English
Department

May 2009

Dear Freshmen (soon to be Sophomore) English Student:

This year Archbishop Mitty High School continues its Summer Reading Program for all levels. For the World Literature course, we have chosen a book that we think you will enjoy. Furthermore, this novel relates to the class in various ways, connecting to some of the key topics in the first semester, including the quest for salvation or enlightenment and the hero in crisis. Also, there is the struggle that humans have with nature, and the story deals with the human ability to withstand a shocking experience and deal with it. The book information is listed below, with a short synopsis from Amazon following it.

***The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith**

"The African-born author of more than 50 books, from children's stories (The Perfect Hamburger) to scholarly works (Forensic Aspects of Sleep), turns his talents to detection in this artful, pleasing novel about Mma (aka Precious) Ramotswe, Botswana's one and only lady private detective. A series of vignettes linked to the establishment and growth of Mma Ramotswe's "No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency" serve not only to entertain but to explore conditions in Botswana in a way that is both penetrating and light thanks to Smith's deft touch. Mma Ramotswe's cases come slowly and hesitantly at first: women who suspect their husbands are cheating on them; a father worried that his daughter is sneaking off to see a boy; a missing child who may have been killed by witchdoctors to make medicine; a doctor who sometimes seems highly competent and sometimes seems to know almost nothing about medicine. The desultory pace is fine, since she has only a detective manual, the frequently cited example of Agatha Christie and her instincts to guide her. Mma Ramotswe's love of Africa, her wisdom and humor, shine through these pages as she shines her own light on the problems that vex her clients. Images of this large woman driving her tiny white van or sharing a cup of bush tea with a friend or client while working a case linger pleasantly. General audiences will welcome this little gem of a book just as much if not more than mystery readers." (from *Publisher's Weekly*)

Since this book connects with many of the issues in the World Literature course, it is important that you do close/active reading so that you will become more actively involved in your reading and be able to find and share your ideas**. You will be tested on this book during the first week of classes in August, and you will complete a writing assignment in response to one of the topics in the novel. Chapter Summaries and/or comments on the top of each page should be done; these will provide you with notes to review before the test and during the writing process.**

Enjoy your summer vacation, and don't forget your summer reading!

Sincerely,

Sophomore English Teachers

Close Reading for Summer Novels

Close reading means reading *actively*—with a pen or pencil in your hand (**not** a highlighter)—and marking your book with as many responses as possible to what you are reading. You should have questions, ideas, and feelings as you read. Here are some guidelines:

1. **Circle** the names of new characters and of unfamiliar words.

2. **Underline** passages or **put an asterisk *** beside passages you think are important in the novel. Next to any underlined or asterisked passages you should write comments. You don't have to do this for all passages you mark.

3. Put a **question mark** beside anything that you do not understand or would like to ask about in class. Passages that confuse you need to be clarified; mark them and then use the teacher to help clarify.

4. When you finish each chapter, go back to the top of the first page and **give the chapter a title. You must do this for each chapter.**

5. Also, when you complete each chapter, use the space at the beginning or end of the chapter to write a **brief summary** of what has happened. Your summary may be a short paragraph or it may be a list of what happened. Do this immediately after you finish the chapter. **You must do this for each chapter.**

6. **No highlighting.**