**Book Review Assignment**

Creative Writing, Senior Elective

*One, fairly universal, piece of advice given to writers is that they must also be readers. Writers can learn their craft from reading, and reading widely. If you are serious about becoming a strong writer, you should read everything— poetry and prose, fiction and nonfiction, classics and contemporaries, novels from every genre. Devour the written word. By doing so, you will learn a variety of cadences and rhythms. You will be exposed to new ideas, different perspectives than your own, fresh vocabulary, and a wide range of narrative techniques. As a result, your intuition as a writer will be sharpened.*

You are assigned to read one book *for pleasure* each month of the trimester. The goal is to help you become a more thoughtful, analytical reader. I do not want you to review a book that you have read (and already analyzed) for a class. I want to you to choose a book— any book— to read outside of school. It does not need to be literary or erudite. Choose a children’s novel, a murder mystery, a contemporary YA… anything that might appeal to you. *Given the unusual circumstances we are currently in, if you need help getting a novel, please let me know as soon as possible!*

After reading (and, hopefully, enjoying) your novel, I want you to think about the book as a writer. Ask questions like: Where was the writing effective? What parts of the story kept your interest? Were the characters believable? Did the way the novel ended stay true to the beginning? Was the story grounded in an authentic setting? Was the dialogue natural? By discovering the strengths and the weaknesses in another author’s writing, you will begin to notice your own strengths and weakness. You will begin to be able to emulate what is done well, and you can actively avoid pitfalls common to authors.

**What to Write:**

* A short synopsis of the novel. Focus on being concise. Do not include subplots or minor characters. Tell the beginning, middle, and end of the plot— no need to worry about spoilers. Try to locate the novel’s “inciting incident” (the event that early in the book sparks the story’s action). This should be no more than a few sentences. When writers try to sell their manuscripts, they are required to provide this type of short, concise summary. This is good practice for any of you who one day may find yourselves querying agents or editors.
* The Good: review what was done well in this book. Write a paragraph (or two) explaining what you liked about the novel. As a reader, what did you respond positively to? Did you like the characters? the pacing and plot? the genre? the concept? the humor? the style of narration? the thematic questions? the usage of language? Explore what the author did well, and try to identify the reasons these techniques worked.
* The Bad: review what was not done well in this book. Write a paragraph (or two) explaining what you did not like about the novel. As a reader, what did you respond negatively to? What were the weaknesses? Where was the writing awkward, stilted, boring, or offensive? Where did the plot veer off course? When did the characters act out of character? What, in your opinion, was phony or cheesy?

**Other Requirements**

* This assignment should be one page— no more than that!
* Please type your assignment, using MLA formatting (font size 12, Times New Roman, double spaced, skip lines, standard heading and title)
* Due dates: Thursday, April 30th; Friday, May 29th