

## SUMMER READING

Students will read *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver

### Assignment:

- There is no written assessment/assignment accompanying this work to be completed during the course of the summer.
- Read the novel. Not the abridged version, the spark notes edition, the "older-sibling-read-it" version—read THE BOOK! Annotate it (have a conversation with it/ask questions of it), be at ease with it, **know** it.
- Be prepared on the first day of the fall semester for written assignments and formal assessments over the novel.
- Enjoy the experience and appreciate the adventure.

### PWB Preview:

Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* is a multifaceted novel that chronicles one family's experience in the Congo during the time that the Belgian rule ends and the nation tries to become a democracy. Foreign fears of communism further destabilize the nation soon to be known as Zaire, causing great unrest, poverty, and fear. This nation, rich in gold and diamonds, finds itself so indebted to the United States and other outside nations that the people suffer even more severely from poverty, malnutrition, and disease.

Parallel to the breakup of a nation and the destruction of its traditions is the disintegration of the Price family who has come to the Congo as missionaries with the impossible goal of transplanting the American church into African soil. The father's idealism is contrasted with the mother's practical realization that loving one's neighbors and sharing one's resources with them is more important than teaching them western theological concepts and religious practices. The father, however, is obstinate and singularly narrow-minded. Furthermore, he is a cruel and completely hardhearted man when crossed in any matter from discipline to family safety. As a result, he is never accepted by the people, who nevertheless show many kindnesses to the mother and her daughters.

Since the story is told from more than one point of view, the composite picture must be pieced together. So, too, must the father's character, for he never tells the story, and what he is can be seen only through the eyes of his wife and his daughters, who find him narrow-minded and opinionated to the extreme. Although he is always a background figure, his position as patriarch shapes the personalities of his daughters and determines to a large extent their ability to be integrated into the African community. The females' differing perspectives on life as a whole and on Africa in particular

give a broad view of human nature as well as world events. They also question what it means to do good to one's neighbors, whether it is in the religious sense or in matters of foreign diplomacy. You must draw conclusions about the personalities of each of the main characters, about life in various parts of Africa, about international intervention in the affairs of nations, and about ways of sharing religious views with people who have not grown up with western traditions. Nathan and his daughters are fictional constructs used to help the author explore difficult questions in the novel. Nathan is not meant to represent all religious leaders and missionaries, nor are the decisions of the Price daughters an endorsement or rejection of any religious values on the author's part.

Barnes & Noble, Borders, local public libraries have the summer reading list, so copies should be available soon. The WHS media center has some copies available.

If you have any questions you may contact:

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## AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

AP English Literature is designed to comply with the curricular requirements described in the *AP English Literature and Composition Course Description*, focusing on building skills necessary for college-level reading and writing. The course includes in-depth, close reading of literary selections chosen from multiple genres, periods, and cultures. Although numerous selections will be read, a few of the works will be studied intensely, analyzing critically its structure, style, themes, tone, syntax, diction, imagery, and symbolism, as well as social and historical values it depicts. The works studied in this course are those of recognized literary merit, written from the sixteenth century to contemporary times, and written by both British and American authors. The reading for this course builds upon the reading done in earlier Pre-AP and AP English classes. The works are directed toward the mature, experienced reader and may be dense, challenging, and may contain potentially sensitive or controversial topics.

### HONOR CODE:

When a student signs his name to any assignment, he is stating that the assignment is his alone and that he has neither sought nor accepted help, other than that explicitly permitted by the teacher. A student may never copy anyone's work or have anyone dictate any part of the assignment to him. Furthermore, when a student discusses an assignment in class, gives an oral presentation, or writes an essay, he tacitly states that he has **read** the work(s) he discusses or writes about. Plagiarism of any type will result in a grade of zero for the assignment and notification to the sponsors of any clubs/organizations to which the student belongs.

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I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the expectations and honor code for the 2016-2017 AP English Literature and Composition course.

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Student Name:

Student Signature:

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Parent/guardian Name:

Parent/Guardian Signature: