

## Summer Reading Assignment

### AP English Language and Composition

Students are to read the following works: Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*, Ishmael Beah's *a long way gone*, and Levitt and Dubner's *Freakonomics*. **Then write a response to each question which is due the first day of school in the fall.** Each response is worth a total of five points. After the students receive passwords and id#s, they will also submit all responses to turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. Students should save all typed work. The passwords and id#s will be given to the students in the fall. There may be additional assignments dealing with summer reading, but they will be done once school begins.

#### *Beowulf*

1. This epic poem is one of the first works composed in the English language. It also tells us about the Anglo-Saxon people who lived in England and their culture. What values did these people support? What ideals did they try to live by? How do their values compare to our values today? Try to find similarities between our culture and this ancient culture. Use examples from text to support your points.
2. As a classic of English literature, the poem presents a basic theme: good vs. evil. Explain how the poem presents this theme. Compare it to other works which share the similar theme. You may use all forms of media as support. Why do you think this theme has been and continues to be so popular?
3. Beowulf fits the classic portrait of a hero. Describe Beowulf's heroic traits. Then compare him to modern heroes, fictional or real. What qualities do they share and which are different?
4. Briefly describe each battle that Beowulf faces. How are they similar, and how do they differ?
5. The heroic paradox states that a hero must die gloriously in battle in order to be remembered. How does Beowulf live up to this definition? How does this explain his motivation to kill Grendel?
6. Describe the form of this poem. How is it put together? Since it was originally oral literature, what elements enhance listening to it instead of simply reading it? What seems archaic about its form? What elements would you not see today in current literature?

#### *a long way gone*

1. What does this book teach us about the culture of Sierra Leone? What elements of this culture are similar to ours? Which ones are different?

2. What is the argument presented in this book about war? Besides Beah's point of view, what other support does he use for his argument? Is the other side fairly represented? Explain.
3. What rhetorical strategies does Beah use to shape his argument? Give examples. If you don't know what this means, look up rhetorical strategies.
4. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of a memoir. Research recent controversial memoirs including this one. Write about at least one book that may have fabricated selections. What is your opinion about the believability of Beah's story? Explain.
5. Since his family is gone, Beah must rely on others in his life to take their place. Describe two relationships that enable Beah to have family figures.
6. What conclusions does Beah come to about revenge? How does his view of revenge change over time?
7. Research the current political situation in Sierra Leone. How have things changed since Beah left the country? How have things remained the same? Describe our country's involvement with Sierra Leone if any.

### ***Freakonomics***

1. What examples can you think of where moral or social incentives and economic incentives are both present? Are the different incentives complementary or competing? For each of the cases you cite, which do you think is the stronger incentive?
2. Provide examples that illustrate how the combination of an information asymmetry and fear can lead to inefficient outcomes. Explain how the introduction of the element of fear makes the problem of the information asymmetry even worse.
3. Explain how a "tournament" or "winner takes all" labor market works. Why would a street-level drug dealer be willing to accept low pay and poor working conditions?
4. Many observers maintained that the drop in crime in the 1990s was at least part due to the adoption of innovative policing strategies. Focusing on the experience in New York City, what do the data tell us about the viability of this assertion? Should we then conclude that smart policing is not a good thing? Why or why not?
5. How does the information in chapter five regarding the contradictory and confusing assemblage of information from parenting experts support the major theme of this book (Hint: incentives matter)?
6. What do the experiences of Winner Lane, Loser Lane, and Temptress tell us about the likely relationship between a child's name and his/her prospects for success in life? Are these examples sufficient for us to draw any definitive conclusions? Why or why not?
7. According to the cover of this book, "*Freakonomics* will literally redefine the way we view the modern world." What information from this book surprised you the most? What did you learn about our world that will stay with you?