

English IV IB Summer Reading Assignment

Rising Seniors: *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is a beautiful Booker Prize - winning novel. It is an excellent choice for English Orals, an oral presentation on two works, or for Paper 2 in May, a comparison essay. Close reading analysis of literary features is essential.

During the first week of school in August, you will take a quotation quiz on the novel. A helpful study guide can be found at <https://brians.wsu.edu/2016/10/19/arundhati-roy-the-god-of-small-things/>.

There are two assignments to complete before the first day of school, a reading journal and cultural background research.

1. **Choose six passages, each about a page in length, spread throughout the novel,** that you find particularly meaningful because of thematic significance and writing style. Indicate the page numbers at the top of your journal pages. Then write a full page response, double – spaced, exploring what you found interesting about each passage. You may have noticed a motif that shows up elsewhere, or found an explanation for a plot point that was previously confusing, or language and literary features that are especially compelling. As you read, you may also use your journal to keep track of characters and questions that you have about the book.

2. **Choose three of the following topics for cultural background research.** The links at the bottom of Wikipedia pages can lead you to useful sources. Let your response be at least a page long, double – spaced, with accompanying images after your findings.
 - a. The Ipe family are Syrian Christians. What is Syrian Christianity? How did it arrive in south India? What percentage of the population of Kerala belongs to this group? Find an image of a Syrian Christian church and insert it with your notes.
 - b. Hindu temple elephants are crucial to the plot. Why are elephants sacred in Hinduism? What physical traits are important? What do the elephants do in the temple’s daily life and on religious holidays? Insert an image of a temple elephant at the end of your discussion.
 - c. The caste system in India is important to the story line. What is the caste system and where did it come from? What is the etymology of the word “caste”? What were the major castes called and what did their members primarily do?
 - d. One of the families in the story is “untouchable.” Where does this term come from? What do they prefer to be called? What did Mahatma Gandhi suggest they be called? What traditional occupations would have caused one’s family to be considered “untouchable”?
 - e. The Meenachil River (called in the book the Meenachal) is central to the trauma at the book’s core. Find a map that traces the path of the Meenachil and insert it, along with several images of life along its banks. Roy discusses the pollution and general degradation of the Meenachil in the book. Is this an accurate depiction? Does the river need environmental protections?
 - f. Roy employs a number of words from a language (Malayalam) spoken in the state of Kerala. Some of these she translates for her readers either when she uses them or elsewhere in the book. Make a list of at least a dozen of these and their translations. If they are not in the

book, find a Malayalam/English Dictionary on-line. Are there any words that you cannot find a translation for? Do they sound important to know? Can you figure them out from context? If not, how would you go about determining their meaning if you had time and opportunity?