



Oak Ridge High School
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26 April 2019

Dear Combined Studies Student:

Please purchase a copy of *The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck. You will find it in our local bookstores and online. The novel will begin our conversation about the driving idea behind our course: the development of humanity, its growing complexity, and the striking similarities across cultures. Our discussion of the novel will launch our school year, and to that end, you should read and complete the following assignments.

HISTORY WRITING ASSIGNMENT

The history assignment is an opportunity to creatively explore the context of some of the key developments in China that set the stage for what occurs in *The Good Earth*. Your writing assignment is to create a personal narrative of someone participating in, observing, or somehow impacted by five key events.

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|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) Opium Wars (1840s & 50s) | 4) Boxer Rebellion (1899 – 1901) |
| 2) Taiping Rebellion (1850 – 1864) | 5) Xinhai Revolution (1911) |
| 3) Sino-Japanese War (1894 – 95) | |

For each entry, assume the identity of a Chinese person – a farmer who is in poverty, a wife whose eldest son is addicted to Opium, a local elite who sees his power limited – almost any type of person will work. You could even use actual historical figures you encounter in your research, so long as you use what you’ve gained from independent research to imagine what it was like for people living through these events. Each journal entry should be approximately 500 (for a total word count of approximately 2500). **This portion of your assignment is NOT about the characters or plots of the stories in *The Good Earth* but more about the setting.** In other words, you will record data that will give a good snapshot of the place and time. You therefore should **NOT** use specific characters from *The Good Earth*. You also should **NOT** use the same person for each entry, but rather use people from a variety of social, political, and economic viewpoints. Of course, your journal entries will reflect actual research using books and online sources to gather information. Although you are **NOT** required to provide a bibliography or works cited list for your research, use your judgment when selecting sources. In addition to encyclopedias like Britannica and Wikipedia to get a general overview of events, you are encouraged to reference books and websites created by credentialed academic authors, as well as actual primary sources from the time periods of each event.

ENGLISH WRITING ASSIGNMENT

As you read *The Good Earth*, you will focus on the development of six categories of ideas (known as SPRITE) in the novel about humanity and the blending of real and fictional history, and utilize a reading log to “track” these topics’ treatment throughout the work. Your job is simply to collect, examine, and respond to as much evidence as possible. These six categories are:

- Social ideas – the impact that social organization and groups have on humanity;
- Political ideas – the impact that politics and government have on humanity;
- Religious ideas – the impact that religion and spiritual ideas have on humanity;
- Intellectual ideas – the impact that new ideas have on humanity;
- Technological ideas – the impact that new innovations have on humanity;
- Economic ideas – the impact that new goods, barter, and money have on humanity.

To track your topics, construct a reading log with four columns, as shown on the example on the back. Your reading log is due on the second day of class, July 30, 2019. Your reading log will have at least 24 entries and needs at least 4 entries for each category. Additionally, your evidence should span the entire work, with ideas pulled from the beginning, middle, and end of the novel.

Principal

Martin G. McDonald

Assistant Principals

Beth Estep

Amber Henry

B. Scotty Herrell

Stephanie Thompson

Athletic Director

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GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

You **are required** to type both of your assignments. Assignments should use standard 12-point Times New Roman font, with double-spaced paragraphs and standard margins. Although the assignments are related, create two separate documents. Be prepared to turn in an electronic copy of each during the first week of school, to be checked for plagiarism and added to the Combined Studies database. These assignments are designed for an individual student. Students should not share or copy their reading logs, research, or analysis.

If you have any questions or difficulties procuring the book, please contact us so we can make arrangements with you.

Principal

Martin G. McDonald

Sincerely,

Teachers of Combined Studies

Assistant Principals

Beth Estep

Amber Henry

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Stephanie Thompson

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