

Honors/DE Seniors Questions

Include in your study guide answers to these questions under #14 Themes :

Death of a Salesman, by Arthur Miller

- What does the book say about career and success?
- What does the book say about family?

Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley

- How do you know this book is a satire? What is he criticizing in the “Brave New World”? (Hint: Which characters does Huxley present in a negative light? Which does he present in a positive light? Note his word choice/diction.)
- What predictions of Huxley have come true today?

Three Cups of Tea, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

Why *Three Cups of Tea*?

Many universities have required their freshman classes to read this book as they enter college. Why? Because it expands our world, motivates critical thinking, and inspires us to become part of the “We Generation” rather than the “Me Generation.” It’s a true story that provides action and moves us to act.

We will discuss all summer reading when we return in the fall. Assessments will be given in addition to your answering questions this summer/annotating your text. Since the 3rd book, *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, is nonfiction, answer these questions. Show annotations (notes/highlighting) in your text that are marked with the numbers below to support your answers.

Death of a Salesman and *Brave New World* expose disturbing truths about the human condition-- particularly the despair that results from trying to live in a fallen world apart from a Savior. In year’s past we’ve read Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* which reveals a Victorian woman’s plight resulting from poverty, ignorance, gender injustice, and evil. While students were moved by the injustices created by the “double standard” and I still highly recommend this book, rather than read another British novel set in the past, we’re reading a true story that reveals the same problems with the human condition but in a modern context. Unlike Hardy, whose worldview was fatalistic offering little hope for those who suffer, *Three Cups of Tea* should be uplifting.

Senior year we study world literature which forces us to look at our past, present, and future as Americans and as global citizens. As you read the three books, think about how each defines “The American Dream.” What worldviews are found in each? How do the three books relate to one another? How do they relate to your life?

1. There is a telling passage about Mortenson's change of direction at the start of the book: "One evening, he went to bed by a yak dung fire a mountaineer who'd lost his way, and one morning, by the time he'd shared a pot of butter tea with his hosts and laced up his boots, he'd become a humanitarian who'd found a meaningful path to follow for the rest of his life." What made Mortenson particularly ripe for such a transformation? Has anything similar happened in your own life?

2. Mortenson's transition from climbing bum to humanitarian hero seems very abrupt. However, looking back, it's clear that his sense of mission is rooted in his childhood, the values of his parents, and his relationship with his sister Christa. Discuss the various facets of Mortenson's character-the freewheeling mountain climber, the ER nurse, the devoted son and brother, and the leader of a humanitarian cause. Do you view him as continuing the work his father began?

3. Mortenson is shown as a hero but also as a flawed human being with some exasperating traits. Talk about Mortenson's character as well as the challenges he faces and how he handles them. What 2 questions would you ask him if you were to meet?,

4. How does Relin's telling the story give it a different perspective than if Mortenson had written the narrative himself?

5. Comment on Mortenson's decision that CAI schools should emphasize increasing girls' enrollment. "Once you educate the boys, they tend to leave the villages and go search for work in the cities. But girls stay home, become leaders in the community, and pass on what they've learned. If you really want to change a culture, to empower women, improve basic hygiene and health care, and fight high rates of infant mortality, the answer is to educate girls."

6. At the heart of the book is a powerful but simple message: we each as individuals have the power to change the world, one cup of tea at a time. Yet the book powerfully dramatizes the obstacles in the way of this philosophy: bloody wars waged by huge armies, prejudice, religious extremism, cultural barriers. What do you think of the "one cup of tea at a time" philosophy? Do you think Mortenson's vision can work for lasting and meaningful change?

7. The Balti people are fierce yet extremely hospitable, kind yet rigid, determined to better themselves yet stuck in the past. Discuss your reactions to them and the other groups that Mortenson tries to help.

8. "I expected something like this from an ignorant village mullah, but to get those kinds of letters from my fellow Americans made me wonder whether I should just give up," Mortenson remarked after he started getting hate mail in the wake of September 11. What was your reaction to the letters Mortenson received?

9. Much of the book is a meditation on what it means to be a foreigner assimilating with another culture. Discuss your own experiences with foreign cultures-things that you have learned, mistakes you have made, ways you were changed.