

# **Orientation**

## **5,000 Stories World Scholar Community**

### **WELCOME**

Hello, new scholars and families! Thank you for joining our world scholar community! My name is Angel Selden and I am the head mentor here at 5000 Stories. We are excited to hear your contributions to our invigorating and inspiring class discussions.

We want you to have the best possible experience in this class! I want you to feel like you can't wait to come to class because the discussion feeds your mind and your heart. I also want you to feel like these explorations strengthen your relationship between parent and child, as opposed to causing frustration or power struggles. And I want you to feel like you've learned and grown and see the world a little differently after you've finished this course.

### **COURSE PURPOSE**

This class does not emphasize acquiring facts or memorizing information. It's about becoming truly engaged with these great works and falling in love with learning. It's about gaining new perspectives and empathizing. It's about learning how to think and articulate those thoughts. It's about listening to other's insights. It's about making connections with other stories and personal experiences and integrating these stories into your own life. It's about true, deep understanding, not just surface knowledge.

But the amazing thing is—when you focus on engagement and connection, you will remember so much more information than if you focused on memorizing information. In his book *Man's Search For Meaning*, Dr. Viktor Frankl, Auschwitz survivor, said, "Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue." I believe the same principle applies to becoming knowledgeable--it comes as a byproduct of being curious and engaged.

### **HOW TO PREPARE FOR CLASS**

Detailed instructions for each week's assignment (which we refer to as "explorations") are listed on the website, including any links you need. Please read each week's exploration and all emails thoroughly before asking me a question—Most of your questions will be answered in one of those two places.

When you arrive at the homepage for 5,000 Stories, first make sure you are logged in to the site. You can find the assignment for your exploration for the week on your desktop by clicking "Member content" from the tabs along the top or clicking the icon of your course below. On mobile, you can also click on the icon of your course if you scroll down, or you can click on the menu in the top right (those three lines) and click on "Member Content" from the dropdown menu. Then click on your course and the week you are on.

The approach to each week's exploration is congruent with the Thomas Jefferson education basic formula for a great education—1. Read the classics, 2. Write about them and 3. Discuss them with a mentor. Each week's instructions on the website are almost identical and follow this simple pattern—1. Read through the study guide questions first. This will give you ideas for what you may want to look for as you read, watch or observe in that week's piece. 2. Read, watch or observe the piece. 3. Write your answers to the chosen study guide questions and/or other observations and insights you had while reading or watching the piece. You can do this while you read or afterward. I know for myself I often forget my thoughts if I wait until afterward, so it's better for me to write my thoughts down right away. 4. Prepare to share two of your insights and/or answers to the study guide questions in class. That doesn't mean you are required to share two, and it also doesn't guarantee everyone will get a chance to share two insights. In our experience, most scholars are eager to share their insights. Some weeks have slightly different instructions, namely the week we study art, so make sure you still read through the instructions for each week. But this is the basic approach. include optional supplemental material you may want to check out.

Plan on setting aside 30 minutes every week day to read, discuss and/or write about the exploration for the next meeting. If the syllabus says "Aug 29—The Tale of the Fisherman & the Golden Fish" that means we are discussing that piece on Aug 29 and you need to **read and prepare for it the week or two before Aug 29.**

**Parents are encouraged to read or watch and discuss the piece with their children, if possible.**

You are not required to, but youth will almost always get more out of each piece, and out of the class, if you do, especially if they are under 15. There are several reasons—1. It's a wonderful opportunity for parent and child to strengthen their relationship over this shared story. It feels like you are exploring this new world together! 2. You are setting a powerful example of continuing your own pursuit of, and passion for lifelong learning. 3. As the parent, you can spark conversation and offer more insight into the piece than if they read it on their own. There is no such thing as cheating in this class. If the youth want to share insights in class that they heard from their parents, that's wonderful! We will all benefit from that. I share things I hear from experts and other people all the time.

Study guide questions—purpose is to give you ideas of how you can explore the piece in greater depth and enhance your enjoyment of the piece, parents are encouraged to share their own answers to the questions with their youth. Allow your youth to ponder their own answers the questions first.

You do not need to answer all the study guide questions! However, you might want to for two reasons:

1. You will be prepared to share your thoughts when other scholars bring up those questions for discussion.

2. It will help you prepare for the quiz game on the final day.

## **CONTENT ADVISORY**

Parents--please read the content advisory for each piece first. If you don't see a link that says "Content advisory" on the assignment page, it means there isn't anything I thought you needed to be advised of. I've included page numbers and minutes that contain content that you may be sensitive to, include language, violence, and nudity, even if it's mild. These parts are rare and can easily be skipped, if you choose. In our curriculum curation we have avoided pieces with mature storylines, and all of the chosen pieces have good principles that can be gleaned from them. Parents may want to preview the entire piece or just the page or minutes I've advised.

Also, if you want to raise my awareness to something I overlooked, please let me know!

## **ADAPTABLE CURRICULUM**

This program is not meant to be prescriptive! It is adaptable to your needs and wants.

First, we assume that you are enrolled in this class because you want to study and discuss the same pieces with your peers at the same time. But how you study the piece and prepare for discussion is totally up to you!

Regarding the study guide—

You are not required to answer all the questions! I've provided a variety of questions to give you ideas for things you can look for or different lenses through which you can observe the story or piece. You can choose the questions that are most interesting to you or make your own observations and connections! We encourage you and your youth to go off on tangents—many homeschoolers call it "going down rabbit trails,"-- write them down and share those rabbit trails in class. If that means you don't have time to answer the study guide questions, that's ok! The study guide questions are there if you would like ideas for what to look for and discuss while reading.

These tangents that arise organically are so powerful because it means you and/or your child are making a connection between an element of the text and something you already know or have experienced. This engages your child and gives the text meaning. And it literally forms a powerful connection in the brain—new neurons branch off of existing ones which create a long-term memory and true understanding of the piece, as opposed to just retaining information or a storyline in short-term memory.

**The goal is to simply be prepared to discuss the piece in class**, in whichever way you choose. There are no negative consequences for missing a class or not reading the assignment for the week. If you would prefer to just listen in on the discussion, for whatever reason, we respect that and will not push you to say anything! But of course the discussion is amazing when most of the scholars are prepared, and I do want you to get your time and money's worth.

If you are struggling, please let me know! Some weeks are more challenging than others. so don't give up if one piece is particularly challenging for you. If you just want to listen in on the discussion some weeks, that is totally fine. You will still benefit from listening in, even if you didn't read the book.

## **FINAL MEETING QUIZ GAME**

The Quiz game on the last day of the session is just for fun! There are no grades or stars for this class. I will say that the quiz game—and the social interactions during the game—are more fun if you're prepared It's a great way to review and remember what we learned over the session. Please allow 2 hours for the last day of class. Questions will be taken from the study guides and from class discussions. While there are no grades or scores for this class, we do give out a virtual badge for each course you've completed with 80% attendance.

## **DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**

As you know, class discussion at 5000 Stories World Scholar Community is not about "right" answers. We embrace all insights, ideas and connections that you bring to the class discussion. However, facts do come up and occasionally we may correct each other on a factual piece of information. Youth may even correct the mentors! If so, we will do so kindly, such as "Actually, serfdom hadn't been abolished yet at this time." In situations where there is disagreement about facts, please say, respectfully, "My sources said \_\_\_\_\_." This applies to both scholars and mentors. Scholars and mentors are then encouraged to do their own research and have a conversation about it with their families on their own time if they wish.

**This is guideline #1: Please do not put down another scholar or their ideas.**

Thankfully, no one has ever done this! You scholars are very mature communicators. But I need to state this explicitly ahead of time, just in case.

If you have a differing viewpoint on the moral of a story or what something symbolizes, or even a disagreement about the facts, we encourage you to share it! Just please do it calmly and with a respectful tone of voice, without undermining other scholars' personal insights. One thing I love about these stories and great works is that they are open to interpretation and integration into one's own life! Different people can glean different things from the same story, and it doesn't matter if that was the author's intention.

Which leads me to **guideline #2: We don't discuss political opinions.** We discuss different political and economic systems and their tenets, similarities and differences, and possibly even advantages and disadvantages. But we will not be debating political issues or which we think is best. The class discussions are to practice thinking and articulating, not to persuade each other to think a certain way.

The same applies to **guideline #3: We don't discuss or teach religious beliefs or opinions in class.** Keep in mind that class members come from various religions and belief systems; some do not ascribe to any religion. Religion may come up in discussion as it relates to the piece we are studying—how religious beliefs and institutions may have influenced these stories, the role it played in historical events, social class and culture; and how religion influenced how individuals lived and saw the world. We may refer to a character as a “Christ figure” which is a widely used literary term. Class members in the past have noticed similarities to Bible stories. This is a wonderful way for some of you to connect with a piece. But this has been a small portion of our conversations and we don't discuss religion specifically or teach or debate religious beliefs or their merits.

## **CONCLUSION**

My assistant mentors and I have curated these explorations for you with love because we are so passionate about the great works of humanity from all over the world, and we are so passionate about fostering a love for them in others. We've chosen these particular pieces because they are masterfully crafted and contain so many layers of meaning and opportunities for discovery and connection; and they give us a peek into other times, places and individual life experiences. Some of them may feel challenging, but I enthusiastically believe that if both of you--parent and scholar--commit to discovering how you connect best with the work—whether it's personal experiences, a passion for history, science, culture, language arts or interpersonal relationships—it will feed your soul as it has so many others.

I hope this video has been helpful for you and has gotten you excited to start learning with us! Please reach out to me if you have any questions, concerns or feedback. Thank you!

