ENGLISH IA SUMMER READING

As a candidate for our English accelerated program, you are required to do summer reading. You need to read two books and we will check your reading when school begins. You will turn in a double entry journal (described below) for The Bean Trees, and you will write an essay about The Good Earth. You may be tested on either or both books.

The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver

A double entry journal is a way to keep track of your thoughts as you read. It also notes the exact words from the book that spark your thinking. Divide your paper in half lengthwise. In the left column, write the exact sentence or sentences from the book along with the page number. In the right-hand column, write your reaction to the sentences. A reaction is your own thinking and understanding of the sentence and what it says about the character you have chosen. There is no "right" answer, but try to write about the character in terms of her values, her strengths and weaknesses, and her attitude toward life.

The characters' lives are full of difficulties and obstacles, yet they manage to "make things as right as [they] can." The book begins by alternating the narrative perspectives of two characters, Taylor and Lou Ann. Once they meet, the narrative viewpoints merge. Keep a double entry journal of the struggles of ONE of these major characters (Taylor or Lou Ann, NOT BOTH). Write sentences from the text and your personal reactions, showing the difficulties faced by the character and how she handles those problems. Include 10-12 entries and space them throughout the book. There are two sample entries on the next page. We are looking for depth of thinking -- do you write more than first thoughts or random questions? Please provide three to five sentences in each of your personal responses. Again, see the sample on the next page.

The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

Read this novel and be ready for an in-class essay the second or third day of school. There may also be an objective test to check for reading. This book is famous for its portrait of Chinese culture and its themes. Were interested in whether you can analyze its material in writing.

For the essay, you will have your choice of three topics on which to write. You should plan for your writing assignment as you move through the book. Keep these topics in mind as you read the novel and prepare to support your discussion with examples from the text.

1) Describe and discuss the lives of Chinese women in the culture of the time as portrayed in the Good Earth.

2) Discuss the relationship between Wang Lung and the earth throughout the story, and explain why his sons do not relate to the soil in the same way.

3) Examine religion as it is practiced by the main character, Wang Lung. He seems to follow a combination of religious beliefs. Find and discuss examples in the text of his religious behavior, and compare or contrast those examples with your own beliefs. How does your religious heritage teach you to deal with adversity?
Sample: Double Entry Journal for

*The Bean Trees*

**QUOTE**

1. I called her Turtle, on account of her grip (36).

(The page number comes at the end of the excerpt, before the period.)

2. Generally speaking, I am not a fool. I must have wanted something, and wanted it badly, to believe that hard in snipes (203).

**REACTION**

Turtle has been severely abused. Taylor recognizes that she clings to people and things. I think Turtle doesn't trust people and she is looking for security. Will Taylor provide this for her? After all, Taylor is running away from her rural roots of marriage, children, and taking responsibility. I don't know if she can care for a child very well, especially since she's barely an adult herself.

Taylor realizes that finding Turtle's family will be impossible, but she also realizes how much she really wants to adopt Turtle. As difficult as the responsibility will be, Taylor wants to take it. This seems very different from her earlier attitude about having children like her classmates in school. Almost against her will, she has come to love this abandoned child and is determined to keep her.

**Note:** the entries should focus on insights about the character you have selected: ONE character, Taylor OR LouAnn. Do not use the two sample entries provided above. Come up with your own. The reference to Turtle in the first sample entry is used to evaluate Taylor's situation and to speculate about how she will cope with Turtle. The reaction isn't about Turtle; it's about Taylor!

Your double entry journal should be typed on a computer if AT ALL POSSIBLE. Otherwise, write very neatly in blue or black ink.

The two books are available at libraries and bookstores. Most bookstores will also order books for you if they don't have them in stock. This usually takes 1-2 weeks. If you are connected to the Internet, check out amazon.com and/or barnesandnoble.com. The books are available and often discounted. They mail the books quickly.