The Webb School English IV
Summer Reading List and Response Assignment

Reading List
Atonement by Ian McEwan
Pride & Prejudice by Jane Austen
The Schoolmaker by Laurence McMillan

Please type your responses to the following questions and print out a paper copy to turn in on the first day of class. You will be graded based on:

- The amount of original critical thinking and analysis
- The organization of the essay or paragraph
- The development of your main idea
- The use of specific examples from the text to support your ideas (properly cited with page or line numbers)
- Mechanical correctness (grammar, punctuation, word choice, and sentence structure)

Long Essay Question (40%)
Each of these works has different narrative perspectives. Jane Austen is famous for a narrative style called “free indirect discourse,” whereby a narrator gives the reader a “sense of being inside a character’s head without actually quoting his or her thoughts or statements.” It’s practically a blend of 3rd and 1st person narration: 3rd person that feels like 1st person. Atonement is a perfect example, on the other hand, of “unreliable narration.” That is, the narrator “intentionally or unintentionally fails to provide an accurate report of events or situations and whose credibility is therefore compromised.” The Schoolmaker is a whole different genre entirely. Being non-fiction, we are dealing with an author is, despite the expectations of objectivity, arguably biased or partial.

Write an essay (at least 500 words) that compares and contrasts how the different narrative decisions in each work contribute to their meaning as a whole. How do they relate to each other? How do they relate to us as readers?

Essay Rubric
90-100: Develops a thesis and draws support from each of the summer reading texts. Makes critical observations about the texts. Stays on topic and relates their observations about the novels to themselves as readers. Grammatical/Syntactical mistakes are few and don’t detract from the clarity of the writing.
80-90: There is a thesis and there is support from each of the novels. The essay relates to the topic, just not as well as an A paper. That is, the analysis isn’t as clear or sophisticated. Grammatical/Syntactical mistakes are noticeable, but they are not predominate.
70-80: There is a main idea that isn’t clearly stated, and support is drawn from the novels. The essay may get sidetracked, but it still mostly deals with the topic at hand. Grammatical/Syntactical mistakes affect the clarity of the essay and it is clear that more thought and effort could have been placed into editing/revising.
60-70: There is no clear thesis and not all of the novels are discussed. It’s clear the essay has been haphazardly written, doesn’t deal with the topic, and leaves much to be edited/revised. Grammatical/Syntactical mistakes predominate.
0-50: At the last minute, the student threw some words on the page in an effort to pass.

Short Answer Questions (15 questions, 60%)
Answer the following questions pertaining to each work. Your answers should take up several sentences, but no more than a paragraph. Support all of your answers with specific supporting examples from the text.
Atonement by Ian McEwan

1. Robbie sees many manifestations of the horrors that war can inflict on people. Cite the most poignant detail from Section II of Atonement. Write down the sentence and explain why this detail stood out to you more than others.

2. Each of the characters in Atonement are motivated by different things. Robbie, for example, is motivated by his desire to reconnect with Celia. Briony is motivated by a need to atone for her mistakes. Which character do you identify the most strongly with? Quote a statement of belief with which you sympathize and explain how you relate to it. If you don’t identify strongly with any one character, choose a statement of belief with which you disagree and explain why.

3. An explicit theme is a major idea in the novel that is stated directly, either by a character or by the narrator. Cite a quote in the novel that you think functions as an explicit theme. Explain how the novel revolves around this main idea.

4. Is Briony, by the end of the novel, seeking forgiveness from anyone in particular? Does she achieve either forgiveness or atonement?

5. What role does literature itself play in this novel?

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

6. When does Elizabeth first reconsider her initial impression of Darcy? Why is the setting of this revelation significant?

7. Which character in Pride & Prejudice do you identify most strongly with? Find dialogue or monologue in the text that you can imagine hearing somebody say today. How might you paraphrase or translate it into contemporary speech?

8. An explicit theme is a major idea in the novel that is stated directly, either by a character or by the narrator. Cite a quote in the novel that you think functions as an explicit theme. Explain how the novel revolves around this main idea.

9. Each of the characters in Pride & Prejudice are motivated by different things. Mrs. Bennet, for example, is motivated by her desire for social status/stability. Darcy seems motivated by more philosophical desires. Which character do you identify the most strongly with? Quote a statement of belief with which you sympathize and explain how you relate to it. If you don’t identify strongly with any one character, choose a statement of belief with which you disagree and explain why.

10. Does the resolution between Darcy and Elizabeth come at the expense of their personal freedoms?

The Schoolmaker by Laurence McMillan

11. What do you think is Sawney’s most defining characteristic? Quote The Schoolmaker and elaborate on why this passage most clearly defines Sawney Webb to you.

12. There are many lessons and motivational aphorisms throughout The Schoolmaker. Pick one that you think is particularly relevant, poignant, or even hypocritical. Quote and analyse.

13. Sawney is human. Do you think McMillan does a good job portraying the humanity of Sawney as someone with both strengths and weaknesses or do you think he simply romanticizes a legend? Choose a passage that either highlights Sawney’s humanity or overly romanticizes his legend and explain how this tone contributes to our understanding of the work as a whole.

14. What’s the source of conflict between the two brothers (Sawney & John) and their families by the end of the novel?

15. Which brother do you imagine was the most effective educator? What draws you to their teaching style?