

# **AP World Summer Assignment**

**2017-2018**

## **Book Review**

You are to choose **ONE** of the following books to read this summer and to discuss on your first day back. Please read the selections and choose widely and wisely. I will check in sometime before school starts to get a sense of your selections (usually around beginning of August).

Please note that the summer work is due on the day we return. Due to its nature (discussion), doing this late is not accepted. In fact, late work is almost intolerable in an AP course. This class is fast-paced (5,000 years of history all over the globe-it tends to become a lot...). Getting behind happens fast.

### **1. *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History*, by J.R. McNeill and William H. McNeill (2003-W.W. Norton and Co.)-327 pgs.**

Led by eminent historian William McNeill, this father-son duo present history as a “web of connections,” and therefore focus on interaction and exchange. This book offers a quick trip through all of world history and recommended for those who want an overview of the course (sort of)

### **2. *Plagues and People*, by William H. McNeill (1977; 1998-Anchor Books/Doubleday)-295 pgs.**

As the title clearly points out, this book is about disease in world history and its demographic, political, and psychological impact. Though a little older, this book is still highly regarded, and was revolutionary for its time. Quite different from the other McNeill selection, this book focuses on one topic and traces it through history (or history through the topic? Is it the history of disease, or disease in history? You decide)

### **3. *A History of the World in Six Glasses*, by Tom Standage (2005-Walker and Co.)-276 pgs.**

This book is about the science, culture, politics, and social implications of 6 of the world's most significant drinks. Through the stories of beer, wine, spirits, coffee, tea, and Coca-Cola, Standage tells the history of the world (more or less...you decide). Very popular book that “everyone's read...”

**4. *Cuisine and Culture: a History of Food and People*, by Linda Civitello, 3rd ed. (2011-John Wiley and Sons)-403 pgs.**

Don't let the length of this book deter you as much of it is recipes and charts. Much like the Standage book, Civitello's work focuses on the relationship between food and people and goes far in proving we are, indeed, what we eat. This book has a little of everything and recommended for foodies!

Regardless of the book you've chosen, you should be ***prepared to discuss the following*** (more on this term) when we return in September:

- ❑ **Author's thesis/main idea**-this is what the whole book is about. What is the "lens" through which the author is seeing (and presenting) history?
- ❑ **Author's identity**-who is the author? Are they an historian? Journalist? Why should this matter? How does it help you "read" the book more accurately?
- ❑ **Periodization/organization-how is the book organized?** What are the chapters about? How does author see historical periods/eras? When are their "beginnings" and "endings" (for example, some historians see the Renaissance as the end of the medieval ages, while others see it as the beginning of the modern era)
- ❑ **Chapter summaries**-you should provide a half-page summary of each chapter (the books have 6-12 chapters of varying lengths). These summaries should highlight chapter's connection to thesis/main idea.
- ❑ **World History?**-is this book about global history, or is it Western history disguised as world history? How can you tell? Where do the book's attentions lie?
- ❑ **Evidence?**-how is the book's knowledge constructed (and therefore yours, as the reader)? Are the sources used by author primary or secondary? What types of sources (newspaper, letters, speeches, etc) Different types, or essentially the same types of sources? How does/should this inform your reading of the book?

Being prepared to discuss when we return means **you should have this assignment in writing**. Writing is thinking, and a way to get at and deepen thinking, and the more you do, the better you think. Therefore, this assignment has two components: writing and discussing.

Either share your work with me ([ckurtz@mvrhs.org](mailto:ckurtz@mvrhs.org)) or bring in 2 hard copies on first day.

Please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns about the assignment, or the course in general ([ckurtz@mvyps.org](mailto:ckurtz@mvyps.org), or through gmail address above)