

## Junior Summer Reading Assignment 2020

**Directions:** After reading Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, choose four of the following prompts and plot out what your responses would be if you were writing a lengthy paper in response to that question. Even though you do not have to write out an entire lengthy paper at this point (that will come when school starts), I want you to identify what your ideas would be and why, and what textual evidence and references you would make to support your claims. For each prompt that you select, start by identifying and explaining your claims and observations in a paragraph, and then outline at least five pieces of textual evidence from each novel that you would use to support your thinking (note the page number). Following each line of text, explain how the line relates to your claim. (You may use bullet point formatting to structure it, but you should have 1-2 pages per prompt. See the sample I've attached for a clearer picture of what I mean.

### Prompt Options from which to Choose

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**Prompt 1:** Andrew Boyd once wrote, "Compassion hurts. When you feel connected to everything, you also feel responsible for everything. And you cannot turn away. Your destiny is bound with the destinies of others. You must either learn to carry the Universe or be crushed by it. You must grow strong enough to love the world, yet empty enough to sit down at the same table with its worst horrors." The above quote implies that when we have empathy for other people, we cannot separate someone else's pain from our own. Boyd says that the failure to learn how to carry the pain of others can result in destruction for the empathetic individual. Does this quote prove true with Huck and Holden? If so, where do we see them demonstrate compassion and "feeling pain" for others? How does it influence them? If not, prove that they remain unaffected by the pain of others.

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**Prompt 2:** Kurt Cobain once said, "The duty of youth is to challenge corruption." This quote implies that the next generation must point out the flaws of society and take a stand against them. Mark Twain and J.D. Salinger were both known to do this with their writing. In what ways do Holden and Huck challenge corruption? What sorts of things do they view as corrupt? What is there for the reader to learn through their actions?

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**Prompt 3:** Groucho Marx once said, "Man does not control his own fate. The women in his life do that for him." Both Huck and Holden are highly influenced by different women in their lives. Which women seem to have influence over these protagonists? In what way do those women influence the protagonists' feelings and actions? Does there seem to be a "type" of woman that they seem to be more compelled to follow? Why might this be?

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**Prompt 4:** Morihei Ueshiba once wrote, "Life is growth. If we stop growing, technically and spiritually, we are as good as dead." Any well-written character is supposed to evolve and change and grow as a result of

his/her experiences and conflicts. Does this ring true for Huck and Holden? Do these characters change and grow throughout the novel, or do they remain static? If they grow, in what way do you see progress? Is their progress enough? If they are static, what characteristics seem too deeply ingrained in them to change?

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**Prompt 5:** In “The Art of Lying”, Mark Twain wrote, “Lying is universal—we all do it. Therefore, the wise thing is for us diligently to train ourselves to lie thoughtfully, judiciously; to lie with a good object, and not an evil one; to lie for others' advantage, and not our own; to lie healingly, charitably, humanely, not cruelly, hurtfully, maliciously; to lie gracefully and graciously, not awkwardly and clumsily; to lie firmly, frankly, squarely, with head erect, not haltingly, tortuously... as being ashamed of our high calling. Then shall we be rid of the rank and pestilent truth that is rotting the land; then shall we be great and good and beautiful, and worthy dwellers in a world where even benign Nature habitually lies, except when she promises execrable weather.” It is obvious that both Huck and Holden struggle with telling the truth at times. Analyze the deceitfulness that Huck and Holden show. When do they lie and for what purposes? Are they harming others with their deceitfulness or helping them? Do we condemn them for the deceit or is it forgivable? Do these characters demonstrate that they’ve been “trained diligently” in the art of deceit? Do they live up to the expectations Twain describes above? Why or why not?

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**Prompt 6:** Mother Theresa once said, “The most terrible poverty is loneliness.” Both Holden and Huck frequently admit to feeling lonely in their lives. In what situations do they feel most alone? What helps them to feel less alone? What factors contribute to the protagonists’ feelings of loneliness?

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### Grading Rubric

Student clearly addresses how he/she would respond to the prompt and clearly identifies what events, characters, and situations in each novel contribute to his/her thinking.	20 (5 for each prompt)
Student shows thorough analysis by referencing at least five pieces of text from each novel, includes page number, line obviously relates.	40 points (10 each prompt)
Student includes an understandable and concise explanation of how the selected text relates to his/her response/claims.	40 points (10 each prompt)

### Sample Question and Response

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**Sample Prompt Question:**

**James Baldwin once said, “You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.” This quote shows that pain is a natural part of life, and because of this, literature often realistically reflects the pain humans experience. What do the stories “Sonny’s Blues’ and “Mice and Men” reveal about pain? What are its causes? How does it influence the characters? What do they do to overcome pain?**

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**Sample Response:**

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Text 1: “Her voice reminded me for a minute of what heroin feels like sometimes-when it's in your veins. It makes you feel sort of warm and cool at the same time. And distant. And- and sure...It makes you feel-in control. Sometimes you've got to have that feeling.” (3)

--Line is important because it shows that both music and drugs have been used by Sonny as a way to cope with pain and loss in his life. Sonny’s pain came from things outside his control, and he uses music and drugs to deal with it.

Text 2: “I could be like mama and say the Lord’s will be done...maybe it does some good if you believe it.” (10)

--This line shows that some people use the idea of a higher power or religion to help them process painful things.

Text 3: “As the singing filled the air the watching, listening faces underwent a change, the eyes focusing on something within; the music seemed to soothe a poison out of them; and time seemed, nearly, to fall away from the sullen, belligerent, battered faces, as though they were fleeing back to their first condition, while dreaming of their last.” (11)

--In this line, a woman in the audience is being described. As she listens to the beautiful music, she can forget about the pain her life has brought her, and she can almost believe that there is hope for her yet. This proves that music is a healthy coping mechanism.

Text 4: "While I was downstairs before, on my way here, listening to that woman sing, it struck me all of a sudden how much suffering she must have had to go through-to sing like that. It's repulsive to think you have to suffer that much." (12)

--This line shows that the most beautiful and soulful music is often inspired from painful events, thus proving that those experiencing suffering often use music as an outlet for those feelings.

Text 5: "These boys, now, were living as we'd been living then, they were growing up with a rush and their heads bumped abruptly against the low ceiling of their actual possibilities. They were filled with rage."

--This idea shows that sometimes one's pain comes from their lack of opportunity to succeed. As young black boys in Harlem in the 80's, they grew up with poverty and violence. Few expected anything of them. The structure of society did not allow them to thrive as others did, and it was painful for them. As a result, they lash out in anger and rebellion.

**Story 2: Mice and Men**—My response: The characters in this book seem to suffer most from not being able to achieve their goals and from the loneliness that comes from the lifestyle they live. The migrant farmers have traveled from place to place for so long that they are lonely, and that loneliness makes many of them mean. They also suffer because they have nothing for themselves. They are always under another person's control, a truth that brings them pain. In addition to acting meanly towards others, the men also seem to distract themselves with overdrinking and violence.

Text 1: "Well, I got a right to have a light. You go on get outa my room. I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room...'Cause I'm black. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you, you all of you stink to me."

--This line shows that Crooks is often excluded and isolated and as a result, he chooses meanness/hardness as a defense mechanism. He tries to kick Lennie out of his room because he is sick and tired of being the one who is rejected. His pain causes him to retaliate.

Text 2: "Maybe you can see now. You got George. You know he's goin' to come back. S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunkhouse and play rummy 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody- to be near him." He whined, "A

guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya," he cried, "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."

--This shows that it is painful for humans to be alone. This kind of loneliness and isolation will mess with a person's mind and influence the way he feels.

Text 3: Candy cried, "Sure they all want it. Everybody wants a little bit of land, not much. Jus' som'thin' that was his. Som'thin' he could live on and there couldn't nobody throw him off of it. I never had none. I planted crops for damn near ever'body in this state, but they wasn't my crops, and when I harvested 'em, it wasn't none of my harvest. But we gonna do it now, and don't you make no mistake about that."

--This line is important because it shows that pain can come from never being able to accomplish one's life goals. Candy and the other men want so badly to have land of their own and the inability to thus far achieve it is excruciating.

Text 4: "Wha's the matter with me?" she cried. "Ain't I got a right to talk to nobody? Whatta they think I am, anyways You're a nice guy. I don't know why I can't talk to you. I ain't doin' no harm to you."

--This line is important because it's another place that Steinbeck shows painful loneliness and rejection. Curley's wife reaches out to anyone who will listen, but she is constantly rejected, which causes her to confusion and anger.

Text 5: "Well, you keep your place then....I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny."

--This line was said by Curley's wife after Crooks tells her to leave his room. Curley's wife tries to be nice initially, but she is hurt by the men's behavior, so she lashes out in anger and meanness. She tells Crooks she could get him killed if he doesn't watch his tone. This is yet another line that shows how pain can cause people to act cruelly.

**\*\*You should follow the above format, but you will be doing four prompts instead of one.**

