



MERIDIAN ACADEMY

CURIOSITY CREATIVITY COMMUNITY

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Humanities

Division 1 (Entering grades 6 and 7): Heroes and Villains

Text to read: *Gracefully Grayson* by Ami Polonsky ISBN: 1484723651

Heroes & Villains is a class based around storytelling and how stories influence our lives. This summer, Division 1 students will read the young adult novel *Gracefully Grayson* by Ami Polonsky. Throughout the book, a middle schooler named Grayson comes to understand their identity through stories from her family and from ancient myths.

Once you complete the reading, generate responses based on the prompts below. **Read these prompts before you begin the book.** That way, you can keep them in mind as you read.

Please answer all of the following questions thoughtfully and thoroughly. **Note the expected length of each response, and please type and print** all responses.

1. **Which story do you think most influenced Grayson throughout the book?**

- a. The story of Persephone
- b. The story of the phoenix
- c. Stories about Grayson's mother
- d. The "story" we tell ourselves about how we should act based on gender

Note: Whatever story you choose, Please use **at least one quote** from the book to back up your answer. (1 paragraph)

2. **Write about a time when you were affected by a story.** This can be a story you heard from family or friends, or it can be from a book, movie, or television show. Retell the story again, and then reflect: How were you changed by this story? (Did it affect your beliefs? Your understanding of yourself, others, or the world? Did it help you make an important decision?) (2-3 paragraphs)

3. **How do Aunt Sally and Uncle Evan feel differently about Grayson performing in the school play?** Do you think it's fair to say that both their positions are created out of love for Grayson? Why or why not? Whom do you agree with and why? (1 paragraph)

4. **If you could play any fictional character onstage, who would it be? Why?** After considering this question, **draw yourself onstage as this character!** This illustration does not have to be perfect, but it should be creative and thoughtful. Consider the **costume** you would wear, any **props** you would use, and even the **set** and **lighting** if you like. I invite you to have fun with this illustration! (1 color illustration)

Please bring your responses, typed and printed, on the first day of school!

Division 2 (Entering grade 8): Constitution Nation

Text to read: *Loyalty* by Avi. ISBN: 0358248078

For Humanities this summer, you will be reading part of *Loyalty* by Avi to give you a foundation for next year's course where we will be investigating how and why people organize.

You will be confronted with questions about how you play a role in making change and making history. To that end, this summer you'll read a book that explores the American Revolution from the perspective of a young loyalist turned British spy navigating patriotism and personal responsibility during the lead up to the War of Independence.

- 1) Read the book. Always have a pen/pencil in hand for marginalia and quote underlining.
- 2) The New York Times review of the book mentions how it feels as if it could be written about today. *Choose five quotes* (with the page number in parentheses) that remind you of contemporary America. Write **5-7 sentences** for each quote about how it relates to today.
- 3) In the book, Jolla says, "Choose which side you're on or find a third way." What side would you choose or what would your third way be? Write **two paragraphs**, each **5-7 sentences** in length, that explains your choice and your reasoning.

Division 3 (Entering grades 9 and 10): American Hi(story)ography

Texts to read: *The Dispossessed*, by Ursula K. Le Guin (ISBN: 9780060512750)

A brief summary:

This speculative fiction novel depicts two worlds:

- **Urras, a capitalist civilization** of warring nations, great poverty, and immense wealth *and*
- **Anarres**, a bleak moon inhabited by a **community of anarchists** who left Urras hundreds of years ago.

The protagonist, Shevek, is a physicist who lives on Anarres, but who visits Urras (specifically, the country of A-Io) in an attempt to unite the two planets.

This novel will help us begin to investigate questions connected to our course, such as:

- What does it mean to envision a completely new way of constructing society?
- What does it take to actually put these ideas into practice, despite resistance from people in power?

Directions:

- 1) As you read: annotate passages that help you to answer the following question:
what do we learn about the differences between *Anarres* and the *nation of A-Io* in terms of their **ideas** and **practices** around ...
 - a) gender?
 - b) work and workers?
 - c) the relationship of the individual and the group?
 - d) the use of resources?
 - e) punishment and justice?
- 2) Write an approximately **2 page response** (12 point font, 1.5 spacing) that describes differences between these two societies. Use quotes from the book to support your response.

Division 4 (Entering grades 11 and 12): East to West: History, Culture, and Literature

Texts to read: *The Girl at the Baggage Claim: Explaining the East-West Culture Gap* by Gish Jen. ISBN: 9781101947821

"There is no truth. There is only perception." –Gustave Flaubert

Jen's book focuses on the ways in which our perception of ourselves helps to shape the way that we live our lives, and that, essentially, those in the East and West view themselves differently. Through the course of reading this text, students will get an introduction to some of the main themes of the year: identity, history, and culture and the ways in which these are truly interconnected constructs.

Step 1: Take the quiz attached to this reading. Complete this quiz BEFORE reading the book. You can look at the guide to interpreting your answers, however, you will understand much more once you begin reading.

Step 2: Knowing your "Big Pit" and "Flexi-Self" identity, think about your own worldview as you read. What does it mean if you have some of both identities? Do you think the test portrays you accurately?

Step 3: Write a 2-3 page reflection about your experience taking the quiz, your own worldview and identity, and comment on the examples that she uses in the book. Do you identify with any of them? What do you learn about Eastern cultures, Western cultures and yourself after reading this book?

Are you a "Big Pit" or a "Flexi-Self"?

Take the following tests to see if you are a "Big Pit" or a "Flexi-Self" or a combination. Then, read the book to find out more!

1. Ask yourself, "Which of the following go together?" Choose two of the three. Write down your answers.

Chicken, Cow, Grass _____

Whistle, Train, Bus _____

Cat, Meow, Pig _____

Sardine, Shark, Can _____

Pencil, Notebook, Magazine _____

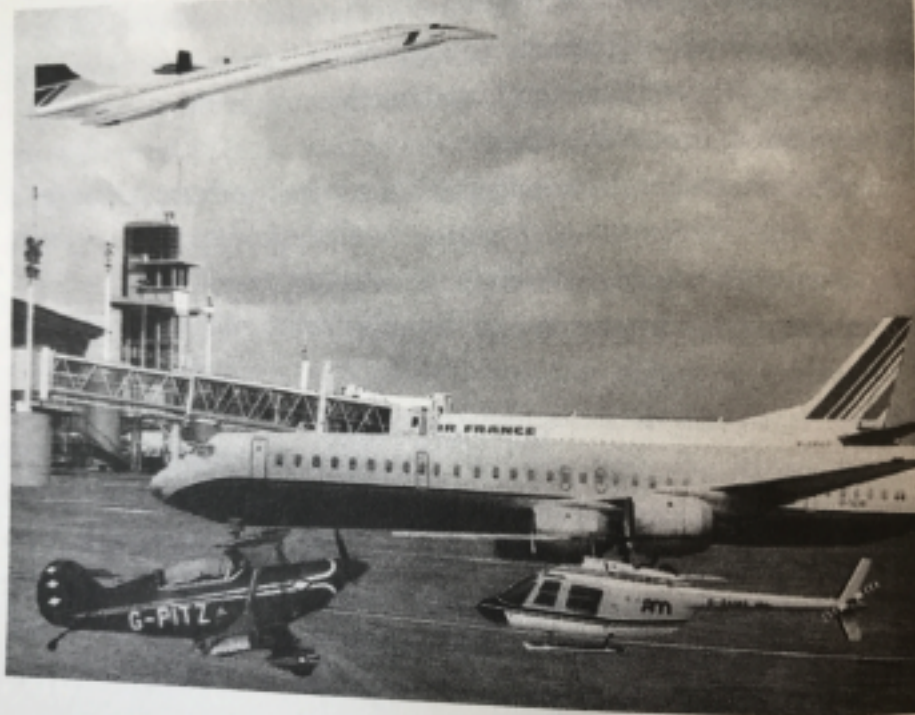
2. List 10 answers to the question, "Who am I?" You should write these statements quickly, in the first person, addressing them to yourself, and don't worry about the order. Just list them as they come into your mind.

3. Draw a diagram of you and your most important relationships. Represent each person (including yourself) as a circle, and connect the circles with lines.

4. Look at the two airport pictures. What has changed? Write down what you see that has changed (only take a few minutes to do this).

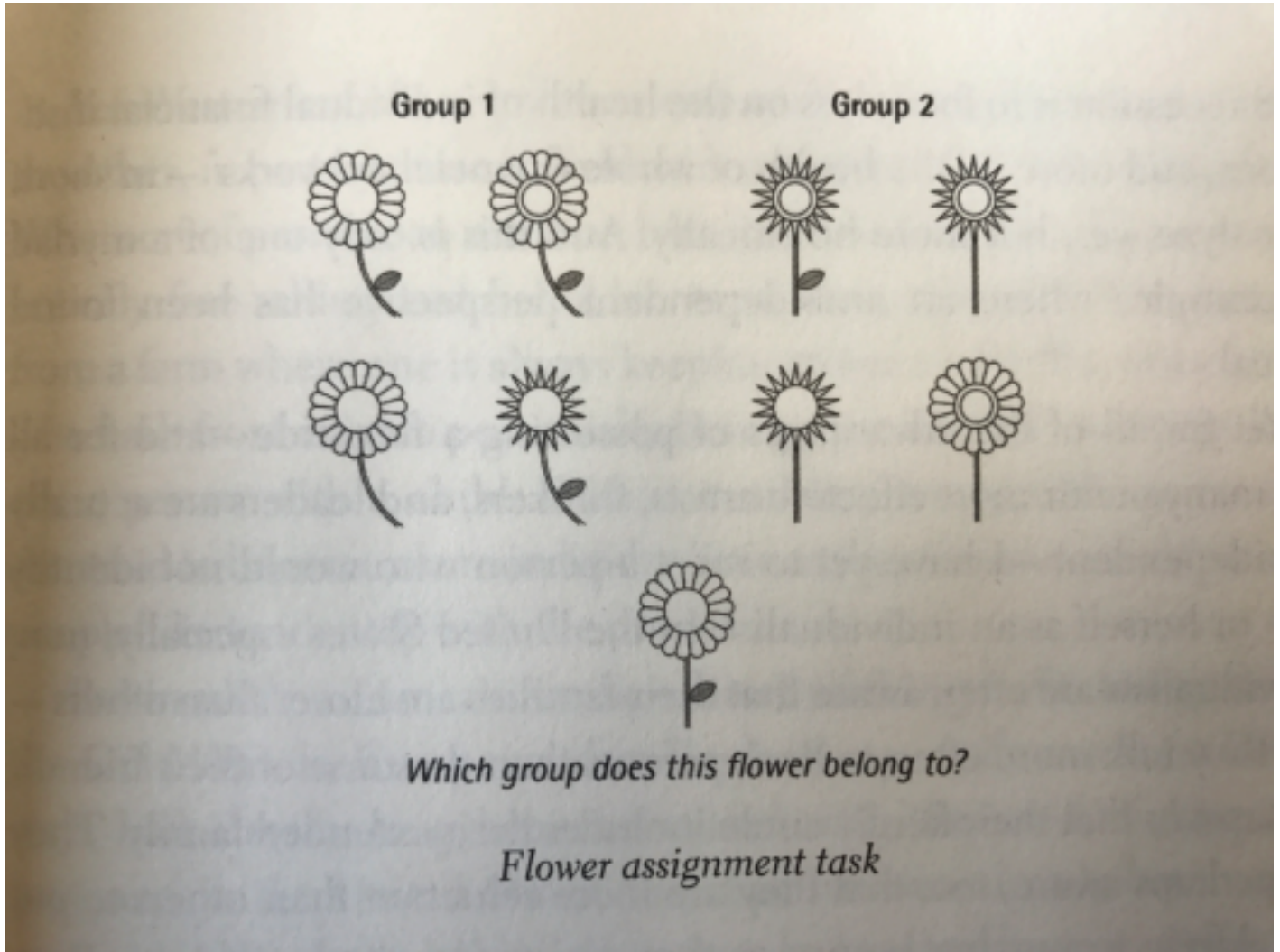


Airport photo 1



Airport photo 2

5. Does the flower belong to group 1 or group 2? Write your answer.



(See page 27, 28, and 29 and Appendix A on pages 255-256 for guidance in translating your answers. However, you will need to read more of the book to gain a better understanding of the "Big Pit" and "Flexi Self" identities.)

Math, Science, & Technology

Division 1 (Entering grades 6 and 7): Engineering

Texts to read: *Catastrophe!* By Fred Bortz

ISBN: 978-0716765387

Before reading the book, look over these questions. Upon finishing the book, type reflections on the following questions and print before class. Use complete sentences and paragraphs.

1. List two main themes or mottos that Bortz draws from the accidents that he describes that can help you in your work this coming year and beyond.
2. The introductory essay explains that one lesson learned from the Rocket Sled work was that objects should be designed to force the user to install them properly (page 9). Find at least two items in your home that follow this rule. Explain:
 1. What is the object?
 2. How is it designed so it can only be used or attached in one way?
 3. What do you think might go wrong if the design did not block misuse? (Do not try it yourself!)
3. The Kansas City Hyatt Regency Hotel and Challenge Space Shuttle disasters were both due to a failure of a part. In both of these cases, the parts were not built in a flawed way because the design required it, but because of manufacturing limitations: the objects simply could not be built in one piece. This conflict between what a designer imagines and what can actually be produced using current or affordable technology is a common one. The complexity of our artifacts is impressive. Pick an object and make a *component list* – how many different parts and how many of each are there? Your object can be high tech (e.g., a microwave oven) or low tech (e.g., a dresser). Be creative in your choice. You should not take it apart! Just catalog all that you can see through careful and systematic observation.
4. The above question highlights that one consideration in an engineering design is *feasibility* – whether the design can actually be built as conceived or imagined. List as many other considerations or variables that engineers and designers care about when doing their work. In other words, what are the different goals that they are trying to meet? Are any of these goals in conflict? Give an example either from the reading or another situation where the more you improve your success with one goal, the harder it is to satisfy the other.
5. For your final task, you are going to look around and identify ten different materials that are a part of different inventions in your home or environment. Be creative about thinking about each and the numerous reasons that that material was a good choice for its task. Try to identify as many different characteristics or properties that guide our choices when we decide to make a part out of one material or another. To enter your TEN materials, go here: bit.ly/EngSummer2023

Division 2 (Entering grade 8): Marine Science

Text: *The Future Earth: A radical vision for what's possible in the age of warming* by Eric Holthaus (2020)

1. **Read the book.** Our year together will begin with discussions that grow from this book. Engage with it however you like – write in it or don't; use sticky notes or don't; dog-ear pages, take some notes, talk about it with people around you (or don't) – but be prepared to share substantive ideas, emotions, reflections, reactions, and opinions *using specific evidence from the text*.
2. **Keep an observation diary.** On page 200, Eric enjoins us "to go outside and enjoy your present Earth." Go outside; experience the world; try some or all or none of the things on Eric's list, then write reflectively about these experiences. We will be engaging with the natural world through observation, reflection, and synthesis throughout our year together; we'd like for you to begin practicing this habit now.
3. **Engage in one of the exercises at the end of the book.** Choose either the Grief Exercise (205–217) or the Imagination Exercise (217–223). Read through the whole process carefully, adapt it however you see fit, then make a plan and try it out. You may wish to do this only once, or you may wish to do this several times with different people or different themes or different variations. *Reflect on this experience/these experiences as part of your observation diary*

Division 3 (Entering grades 9 and 10): Revolutions in Math and Science (RIMAS)

Text to read: *Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love* by Dava Sobel (1999)

1. **Read the book.** This book will set the tone for our learning and explorations together in this course – in particular, the focus on the lives and experiences of people involved in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Engage with the text deeply: take notes, write in the margins, organize your thoughts, and come ready to discuss.
2. **Respond to the following thematic questions in a short essay.** Draw *specific evidence* from the book. Limit yourself to three (3) typed pages, single-spaced. Be prepared to discuss thoughtfully:
 - What is belief? What is truth? Where do they intersect and where do they diverge?
 - What is the nature of evidence? How is it different from argument? from proof?
 - What does it take to convince somebody of something? What makes this challenging?

Division 4 (Entering grades 11 and 12): Physics and Calculus

Text to read: *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea* by Charles Seife
ISBN: 0140296476

As you are reading, complete the following:

1. As you come upon quotes, passages, or images that leave a mark on you, make a note of this. It can be helpful to mark these pages with sticky notes and jot down why the passage was impactful; you could also keep a journal of the passages, or find another way better suited to you for keeping track.

After you have finished reading, complete the following:

1. Using the passages you collected while reading, choose a single instance in the book (a quote, image, etc.) that left the greatest impact on you.
2. Use this chosen passage as a guide to create an artifact that sums up what you will take away from *Zero*. You could write a poem, draft a short essay, create an image, or make something else entirely. 3. Finally, frame your artifact in the context of the book. Write a cover page to your artifact which includes the passage you chose as inspiration, why you chose this passage, and how your artifact echoes both the chosen passage and the book as a whole. Use as much space as you need, but a paragraph or so should suffice.

Bring your artifact, cover page, and notes of the impactful passages to the first day of school.

Español

Intermediate Spanish Middle School

Optional Middle School Intermediate Spanish Assignment:

Students can read the follow-up to the Lagrimas de Xochitl novel read during trimester 3 of Novice High. If you are interested in this option, please see Laura to pick up the book!

Los Sueños de Xochitl



French

French Novice and French Intermediate (Middle School and High school)

French Novice:

Students should answer this survey before classes begin in September: [Survey](#)

French Intermediate (Novice High) MS and HS:

Students should read the first four chapters of “Presque Mort” and answer the comprehension questions from the following [booklet](#).



Additional

11th Grade Only: Junior Research Project Seminar

Text to read: *The Craft of Research, Third or Fourth Edition* by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams
ISBN: 978-0226065663

In order to prepare for your Junior Research Project Seminar please read **Parts I and II**, which cover pages 1-102. (This also includes a Prologue.)

As you read, you are required to write **marginalia** throughout the assigned pages. Marginalia consists of notes to yourself, the authors, or to us about what you read. You're especially encouraged to:

- Ask questions about what you're reading – do you understand? Are you skeptical?
- Note ideas that remind you of other things you've read, seen, or experienced.
- Star things that you think are awesome, really interesting, and/or useful.

- Draw pictures and/or diagrams that help illuminate points for you.

We will be checking your marginalia! Make it thoughtful and detailed.

Note: Before you begin your marginalia, [read this short blog post](http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2013/09/17/edgar-allan-poe-marginalia/), "Edgar Allen Poe on the Joy of Marginalia".
(<http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2013/09/17/edgar-allan-poe-marginalia/>)

After completing the reading, identify three potential topics that you might be interested in exploring this year in JRPS. **Write a substantial paragraph** about each topic that addresses the following:

- Why you're interested in this topic.
- Why do you think this topic will sustain you for an entire school year.
- What kinds of resources you anticipate using (scholarly journals, etc.).
- Ideas for your final project.