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Contemporary World Literature --Reading Log

Thomas – 2016

Record **ten two-part entries** while you read the novel/non-fiction work of your choice. For each entry, pick two questions from the attached list. You should pick **two** different questions each day. Respond to each question with at least one well-developed paragraph.

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Question:

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**Essential Questions**

**Adversity, Conflict, and Change**

* How does conflict lead to change?
* What problem-solving strategies can individuals use to manage conflict and change?
* How does an individual’s point of view affect the way they deal with conflict?
* What personal qualities have helped you to deal with conflict and change?
* How might if feel to live through a conflict that disrupts your way of life?
* How does conflict influence an individual’s decisions and actions?
* How are people transformed through their relationships with others?
* What is community and what are the individual’s responsibility to the community as well as the community’s responsibility to the individual?

**Social Justice**

* What is social justice?
* To what extent does power or the lack of power affect individuals?
* What is oppression and what are the root causes?
* How are prejudice and bias created? How do we overcome them?
* What are the responsibilities of the individual in regard to issues of social justice?
* Can literature serve as a vehicle for social change?
* When should an individual take a stand against what he/she believes to be an injustice? What are the most effective ways to do this?
* What are the factors that create an imbalance of power within a culture?
* What does power have to do with fairness and justice?
* Is it ever necessary to question the status quo?
* What are the benefits and consequences of questioning / challenging social order?
* Do we have choices concerning fairness and justice?
* Does labeling and stereotyping influence how we look at and understand the world?
* What does it mean to be invisible? (context: minorities)
* In what ways can a minority keep their issues on the larger culture’s "radar screen?"
* Does an institution/culture ever have a right to censor its artists?
* What creates prejudice and what can an individual overcome it?
* What are the causes and consequences of prejudice and injustice, and how does an individual’s response to them reveal his/her true character?
* What allows some individuals to take a stand against prejudice/oppression while others choose to participate in it?
* What are the causes and consequences of prejudice and how does an individual’s response to it reveal his/her morals, ethics, and values?

**Decisions, Actions, and Consequences**

* What is the relationship between decisions and consequences?
* How do we know how to make good decisions?
* How can a person’s decisions and actions change his/her life?
* How do the decisions and actions of characters reveal their personalities?
* How do decisions, actions, and consequences vary depending on the different perspectives of the people involved?

**Chaos and Order**

* What is the importance of civilization and what factors support or destroy its fabric?
* What are the positive and negative aspects of both chaos and order?
* What are the responsibilities and consequences of this new world order described as “global”?
* What role does chaos play in the creative process?
* What are the politics and consequences of war, and how do these vary based on an individual or cultural perspective?

**Constructing Identities**

* How do we form and shape our identities?
* In a culture where we are bombarded with ideas and images of “what we should be,” how does one form an identity that remains true and authentic for her/himself?
* What turning points determine our individual pathways to adulthood?
* In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define us, how do we make decisions for ourselves?

**Creation**

* What is creativity and what is its importance for the individual / the culture?
* What is art and its function in our lives?
* Does a culture / community / institution have the right to censor its artists?

**Freedom and Responsibility**

* What is freedom?
* Is freedom ever free?
* What is the relationship between freedom and responsibility?
* What are the essential liberties?
* Is liberty and justice for all attainable?
* Should people sacrifice freedom in the interest of security?
* When does government have the right to restrict the freedoms of people?
* When is the restriction of freedom a good thing?

**Good and Evil in the World**

* Is humankind inherently good or evil?
* Have the forces of good and evil changed over time and if so, how?
* How do different cultures shape the definitions of good and evil?

**Heroes and Sheroes**

* Do the attributes of a hero remain the same over time?
* When does a positive personality trait become a tragic flaw?
* What is the role of a hero or “sheroe” (coined by Maya Angelou) in a culture?
* How do various cultures reward / recognize their heroes and “sheroes”?
* Why is it important for people and cultures to construct narratives about their experience?
* What is the relevance of studying multicultural texts?
* How do the media shape our view of the world and ourselves?
* In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define us, how do we make decisions for ourselves?

**The Human Condition / Spirit**

* In the face of adversity, what causes some individuals to prevail while others fail?
* What is the meaning of life?
* What is the meaning of life and does that shape our beliefs regarding death?
* Are we governed/guided by fate, free will, a greater power, or do we fall somewhere on the spectrum between?

**Illusion vs. Reality**

* What is reality and how is it constructed?
* What tools can the individual use to judge the difference, or draw a line between, illusion and reality?
* What is hypocrisy and what can the individual / subculture / culture do about it?

**Language and Literature**

* How is our understanding of culture and society constructed through and by language?
* How can language be powerful?
* How can you use language to empower yourself?
* How is language used to manipulate us?
* In what ways are language and power inseparable?
* Is it possible to have culture without language?
* Is it possible to think without language?
* How does language influence the way we think, act, and perceive the world?
* How do authors use the resources of language to impact an audience?
* How is literature like life?
* What is literature supposed to do?
* What influences a writer to create?
* What is the purpose and function of art in our culture?
* How does literature reveal the values of a given culture or time period?
* How does the study of fiction and nonfiction texts help individuals construct their understanding of reality?
* In what ways are all narratives influenced by bias and perspective?
* Where does the meaning of a text reside? Within the text, within the reader, or in the transaction that occurs between them?
* Can a reader infer an author's intentions based on the text?
* What are enduring questions and conflicts that writers (and their cultures) grappled with hundreds of years ago and are still relevant today?
* How do we gauge the optimism or pessimism of a particular time period or particular group of writers?
* Are there universal themes in literature that are of interest or concern to all cultures and societies?
* What are the characteristics or elements that cause a piece of literature to endure?
* What distinguishes a good read from great literature?
* Who decides the criteria for judging whether or not a book is any good?
* What is the purpose of: science fiction? satire? historical novels, etc.?

**Love and Sacrifice**

* If any, what are the boundaries of love and sacrifice, and where does one draw the line between them?
* What are the factors that move individuals / communities / nations to great sacrifice and what are the consequences?

**Nature in the Balance**

* What are the responsibilities of the individual / society / superpowers in regard to the health of the environment? ( local, regional, national or international context can be used)
* What are the consequences of being unconcerned with nature’s balance/harmony?

**Our View of the World and Ourselves**

* How do we know what we know?
* How does what we know about the world shape the way we view ourselves?
* How do our personal experiences shape our view of others?
* What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider?
* What does it mean to “grow up”?
* Do you believe that things are fated no matter what, or do you believe your actions can change the course of your life?
* Have the forces of good and evil changed over time?
* What is the relevance of studying multicultural texts?
* How do the media shape our view of the world and ourselves?
* In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define us, how do we make decisions for ourselves?
* What turning points determine our individual pathways to adulthood?

**Past, Present, and Future**

* Why do we bother to study/examine the past, present or future?
* What are the recurrent motifs of history and in what ways have they changed or remained the same?

**The Pursuit of Happiness**

* What is happiness and what is the degree of importance in one’s life?
* To what extent do a culture / society / subculture shape an individual’s understanding or concept of happiness?

**Relationships and Community**

* What are the elements that build a strong friendship?
* How do friendships change over time?
* What impact does family have during different stages of our lives?
* What can we learn from different generations?
* How is conflict an inevitable part of relationships?
* How do you know if a relationship is healthy or hurtful?
* What personal qualities help or hinder the formation of relationships?
* How are people transformed through their relationships with others?
* What is community and what are the individual’s responsibilities to the community as well as the community’s responsibilities to the individual?

**Shades of Truth**

* Are there certain truths that can be considered universal or absolute?
* What are the consequences of examining “all of the shades of gray”?
* How does perspective shape or alter truth?