

Required Summer Reading and Essay

Salmon Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

After reading the novel, write a 500-700-word essay in which you address the following question:

How important are stories and storytelling to our lives?

In your essay you should discuss Rushdie's novel, but you are also welcome to include your own experiences and observations, including other things you've read or watched. Here are some questions you might want to consider:

- Based on the novel, what do you think Rushdie thinks about stories?
- Does Rushdie include characters in the novel who would disagree with him? Who are they and what do they think about stories?
- What are your earliest memories of hearing or telling stories?
- How do stories and storytelling fit into your current life?
- Do you think stories/storytelling will be important to you in your career? In your personal life?

Note that these questions are just to help you think through some ideas and come up with details to discuss. You are not required to answer all of these questions. In fact, I would advise you against trying to answer all of them. It's probably better to focus on just a couple things. When you write your essay, it should not sound like you are answering *my* questions. It should feel like *you* have something to say. And I am interested in hearing what you have to say. That means, for example, that you should use the first person pronouns (*I, me, my, mine*). You do not have to write in a formal, academic style.

Take time to do your best work. That means that you should do some planning before you start writing, and you should proofread your essay before turning it in. Do not try to do the whole thing in one sitting. Your essay will be graded based on four areas: ideas, organization, voice, and conventions. Look at the attached scoring guidelines in order to get an idea of what's involved in these different areas. In addition to receiving a grade for what you write over the summer, you will also be revising your essay at the beginning of the school year.

Final note: Do **not** look to outside sources to help you write your essay--whether they are about the novel or about the importance of storytelling. The novel should be accessible enough. You do not need to understand everything to write about it. And, as I already wrote, I'm interested in what you have to say.

Recommended Summer Reading

- Charles Benoit, *Snowjob*. Charles Benoit will be reading at AC in the fall. You might want to read his latest book, written for young adults, *Snowjob*, or one or his earlier YA books. You can find out more information at his website: <http://charlesbenoit.com/>. You can find his books at the library.
- Grimm's Fairy Tales. In English II, we'll be doing some work with fairy tales, things like Cinderella, Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, etc. You probably know the basic stories, but if you've never read the pre-Disney versions, you may be surprised by the violence and gruesomeness of these stories.
- Anything else you are interested in reading! Because reading will make you a better reader and a better writer. Even taking 20 minutes a day will help you form some good habits, and at the end of the summer, you'll be surprised at how much you've read!

Scoring Guide: Ideas

<p>5. This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</p> <p>A. The topic is narrow and manageable.</p> <p>B. Relevant, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.</p> <p>C. Reasonably accurate details are present to support the main ideas.</p> <p>D. The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience; the ideas are fresh and original.</p> <p>E. The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.</p> <p>F. Insight—an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of high-level performance, though not required.</p>	<p>3. The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.</p> <p>A. The topic is fairly broad; however, you can see where the writer is headed.</p> <p>B. Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough in fleshing out the key issues or story line.</p> <p>C. Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate, or expanded enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.</p> <p>D. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.</p> <p>E. The reader is left with questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks."</p> <p>F. The writer generally stays on the topic but does not develop a clear theme. The writer has not yet focused the topic beyond the obvious.</p>	<p>1. As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details.</p> <p>A. The writer is still in search of a topic or has not yet decided what the main idea of the piece will be.</p> <p>B. Information is limited or unclear, or the length is not adequate for development.</p> <p>C. The idea is a simple restatement of the assigned topic or an answer to the question with little or no attention to detail.</p> <p>D. The writer has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way.</p> <p>E. Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what is important.</p> <p>F. The text may be repetitious, or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts with no discernible point.</p>
--	---	--

Scoring Guide: Organization

- 5.** The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.
- A. An inviting introduction draws the reader in. A satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
 - B. Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect.
 - C. Details seem to fit where they're placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
 - D. Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
 - E. The title (if requested), is original and captures the central theme of the piece.
 - F. Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the purpose and audience.
- 3.** The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.
- A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie up all loose ends.
 - B. Transitions usually work well; at other times, connections between ideas are fuzzy.
 - C. Sequencing shows some logic, but is not under enough control to consistently support the ideas. Sometimes, in fact, it is so predictable and rehearsed that the structure distracts from the content.
 - D. Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.
 - E. A title (if requested) is present, although it may be uninspired or a restatement of the prompt or topic.
 - F. The organization sometimes supports the main point or story line; at other times, the reader feels an urge to slip in a transition or move things around.
- 1.** Writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure.
- A. There is no real lead to set up what follows, no real conclusion to wrap things up.
 - B. Connections between ideas are confusing or not even present.
 - C. Sequencing needs lots and lots of work.
 - D. Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to get on with it, and vice versa.
 - E. No title (if requested) is present or, if present, does not match well with the content.
 - F. Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line.

Scoring Guide: Voice

5. The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the piece with an awareness of and respect for the audience and the writing's purpose.

- A. The tone of the writing adds interest to the message and is appropriate for the purpose and audience.
- B. The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer, sensing the person behind the words.
- C. The writer takes a risk by revealing who he or she is consistently throughout the piece.
- D. Expository or persuasive writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by showing why the reader needs to know this and why he or she should care.
- E. Narrative writing is honest, personal, and engaging and makes the reader think about and react to the author's ideas and point of view.

3. The writer seems sincere but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant, or even personable, but not compelling.

- A. The writer seems aware of an audience but discards personal insights in favor of obvious generalities.
- B. The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing, yet safe manner.
- C. Only one or two moments here and there intrigue, delight, or move the reader. These places may emerge strongly for a line or two, but quickly fade away.
- D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic to build credibility.
- E. Narrative writing is reasonably sincere, but doesn't reflect unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1. The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic and/or the audience.

- A. The writer is not concerned with the audience. The writer's style is a complete mismatch for the intended reader, or the writing is so brief that little is accomplished beyond introducing the topic.
- B. The writer speaks in a kind of monotone that flattens all potential highs or lows in the message.
- C. The writing is humdrum and "risk-free."
- D. The writing is lifeless or mechanical; depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or filled with jargon.
- E. The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is present—zip, zero, zilch, nada.

Scoring Guide: Conventions

5 The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.

- A. Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
- B. The punctuation is accurate, even creative, and guides the reader through the text.
- C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of capitalization skills are present.
- D. Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
- E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.
- F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being ready to publish.

3 The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability; at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.

- A. Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words, but more difficult words are problematic.
- B. End punctuation is usually correct; internal punctuation is sometimes missing or wrong.
- C. Most words are capitalized correctly; control over more sophisticated capitalization skills may be spotty.
- D. Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning but may not be correct or accurately applied all of the time.
- E. Paragraphing is attempted but may run together or begin in the wrong places.
- F. Moderate editing (a little of this, a little of that) would be required to polish the text for publication.

1 Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and usage, and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.

- A. Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.
- B. Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect.
- C. Capitalization is random, and only the easiest instances show awareness of correct use.
- D. Errors in grammar or usage are quite noticeable, frequent, and affect meaning.
- E. Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (every sentence) that it has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text.
- F. The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning. Extensive editing (virtually every line) would be required to polish the text for publication.