

WORLD STUDIES: LITERATURE | READINGS

Greetings rising sophomores! As we seek to deepen our understanding of the world around us, we turn to literature for lessons from the past and future. This summer you have the choice of reading one or both of the following books related to plagues and pandemics. Harvard history professor Jill Lepore wrote that, “All plague novels are parables.” A parable is a story used to illustrate a lesson. We will focus on what these parables have to teach us about resilience in our notes, inter-grade-level discussion, and writing in class.

Fever 1793 by Laurie Halse Anderson: A historical fiction young adult novel tackling the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia.

Pages: 251

Challenge level: Young Adult

From Publisher’s Weekly:

The opening scene of Anderson’s ambitious novel about the yellow fever epidemic that ravaged Philadelphia in the late 18th century shows a hint of the gallows humor and insight of her previous novel, *Speak*... Extremely well researched, Anderson’s novel paints a vivid picture of the seedy waterfront, the devastation the disease wreaks on a once thriving city, and the bitterness of neighbor toward neighbor as those suspected of infection are physically cast aside.

[For the full review click here.](#)

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel: A dystopian novel set in post-apocalyptic Great Lakes Region of the American continent in which a wandering Shakespearean troupe of actors brings hope to humanity

Pages: 337

Challenge level: Moderate

From *The New York Times* Book Review:

One night, in a Toronto theater, onstage performing the role of King Lear, 51-year-old Arthur Leander has a fatal heart attack. There is barely time for people to absorb this shock when tragedy on a considerably vaster scale arrives in the form of a flu pandemic so lethal that, within weeks, most of the world’s population has been killed.

[For the full review click here.](#)

WORLD STUDIES: LITERATURE | ASSIGNMENT COMPONENTS & GRADING

Part One: Journal

As you read, collect quotes and reflect on **questions** you have about the text, examples of **resilience**, and **connections** you make to the text.

Write your quotes and reflections in the [template here](#). You must select the quotes yourself out of the text. Your reflections must be your own thoughts, questions, and connections. Copy the full quote, using quotation marks and the page number, and write your reflections, questions, and connections in complete sentences. Each reflection should be at least 150 words long. Write a total of three reflections from the beginning, middle, and end of the novel.

Part Two: Discussion

Upon return to campus, we will have inter-grade-level discussions on this book, in which you will be expected to draw from the text and your journal. That discussion will center around the theme of **resilience**, with the following primary focus questions:

1. What survival tactics prove successful in adjusting to life after a pandemic?
2. What do you make of the assertion that “survival is not enough?”
3. How would you describe resilience in this world? What are specific examples?
4. While the situations in these books may be more extreme than ours, what parallels do you see with life in 2020?

ASSIGNMENT IS DUE FIRST DAY OF CLASS TO GOOGLE CLASSROOM!

Questions? Contact your friendly Midland English teacher and have a great summer!

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