion group with 2-3 of your peers. Each week you will read an assigned portion of the book, and you will alternate roles in the discussion. At the end of the study you will compose an in-class essay. Because you will be in charge of discussing and analyzing the book you select, it is extremely important you read regularly to meet assignment deadlines. Make your book choice wisely.

2 Book Choices

The following books have been selected based upon their literary merit. Please choose three from the list below, and return your selections on the attached permission form. Selections are due on Thursday, 4/2 and book groups will be posted on Friday, 4/3. ***I will not reserve the book choice for you until you obtain parent permission.***

All students will be responsible for obtaining their own book copies for this assignment. Students should bring their assigned books to class on Wednesday, 4/15 (A) and Thursday, 4/16 (B).

***1984* by George Orwell**

Written in 1948, *1984* was George Orwell's chilling prophecy about the future. And while 1984 has come and gone, Orwell's narrative is timelier than ever. *1984* presents a startling and haunting vision of the world, so powerful that it is completely convincing from start to finish. No one can deny the power of this novel, its hold on the imaginations of multiple generations of readers, or the resiliency of its admonitions—a legacy that seems only to grow with the passage of time.

In George Orwell's *1984*, Winston Smith wrestles with oppression in Oceania, a place where the Party scrutinizes human actions with ever-watchful Big Brother. Defying a ban on individuality, Winston dares to express his thoughts in a diary and pursues a relationship with Julia. These criminal deeds bring Winston into the eye of the opposition, who then must reform the nonconformist. George Orwell's *1984* introduced the watchwords for life without freedom: BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU. —*Amazon.com*

***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley**

Far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through clever use of genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs, all its members are happy consumers. Bernard Marx seems alone harbouring an ill-defined longing to break free. A visit to one of the few remaining Savage Reservations, where the old, imperfect life still continues, may be the cure for his distress...

Huxley's ingenious fantasy of the future sheds a blazing light on the present and is considered to be his most enduring masterpiece. —*Goodreads*

***Children of Men* by PD James**

The human race has become infertile, and the last generation to be born is now adult. Civilization itself is crumbling as suicide and despair become commonplace. Oxford historian Theodore Faron, apathetic toward a future without a future, spends most of his time reminiscing. Then he is approached by Julian, a bright, attractive woman who wants him to help get her an audience with his cousin, the powerful Warden of England. She and her band of unlikely revolutionaries may just awaken his desire to live . . . and they may also hold the key to survival for the human race. —*from the publisher*

***Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury**

Guy Montag is a fireman. His job is to burn books, which are forbidden, being the source of all discord and unhappiness. Even so, Montag is unhappy; there is discord in his marriage. Are books hidden in his house? The Mechanical Hound of the Fire Department, armed with a lethal hypodermic, escorted by helicopters, is ready to track down those dissidents who defy society to preserve and read books.

The classic dystopian novel of a post-literate future, *Fahrenheit 451* stands alongside Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World* as a prophetic account of Western civilization's enslavement by the media, drugs and conformity.

Bradbury's powerful and poetic prose combines with uncanny insight into the potential of technology to create a novel which, decades on from first publication, still has the power to dazzle and shock. —*Goodreads*

***The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin**

Winner of the Hugo and Nebula Awards

When the human ambassador Genly Ai is sent to Gethen, the planet known as Winter by those outsiders who have experienced its arctic climate, he thinks that his mission will be a standard one of making peace between warring factions. Instead the ambassador finds himself wildly unprepared. For Gethen is inhabited by a society with a rich, ancient culture full of strange beauty and deadly intrigue—a society of people who are both male and female in one, and neither. This lack of fixed gender, and the resulting lack of gender-based discrimination, is the very cornerstone of Gethen life. But Genly is all too human. Unless he can

overcome his ingrained prejudices about the significance of "male" and "female," he may destroy both his mission and himself.

Embracing the aspects of psychology, society, and human emotion on an alien world, *The Left Hand of Darkness* stands as a landmark achievement in the annals of intellectual science fiction.

—*from the publisher*

***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

The elegance of Ishiguro's prose and the pitch-perfect voice of his narrator conspire to usher readers convincingly into the remembered world of Hailsham, a British boarding school for special students. The reminiscence is told from the point of view of Kathy H., now 31, whose evocation of the sheltered estate's sunlit rolling hills, guardians, dormitories, and sports pavilions is imbued with undercurrents of muted tension and foreboding that presage a darker reality. As an adult, Kathy re-engages in lapsed friendships with classmates Ruth and Tommy, examining the details of their shared youth and revisiting with growing awareness the clues and anecdotal evidence apparent to them even as youngsters that they were different from everyone outside. [...] Ishiguro conveys with exquisite sensitivity the emotional texture of the threesome's relationship, their bonds of personal loyalty that overcome fractures of trust, the palpable boundaries of hope, and the human capacity for forgiveness. Highly recommended for literary merit and as an exceptional platform for the discussion of a controversial topic. —*Lynn Nutwell for School Library Journal*

***On Such a Full Sea* by Chang-Rae Lee**

On Such a Full Sea takes Chang-rae Lee's elegance of prose, his masterly storytelling, and his long-standing interests in identity, culture, work, and love, and lifts them to a new plane. Stepping from the realistic and historical territories of his previous work, Lee brings us into a world created from scratch. Against a vividly imagined future America, Lee tells a stunning, surprising, and riveting story that will change the way readers think about the world they live in.

In a future, long-declining America, society is strictly stratified by class. Long-abandoned urban neighborhoods have been repurposed as highwalled, self-contained labor colonies. And the members of the labor class—descendants of those brought over en masse many years earlier from environmentally ruined provincial China—find purpose and identity in their work to provide pristine produce and fish to the small, elite, satellite charter villages that ring the labor settlement.

In this world lives Fan, a female fish-tank diver, who leaves her home in the B-Mor settlement (once known as Baltimore), when the man she loves mysteriously disappears. Fan's journey to find him takes her out of the safety of B-Mor, through the anarchic Open Counties, where crime is rampant with scant governmental oversight, and to a faraway charter village, in a quest that will soon become legend to those she left behind. —*from the publisher*

***The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

The searing, postapocalyptic novel destined to become Cormac McCarthy's masterpiece.

A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other.

The Road is the profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, "each the other's world entire," are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation. —*from the publisher*

Other Worlds: Imagining a More Perfect Future

My top 3 book choices (due Thurs. 4/2)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(student signature)

I understand that some of the choice texts contain adult themes and language. I approve of my student's selections.

(parent signature)