10th grade AP Prep Summer Reading Journal Assignment

Directions for Summer Reading

**Required:**

1. Read *Cat’s Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut for the first month of school.
2. Take the Summer Reading Essay Test in the first month of school in class.

**Optional:**

1. Note-taking on the following thematic and comprehension questions in preparation for the summer reading test and other classroom discussion. Note, this is optional and a means for you to think about the text and prepare for the summer reading assessment, but is **NOT** required.

**Working Notes Description:**

Your working notes for this text will differ in complexity. **The working notes have no point value attached to them; however, they will be a significant help during class discussion and for use on the timed writing test, but are not required.** The questions provided in the working notes section of the journal are to be used to help guide you through the text and help you to understand the complexities of Vonnegut’s work. To help organize your notes, lead with a heading and follow with a bulleted list. This list will blend your own thoughts with words from the text. Again, for your own benefit, provide page numbers for easy reference. Notice that this format does not sacrifice thoroughness for compactness.

**Thematic Questions:**

1. Provide a short analysis of Jonah’s character. Focus on the following ideas to help guide your analysis:

* His culpability for the world ending
* His gradual adoption of Bokonism
* His judgement of the Hoennikker family

1. Consider any of the text’s major characters by examining how and when information about the character is revealed. How reader’s expectations are controlled by the way Vonnegut presents the character you have chosen?
2. Point of view is unique in *Cat’s Cradle*. While the narration is first person, the narrator’s views are shaped by his reporter’s tasks and sensibilities. Examine John’s views of the other characters. How are they formed? How do they shift as the text progresses?
3. Explain the following quotation as it relates to the themes of the text as a whole: “’No wonder kids grow up crazy. A cat's cradle is nothing but a bunch of X's between somebody's hands, and little kids look and look and look at all those X's . . .’ ‘And?’ ‘No damn cat, and no damn cradle.’”
4. Analyze what Ice Nine, its creator, and keepers reveal about Vonnegut’s views? How is Ice Nine a vehicle for satire?
5. In many works of literature, things are often not what they seem. This theme is often called “appearance versus reality.” By analyzing how it is presented in the work, we can usually identify what the author’s opinion/comment on that theme might be. In your essay, analyze how *Cat’s Cradle* presents this theme of appearance versus reality, and identify the author’s stance on that theme.

If you are confused about the plot or the characters as you read, before reading the chapter, I would suggest reading a summary online. This is not a substitute for reading the text carefully, but it should help you organize your thoughts as you read.

CHAPTERS 1–4 Questions

By what two names does the narrator refer to himself? What is the significance of the names? What is the title of the book that the narrator intends to write? What is its intended subject matter? What is a karass?

CHAPTERS 5–8 Questions

What child’s toy does Newt remember Dr. Hoenikker making on the day the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima? What is its significance? Who are the other members of Dr. Hoenikker’s family? What are they doing on the day the bomb fell? Why does this matter?

CHAPTERS 9–18 Questions

Who is Dr. Asa Breed? Who is Secret Agent X-9? What is the significance of this description? Who is Emily? What is her connection to Dr. Hoenikker? Dr. Breed?

CHAPTERS 19–24 Questions

What is Ice Nine? Why is the Ice Nine so important to the story? How did Ice Nine come to be created? What is a Wampeter? Who is John’s Wampeter?

CHAPTERS 25–36 Questions

What do each of the following characters reveal about the Hoenikkers? Miss Faust Lyman Enders Knowles Marvin Breed Jack (of Jack’s Hobby Shop)? What does John discover about Dr. Hoennikker’s grave and marker? What do readers learn about Emily Hoenikker in this section? What name is on the pedestal of the angel grave marker? Why is it John’s vin-dit? Why is Franklin Hoenikker wanted by law enforcement?

CHAPTERS 37–47 Questions

Identify these characters: Mona Aamons Monzano Miguel “Papa” Monzano Julian Castle Philip Castle Horlick and Claire Minton H. Lowe and Hazel Crosby? How did Franklin Hoenikker become associated with San Lorenzo? Who wrote a history of San Lorenzo?

CHAPTERS 48–60 Questions

Identify these characters: Lionel Boyd Johnson Angela Hoenikker Conners Harrison Conners Nestor Aamons Corporal Earl McCabe? What does John learn from Angela about Dr. Hoenniker? About her life before and after Dr. Hoenniker’s death? What major event does John say that Angela leaves out of her story? Trace San Lorenzo’s history. What is its significance? What was McCabe and Johnson’s goal on San Lorenzo? What two areas do they choose to address in order to achieve this goal?

CHAPTERS 61–68 Questions

What is unique about the crowd, band, dogs, and even infants of the San Lorenzans who greet John? What is Papa’s background?

CHAPTERS 69–86 Questions

What ritual of Bokononism does John discover? Why is it significant? Why did McCabe and Bokonon make Bokononism illegal?

CHAPTERS 87–104 Questions

What is the one “catch” to being the next President of San Lorenzo? What is Papa’s religion?

CHAPTERS 105–127 Questions

How had the Hoenikker children discovered Ice Nine? How is Ice Nine released on the world? Who survives? How? What does Bokonon say about the end?

CHAPTERS 19–24 Questions

What does the creation of Ice Nine reveal about Dr. Hoenikker?

CHAPTERS 25–36 Questions

What is the significance of Dr. Hoenikker’s grave and marker? Discuss the “innocence” of Dr. Hoenikker as espoused by Marvin Breed. Why are readers once again not allowed to know John’s last name?

CHAPTERS 37–47 Questions

What ironies are at work in John’s encounters with the Hoenikkers? What societal issues does Vonnegut introduce in this section? What views of the author seem to show in these issues?

CHAPTERS 48–60 Questions

What ironies are at work in the history of San Lorenzo and its religion? Why does Angela diminish Newt’s memories of their father?

CHAPTERS 61–68 Questions

42. What does Mona represent?

CHAPTERS 69–86 Questions

Respond to the exchange between John and Philip Castle in which Castle says, “What makes you think a writer isn’t a drug salesman?” (153). Discuss the symbolism of the cat’s cradle as it appears in Newt’s art and his discussion of his sister’s marriage.

CHAPTERS 87–127 Questions

What do you believe happens after the last page of the book?