

Reading Guides—

Animal Farm, George Orwell

General considerations:

Keep a reading journal handy for your notes. As you read the book, jot down new vocabulary as you encounter it. Does the author attempt to define the words in context or leave it to the reader to either know the word or go elsewhere for its meaning?

1. Reserve one or two blank pages in your journal for each of the characters. Jot down ideas and impressions of these characters as you go along. Who do you think will be the most significant character(s)? Why?
2. In Chapter 1, what is the importance of Major's dream? Why do you think the song is significant?
3. What events lead up to the revolution? What do the animals do after they take over the farm?
4. Describe animal life on Animal Farm. What jobs do they perform? How do they feel?
5. What do other humans think about Animal Farm? What rumors do they spread about the Farm?
6. Summarize the different views and plans of Snowball and Napoleon.
7. What does it mean when the pigs move into the farmhouse? What reasons do the pigs give to the other animals? Do you think another reason exists?
8. In Chapter 7, Napoleon begins to blame Snowball for every bad thing. Why do you think he does that? How does this affect the other animals?
9. What reason would you give for banning Beasts of England?
10. In Chapter 8, Napoleon sets himself apart from other animals. Does this remind you of anything . . .?
11. Why does Moses the Raven return? What does he represent?
12. Why does Napoleon send Boxer to the knacker instead of the hospital?
13. What does it mean that pigs now walk on two legs? To conclude, what is the moral of this fable?

The Fall of the Berlin Wall, William Buckley

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[The Fall of the Berlin Wall](#) is a short and concise history of one of the most compelling symbols of the Cold War. In less than 200 pages William F. Buckley introduces the reader to the events, ideas, and personalities behind the 28-year history of the concrete and barbed wire division that separated Berlin; and in many ways symbolized the separation between East and West. In the process Buckley gives an intriguing glimpse into the heart of the conflict that so dominated the later half of the Twentieth Century.

1. Initially, what does the author have to say about the history of Berlin?
2. Why does Berlin become the focal point of international relations as the world moves out of World War II and into the Cold War?
3. Who are some of the characters the author identifies as central to the story of the Berlin Wall? Could you provide a brief identification of 3-5 sentences for each of these characters? How does each person fit into the story of “the Wall.”
4. While the author writes about the famous people of history, he also writes about ordinary people who sometimes acted in heroic fashion. Identify and describe the actions of two people from the story that you would most like emulate in your life.
5. As the author describes the events of 1989, would you have wanted to be living in Berlin at that time? Why or why not?
6. What do you understand the following terms to mean: Solidarity, Velvet Revolution.
7. Pick 3 scenes from the novel that convey an important message. Describe each scene and the message. Include the page(s) where you found the passage. Explain your reasons for choosing the scene.

Hiroshima, John Hersey

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1. Copy 2 quotes that caught your attention. Include the page citation (e.g. p. 16, "There, in the tin factory, in the first moment of...books."). Explain why you found that quote important. (10 points each)
2. Pick 2 scenes from the novel that convey an important message. Describe each scene and the message. Include the page(s) where you found the passage. Explain your reasons for choosing the scene. (10 points each)
3. Identification--Use at least 3 complete sentences to identify any 3 of the book's characters. (5 points each)
4. Identification--Use at least 3 complete sentences to identify any 3 terms used in the novel. (5 points each)

Brunelleschi's Dome, Ross King

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1. Is architecture art? Why or why not? Discuss why architecture was widely considered “an occupation unfit for educated men” (pps. 157 – 158) until Brunelleschi’s dome.
2. What was the most fascinating /interesting/surprising thing you learned about the building of Brunelleschi’s dome?
3. Discuss how inventors in 15th century Italy kept their secrets. Do contemporary inventors also guard their work? How is it different?
4. Name some recent marvels of architecture and technology. Compare/contrast with Brunelleschi’s accomplishments.
5. Discuss the rivalry/competition between Ghiberti and Brunelleschi (mainly chap.5). Must there always be a rivalry for genius to thrive? What other great rivalries come to mind?
6. King spends an equal amount of time explaining the machinery that Brunelleschi invented. Why? Did these details add to or take away from the book? Did you find it interesting?
7. Discuss the competition system in Florence. Why, after all of Brunelleschi’s success with the dome, would the Opera del Duomo still make him compete for the lantern? And against his own carpenter and “gasp” a WOMAN?!
8. Discuss the process of casting bronze (p. 17). How did Brunelleschi’s knowledge of goldsmithing help him with this process?
10. Discuss the lives of the workers (chap 6). How did Brunelleschi show concern for the laborers of his dome?

Galileo's Daughter, Dava Sobel

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1. What impressions or ideas did you have about Galileo before reading Sobel's book? Did the book change any of your opinions, and if so, how?
2. In what ways did the insertion of the full-length letters of Suor Maria Celeste, and the excerpts from the Rule of Saint Clare and the testimony from Galileo's trial, affect the narrative flow of the story?
3. If you have ever carried on an in-depth correspondence with a friend or family member, compare that experience to keeping in touch by telephone or e-mail. Is long-hand letter writing becoming a lost art?
4. How would you characterize Galileo's behavior as a father to each of his children? Was Galileo's relationship with Suor Maria Celeste an ideal father-daughter relationship?
5. What part did Galileo's frequent bouts of illness play in his personal and professional decisions?
6. Which aspects of convent life at San Matteo were most surprising or disturbing?
7. Who are the heroic figures in the story? Was Castelli a hero? Signor Geri? Suor Luisa?
8. Which arguments did Galileo employ to reconcile his scientific discoveries with his religious beliefs? How do these compare with the current stance of the relationship between science and religion?
9. How do you think Galileo would react to the news that pope John Paul II had called for a reexamination of his affair?
10. Given the suggestion in one of Suor Maria Celeste's letters that she wrote out the final manuscript for Galileo's Dialogue, how do you imagine the two of them might have worked together? How do you think each of them expected the final product to be received?
11. Censorship constituted a routine part of the publication process of the 17th century. What part does it play today?

- 12.** For what crimes or infractions was Galileo brought to trial? Did his accusers see him as truly a heretic or merely disobedient?
- 13.** Viewed in this age of televised court cases, what did you think of the legal process of Galileo's trial?
- 14.** Why did Galileo abjure his belief in the Copernican system? What do you think would have happened to him and his family if he had refused to abjure?
- 15.** Can Galileo's arguments in defense of the Copernican model of the universe be applied to recent debates about the teaching of evolution in the classroom?
- 16.** Which scientific ideas of Galileo's turned out to be wrong? How could incorrect assumptions lead him in the right direction for establishing modern science?
- 17.** Is it possible for us to look at the culture of the 16th century, its class system, the options available for women, commonly held views on how diseases are spread without imposing a 21st century perspective?
- 18.** Can you see any similarities between the 17th-century reaction to the bubonic plague and modern responses to the AIDS epidemic in terms of popular superstitions, medical treatments or government intervention?
- 19.** Galileo believed that the Bible was a book about how to go to heaven not how heaven goes. Do you agree with him?

Longitude, Dava Sobel

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Quotes to consider: What do you think the following quotes mean?

“The placement of the prime meridian is a purely political decision... The zero-degree parallel of latitude is fixed by the laws of nature, while the zero-degree meridian of longitude shifts like the sands of time.” (p. 4)

“Indeed, King Louis XIV of France, confronted with a revised map of his domain based on accurate longitude measurements, reportedly complained that he was losing more territory to his astronomers than to his enemies.” (p. 27)

1. Related to the quote above. . . what are the consequences of people who are not experts in science making decisions that impact scientific research?
2. Identify and describe the central challenge presented in the book. Why was mastering this challenge so important to life at this time?
3. Why did the British, French, Danish and other governments become involved in the longitude problem?
4. Contrast the approach of the British government to solving the longitude problem with the approaches used by governments today for solving scientific problems.
5. What were the social barriers that John Harrison faced, and how did these affect his participation in the longitude contest?

Time After Time:

We live in a modern era, far past the illogical problem-solving techniques employed in 1687. However, the definition of modern thought is a direct function of time. Read the following quotes and consider some of the parallels between 1687 and 2008.

“Surely the most colorful of the off-beat approaches was the wounded dog theory, put forth in 1687.” (p. 41)

6. Is it possible for us to be aware of modern day gaps in judgment as they are occurring, or will they only be revealed by hindsight? Explain your response.

7. What are the consequences of “being blind” to our illogical thinking?
8. What modern-day ideas do you suspect will be mocked in the future as we mock the “wounded dog theory” today?

“Having established itself securely on shipboard, the chronometer was soon taken for granted, like any other essential thing, and the whole question of its contentious history, along with the name of its original inventor, dropped from the consciousness of the seamen who used it every day.” (p. 164)

9. Which “essential things” that we use today have a history familiar to the American public, and which have we come to take for granted?
10. What reasons might we want or need to know the history behind common-use items, such as microwave ovens and air conditioning units?

One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

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1. Draw a map of the layout of the camp and work site. Be sure to mark every spot Shukhov visited.
2. How does the author's style reflect the bitter cold in the novel?
3. Draw an organizational chart showing the chain of power in the camp.
4. Why does the author use a "good" day as the subject of the novel?
5. What effect does the last paragraph of the novel have on the reader?

Characterization

6. Make a list of Shukhov's rules for survival in the camp. What do they tell you about his character?
7. Using a map of the Russian Republic and its neighboring states, identify the ethnic regions of as many characters as possible (i.e. Stakhan - Estonia, Tsezar – Moscow).
8. What accounts for the stratification in the camp? How is this ironic in light of the "crimes" that placed many of the prisoners in the camp?
9. Who will and will not survive the camp and why?
10. Which of his fellow zeks does Shukhov trust? Why?
11. Why does Shukhov take such pride in his work? What are the rewards of this ethic and who shares it with him?
12. What qualities makes Tiurin such a good leader? Give specific examples of his leadership skills.
13. The 104th squad has a reputation for spirit. Shukhov tells us what does not cause this spirit. What does cause it?
14. Which of the zeks would you choose to be in your squad? Why?
15. Compare and contrast Shukhov's and Fetiukov's drive to survive.

Theme

16. Make a survival guide for new prisoners at the camp.
17. How is personal pride or dignity linked to material wealth within the camp? Is material wealth the only means of preserving personal pride or dignity? Why or why not? Explain how those prisoners who have maintained their personal pride or dignity have accomplished this.
18. Shukhov believes that personal pride or dignity is necessary for long term survival. Give specific examples that defend or refute his belief.
19. Identify the prejudices Shukhov has about other ethnic groups. How does this affect his working relationships with them? How do his prejudices correspond with prejudices in your world?

The Discoverers, Daniel Boorstin

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1. Who are the key characters of this book? Do they share any traits or accomplishments in common?
2. Does this book have a central theme, a main focus around which the entire book revolves? How do the characters identified above serve to illustrate the theme?
3. When did Boorstin write this book? Do you think that people will find this book worth reading 50-100 years from now? Why?
4. What did you like or dislike about this book? What prompted you to select this book over the others in the list? Would you give this book as a gift? If so, to whom would you give it and why? If you had to downsize your book collection by one half, would you keep or discard this book? Why?
5. How did this book affect you? Do you feel 'changed' in any way for having read *The Discoverers*? Did this book expand your realm of experience or challenge ideas you have held for some time? Do you understand yourself or someone you know better as a result of reading this book?