Summer Reading Assignment: Book Notes for *Jane Eyre* AP Lit/Mrs. Meanix/C213

**Due: First Day of School/25 points Format: Handwritten or typed**

Word on the street is that book notes are no fun. However, most students report that they are tremendously helpful when preparing for the AP Exam. **Note:** You need not write book notes for the One Book One School title—just *Jane Eyre*.

**What are book notes?**

Authors write stories to examine life in some way. Fiction isn’t real, but the messages are. A good writer expresses universal truths through their stories. In AP “speak,” we call these observations the author’s “meaning of the work as a whole.” Writers use specially crafted language to build these meanings, including various literary devices and techniques, many of which you have been discussing in English classes since middle school.

How will you collect this important language? By writing book notes. Book notes consist of direct quotes (with page numbers) and your interpretations/analyses. The quotes you include can be full sentences, but they can also be phrases or maybe even just words. When you see a pattern—something particular that the writer uses that seems to be there for a reason, write it down—even if you are not entirely sure of why or how it matters. Record the language and your ideas.

Your ideas do not need to be perfect or “correct.” Your notes can include questions and pictures. Your commentary can be informal or formal, or a combination. Write anything appealing to you, so long as it’s meaningful…. ***What I hope to see is evidence of your own original thinking.***

**The purpose of book notes is for you to notice how the author uses language to make meaning, and book notes, when done well, should help you find ways to see multiple meanings.**

**What are book notes NOT?**

Book notes are not a list of plot events. They are not Spark Notes or Schmoop or Lit Charts or anything you’ve seen on the internet or from a movie version of the stories. If the information you include in your book notes appears to have come from a source like the ones listed above, you will not receive credit. If you only record plot events, then you haven’t done the assignment properly and will not receive credit.

The point of book notes is for you to NOTICE how a writer’s language builds meaning. Why does Shakespeare use this particular simile? What does it do? Does the image create irony? Connect to another part of the story? Look for relevance and meaning. Try to think outside the box—look for the unexpected. Don’t share with your friends and **don’t** look on the internet. Be original. If your ideas don’t pan out, oh well. Your brain will be better off either way.

**Here is some difficult truth:**

In order to notice what is important, you will need to read *slowly* and *carefully,* making notes as you go. We call this **close reading and annotation**. You will need to pay attention.

***My suggestion is for you to read the book twice. Yes, I said “twice.” The first time to see what is obvious, and the second time to notice what is more abstract.***

If you wait until the week before school starts, you will not be able to do a decent job. *Jane Eyre* is no walk in the park. Start early and do a little at a time.

**Directions:**

Bottom Line: Book notes should reinforce analysis for meaning, not just an understanding of plot events. If you only focus on plot, you are missing the bigger picture. Don’t record language and just say what it IS. Say what it MEANS… Or what you think it might mean☺

***Always start with the title, author’s name, and year of publication. And don’t forget to write your name!***

**Book notes must include direct quotes and interpretation pertaining to the following. Notice how the list goes from concrete literary devices to more abstract, “read between the lines” terminology.**

**Stuff that’s easy to spot—record these during your first reading.**

* Point of view: Who tells this story? Think: Why did the author choose to tell it the way he/she does? How does the point of view affect the meaning?
* Setting: Remember, **setting is more than simply location**. Think of seasons, weather, and places… The descriptions are what makes setting important. Yes, you will have many settings to record.
* Characters: Include a descriptive analysis of each. Include physical traits, dialogue, and actions to show how the author builds characterization. Include major and supporting characters who have an influence.
* Symbols—Track their appearances throughout the stories. When you consider what they might represent, keep in mind all of the information you’ve collected about the symbol so far. And FYI—A symbol doesn’t represent one idea in chapter 3 and then a totally different idea in chapter 6. Be consistent. If you can’t be consistent, reconsider your approach.
* Imagery: What kinds of images are constructed? How are they constructed? Why are they there?
* Allusion. Allusion is often overlooked when we are being lazy. Most of you have a magical device in your pocket called a smart phone. Stumble upon some weird name or phrase that you’ve never heard of? Take out the Google and search! This is the exception to my “no internet” lecture—when it comes to allusion, the internet is so helpful. And *Jane Eyre* is brimming with allusion.

**Read between the lines—add this stuff to your notes as you complete your second reading.**

* Tone and mood. These two are connected. Pay attention to how the author creates them.
* Irony. When irony happens, there is meaning. It’s hard to spot, though. This is why you must read with your attention span firmly in place. And irony can be the result of everything else on this list. It’s magic.
* Motif: These are abstract ideas that are present throughout a work— examples: sadness, religion, poverty, power, etc. Often linked to symbols and included to gradually lead to meaning of the work as a whole.
* Meaning of the work as a whole—What is the author saying about the world/life/people? You should have more than one idea for this section. Meanings should be written universally—the big truth of life unearthed by the novel should apply to all humanity, not just the characters in the book.

**You must provide a comprehensive analysis of the book. If the book is 50 chapters long, but you only have notes from chapters 1-15, then you haven’t done the job.**

**How will I know what to include?**

This is where that attention span comes in. You need to notice the language that is meaningful. But how?

* Look for patterns and similarities between words, phrases, characters, settings, etc.
* Look for contrast and opposites: think inside/outside, city/country/, male/female, dark/light, etc.
* Reconsider the “boring” parts—if a writer spends two pages describing scenery, don’t tune out. Everything is there for a reason.

**Organization**

You are free to organize the book notes however you like. *But* they must be organized somehow. Some people arrange their notes by chapter with sub sections for each of the required components listed above. Others arrange by each component—a section for setting, a section for allusion, for symbolism, etc.

Regardless of the system you use, I advise you to create a separate section for characters.

**Keep in mind:**

Don’t be afraid to be wrong. This activity is all about thinking—about how you think while you read. It’s a skill that will develop as you practice. Work hard and you’ll see results. Making mistakes is an important part of the journey to growth and success. Embrace this concept. **But** understand that I can easily tell the difference between true effort and nonsense. **So don’t write nonsense.**

Remember, it’s your job to decide what is important. Don’t search “symbols in *Jane Eyre*” on the internet. Read the book and decide for yourself.

**One more thing:**

**Break up with Sparknotes. Right now.**

Sparknotes is not as smart or funny or charming as you are… you are better than Sparknotes. AND Schmoop. Neither of them respects you or cares about you or even knows who you really are. Do not respond to their texts. You are better off alone.

See you soon☺ Enjoy the remainder of 10th grade and your summer.