

MYSTERY and DETECTIVE FICTION

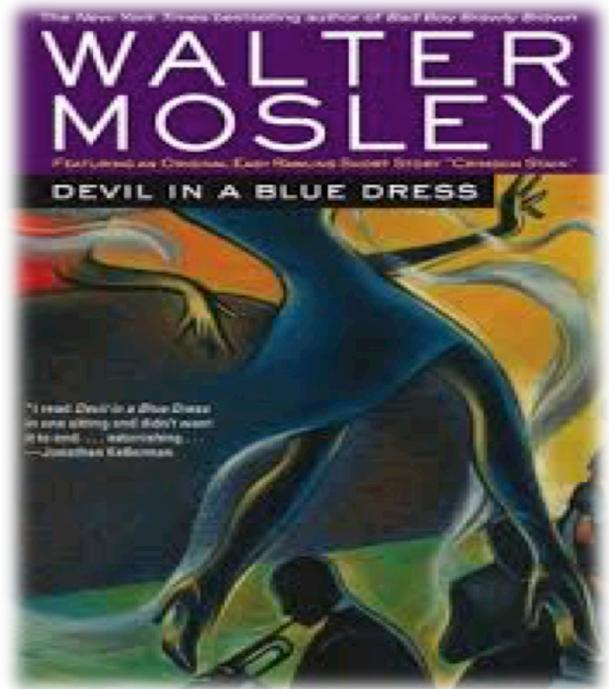
Devil in a Blue Dress

by Walter Mosley

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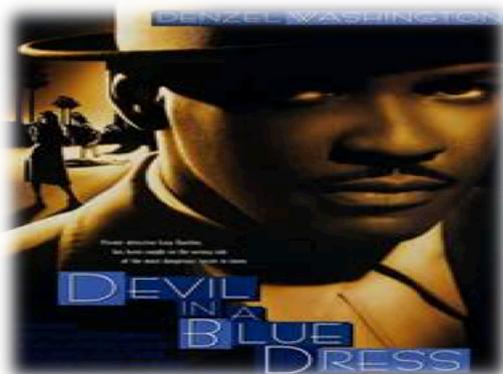
SUMMER READING
ASSIGNMENT 2017



Devil in a Blue Dress begins on page 43 of your text; you may skip pages 1-42.

Please read *Devil in a Blue Dress* closely and annotate it carefully. Consider these ideas for effective annotation of the text:

- Note key images, references, or symbols
- Circle and define words with which you are not familiar
- Keep a running log of the development of each character
- Identify the major themes and the methods used to develop them



Please read the excerpt from “The Simple Art of Murder” by Raymond Chandler on the reverse side of document.

"In everything that can be called art there is a quality of redemption. It may be pure tragedy, if it is high tragedy, and it may be pity and irony, and it may be the raucous laughter of the strong man. But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world. I do not care much about his private life; he is neither a eunuch nor a satyr; I think he might seduce a duchess and I am quite sure he would not spoil a virgin; if he is a man of honor in one thing, he is that in all things. He is a relatively poor man, or he would not be a detective at all. He is a common man or he could not go among common people. He has a sense of character, or he would not know his job. He will take no man's money dishonestly and no man's insolence without a due and dispassionate revenge. He is a lonely man and his pride is that you will treat him as a proud man or be very sorry you ever saw him. He talks as the man of his age talks, that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness. The story is his adventure in search of a hidden truth, and it would be no adventure if it did not happen to a man fit for adventure. He has a range of awareness that startles you, but it belongs to him by right, because it belongs to the world he lives in."

~Raymond Chandler

Chandler suggests that the potent detective must interact with a sordid world that is paved with "mean streets." However, the root of the detective's potency lies in his ability to navigate those streets with his honor as his only compass.

Use the following questions and prompts to determine whether the novel's protagonist Easy Rawlins is an honorable detective. Please take brief notes about each of these questions, either in a Google Document or in a notebook.

- What are the elements that challenge Easy's honor? How does Easy respond to these situations? Pay attention to Mosley's depiction of 1940s Los Angeles. How do the societal norms of the city's various cultures inherently create conflict for the protagonist?
- How does Easy's status as a "poor man" compel him to engage in detective work? Further, how does one's economic status shape and govern his or her perspective regarding the world in which they live and the people with whom they interact?
- In what ways is Easy a man who is respectful to women? Besides monitoring his individual interactions, pay attention to his private thoughts as a first person narrator.
- Is Easy judicious in his meting out of justice, or is he capable of dispensing passionate, violent revenge that serves mostly his ego? Does his use of violence match the required circumstances?