

10th Grade History: The Modern World – Summer Reading Assignment

Rising Sophomores are expected to engage in thoughtful summer reading. While reading, please take notes on the guiding questions as there will be discussions or a writing assignment highlighting them.

This year, students can choose one (1) book from a list of four (4):

~Note: a 4th Choice (*King Leopold's Ghost*) was added in July~

Empires of the Sea – Roger Crowley (*Non-Fiction*) - 368 pages

Crowley writes a thrilling account of the 16th century clash between Christendom and Islam, featuring a colorful array of Kings, popes & pirates.

- What 2 - 3 characters (on each side) were most significant in this historical narrative? Why?
- In a sense, one could describe the historical development of the world today as a 'coming together': what are the ways that global connections & events impacted the more narrow focus of this book?
- "*The key to Europe was Malta; the key to Malta was Saint Elmo.*" Are these valid generalizations? Why or Why not?
- Did anything surprise you or open your eyes by providing a new window onto the world? Why do you think this book was chosen for a class about the 'Modern World'?

King Leopold's Ghost – Adam Hochschild (*non-Fiction*) – 404 Pages

An award-winning journalist, Hochschild's account of the brutal plunder of the Congo by Leopold II of Belgium from 1884 to 1908 presents a megalomaniac of monstrous proportions; it also movingly reveals those brave and committed few who fought him and bore witness. In so doing, he reveals the dark interconnected underbelly of modernity.

- Hochschild writes that Leopold "found a number of tools at his disposal that had not been available to empire builders of earlier times." What new technologies and technological advances contributed to or otherwise enabled Leopold's exploitation of the Congo?
- In a sense, one could describe the last few centuries of historical change as a 'coming together': what are the ways that global connections & distant events impacted what happened in the Congo?
- Morel, Sheppard, Williams, Casement, etc. boldly spoke out against the Congo atrocities, often at great danger to themselves. Others, like Leopold and Stanley, rationalized and committed those same atrocities. Given that "Western" society produced both kinds of people, how were the values of 'western society' reflected in the actions of both groups? To what extent has the balance between those competing values shifted today?
- Did anything surprise you or open your eyes by providing a new window onto the world?

The Afghan Campaign – Steven Pressfield (*Historical Fiction*) - 368 pages

This novel follows a 2,300-year-old clash between an invading Western Army & fierce Eastern Warriors in a coming of age tale that explores the harsh ethical challenges soldiers face embarking on a new type of war. Narrated by a young soldier, this story opens a window into a past that looks very much like the present.

- Consider the characters mentioned in the novel: who are the protagonists? Antagonists? And what examples / incidents in the book support these characterizations?
- Identify at least four military tactics / strategies employed by either Alexander's army or the Afghan fighters (*at least one from each side*): why do you think those tactics/strategies were used?
- What recurring themes or tropes are expressed in the book? Of the themes you identified, which do you think is the most significant and why?
- Did anything surprise you or open your eyes by providing a new window onto the world? Why do you think this novel, set so far in the past, was chosen for a Modern World History course?

(See next page)

Revolution – Jennifer Donnelly (*Historical YA Fiction*) – 472 pages

Andi lives in NYC and her comfortable world is starting to fall apart. **Alexandrine** lived 200 years earlier in Paris and dreamed of acting. But when Andi finds Alex's diary, she grows obsessed until Alex's words transcend paper and time, & the past becomes suddenly terrifyingly present!

- Who are the protagonists? Antagonists? What examples in the book support these characterizations?
- In *Revolution*, Andi discovers a diary dating back to the French Revolution & grows obsessed with the girl's plight. Draw parallels between Andi's "personal revolution" and the French Revolution.
- What was life like in Paris in the 1790's? 2011? Focus on the *daily lives* of people when you answer: what do they eat? Where do they go? What do they do for fun? What are their greatest concerns?
- As you read, make a list of the historical events that Alex refers to in her diary. Briefly describe the events and Alex's reaction to them.

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies', said Jojen. 'The man who never reads lives only one.' "

— **George R.R. Martin**, *A Dance with Dragons* [Game of Thrones]