



XAVIER COLLEGE PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL
SUMMER READING & WRITING 2026: English IV Honors
1st Semester: "Nation, Identity, and Literature" (DUE)
2nd Semester: "California Dreaming: Place, Culture and Literature"

Dear Incoming Honors Senior,

We hope that this letter finds you well and anticipating the end of a rewarding year. We expect that you will have many good experiences and make good decisions before we see you again in August. One of those decisions we would like to help you with is for you to remain engaged in some kind of academic activity this summer. It is our belief that encouraging students to read year-round is a key element in the development of lifelong learners. While the summer is certainly a time to be away from school, we do not want you to stop reading, thinking, and growing.

You will read two books this summer. This required reading will establish themes and set the tone for the work of the course. Both readings are intended to be challenging and compelling, and provide you with a good foundation for written and oral literary analysis. Expect to think AND enjoy the readings.

Required Books:

1. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah

"[A] substantial collection of staggering personal essays ... Incisive, funny, and vivid, these true tales are anchored to [Trevor Noah's] portrait of his courageous, rebellious, and religious mother, who defied racially restrictive laws to secure an education and a career for herself ..." [here's a link on Amazon.](#)

2. *Exit West. A Novel* by Mohsin Hamid

"[A]n astonishingly visionary love story that imagines the forces that drive ordinary people from their homes into the uncertain embrace of new lands ..." [here's a link on Amazon.](#)

Reading Assignment:

For both books, make sure to carefully read and take notes/annotate. You will also be required to **write a "Dialectical Journal"** for the novel *Exit West* (see instructions below). On the **first day** of class, you will take **an assessment** that will include comprehension questions and written responses on *Born a Crime*.

Note on Course Content and Readiness Expectations: Please note that this is a college-level course and will call for maturity on your part. At times, you may find the required texts difficult or offensive due to depictions of violence, prejudice, crime, and sexual situations. The course materials have been chosen for their thematic unity, innovative and ambitious narrative strategies, and historical and cultural relevance to the course.

Please note that there is required summer reading for Senior Honors ONLY. However, if you have any thoughts or consideration of taking the Honors class, you should do these Reading and Writing Assignments.*

**There are separate summer assignments for AP Lit provided by Ms. Eldridge.*

Exit West Dialectical Journal Instructions

Dialectical Journals’ Purpose: The term *dialectic* means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” Think of your dialectical journal as a conversation with Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*. The process is meant to help you develop a better understanding of the text—and perhaps of your own experiences. In general, it is a useful way to process what you’re reading, prepare yourself for discussions, and gather textual evidence.

Procedure:

- As you read, choose a passage that stands out to you and record it in the left-hand column of a T-chart (ALWAYS include page numbers).
- In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage)
- Here are some *general* strategies to guide you through thinking about the dialectical journal process:

Question – ask about something in the passage that is unclear – and then respond and/or reflect upon your question if/when you find an answer.

Connect – make a connection to your life, the world, or another text.

Clarify – answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction.

Reflect – think deeply about what the passage means in a broad sense – not just in this specific text. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?

Evaluate - make a judgment about what is happening in the text, the actions you observe, or what the author is trying to say

Dialectical Journal Sample Entry & Format

Passage from the text--	Page #s	Your response to the passage--
1. "Saeed’s father tarried at her grave each evening on the way home. Once as he stood there he saw some young boys playing football and this cheered him, and reminded him of his own skill at the game when he was their age, but then he realized that they were not young boys, but teenagers, young men, and they were not	87	This passage starts out with a neutral tone – or at most, a bittersweet, poignant mood. With Saeed’s father visiting his wife’s grave daily, we as readers may feel his sadness and devotion. As we keep reading, the horrific reality of the situation becomes slowly revealed. There’s an accompanying shift in the tone. At first, it seems like Saeed’s father is invited out of his grief and loneliness by observing “young boys playing football.” Then, in one long(!) continuous sentence it is disclosed that these are, in fact, “young men” who are kicking around not a soccer

<p>playing with a ball but with the severed head of a goat, and he thought, barbarians, but then it dawned upon him that this was the head not of a goat but of a human being, with hair and a beard, and he wanted to believe he was mistaken, that the light was failing and his eyes were playing tricks on him, and that is what he told himself, as he tried not to look again, but something about their expressions left him in little doubt of the truth.”</p>		<p>ball, but instead “the head not of a goat but of a human being.” The disturbing and shocking scene is told rather matter-of-factly, almost as if it is a crime-scene report.</p> <p>What does Saeed’s father feel about this – or anything? Have his feelings been numbed by his wife’s violent death? He makes a judgment in referring to the players as “barbarians,” but that is the extent of any expression of horror. He questions what he sees and initially feels doubt and uncertainty in his abilities. He doesn’t want it to be true – and tries to avert his eyes. But, “something about their expressions left him in little doubt of the truth.” In the context of the violence that has crept into his life, this scene is ultimately just another terror that Saeed’s father must witness. He doesn’t seem to feel much, he insulates himself by looking away and trying to deny whatever emotions were to come up.</p>

CHOOSING PASSAGES FROM THE TEXT:

Whenever you read, it’s a good practice to look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking or puzzling. For example, you might record:

- o Effective &/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices
- o Passages that remind you of your own life or something you’ve seen before
- o Structural or POV shifts or turns in the plot
- o A passage that makes you realize something you hadn’t seen before
- o Examples of patterns: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols or motifs.
- o Passages with confusing language or unfamiliar vocabulary
- o Events you find surprising or confusing
- o Passages that illustrate a particular character or setting

RESPONDING TO THE TEXT:

You can respond to the text in a variety of ways. The most important thing to remember is that your observations should be specific and detailed.

Sample Sentence Starters:

- I really don’t understand this because...
- I really dislike/like this idea because...
- I think the author is trying to say that...
- This passage reminds me of a time in my life when...
- If I were (name of character) at this point I would...
- This part doesn’t make sense because...
- This character reminds me of (name of person) because...

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

For this assignment, you are expected to produce 3 dialectical journal entries (minimum 300 words each) within a specific category. Your journal should be **handwritten!** Your entries should come from at least two (2) categories listed below:

Indirect characterization: what does your chosen passage reveal about a particular character (you are not focusing on directly stated traits, such as *tall, well-dressed, angry-looking*, etc.)*

A personal reflection/explanation/reaction to a sentiment or thought expressed by the narrator, or the action/interaction by a particular character (or characters)

Analysis of the mood evoked by a particular scene or setting in the book*

***This dialectical journal entry may be fulfilled by *drawing a character at a specific moment*, or a specific scene, or a specific setting, and explaining your artistic choices in a minimum 200 word paragraph.**

POINT BREAK DOWN:

Dialectical journal: **30 points (hard copy handed in on first day of class)**