

PR: Personal Reading

English/Mr. Burke (2003)

Overview You must *always* have (at least) a book you are reading on your own outside of class. I tend to have several books going at one time, in addition to the magazines and bedtime books I read every day. Last year's students read an average of five PR books in addition to the required class texts. Reading is a *very* important part of this class; it figures significantly in my evaluation of your work as a student in here. Here is what Alex Dove, a student from last year wrote in June:

In the last few months for me I have learned how to enjoy reading. I have learned how much better reading a book can be than watching a movie. I never used to want to read because any time I had to it was usually for school, and in school I didn't get to read what I wanted to. I have just recently discovered that reading can actually be fun, interesting, entertaining, and very enjoyable. I have discovered that because Mr. Burke allows us to pick our own books, no guidelines to follow. Without this class I never would have read *Hoop Dreams*. If I never read that book, I would maybe never want to read like I want to now.

Guidelines

- You must finish at least one book (or the equivalent of about 300 pages) each grading period.
- Class texts do not qualify; nor do summer reading books.
- Unless otherwise specified, you are free to choose the books you read.
- Keep your book with you at all times.
- Read 20 minutes each day from your PR book.
- Choose PR books appropriate for your age, interests, and reading ability.

Performance

Standards

To successfully complete this requirement you must:

- Read one thousand pages by the semester's end.
- Maintain an annotated bibliography for each book. (See sample below)
- Write a one-page reflective response that is *not* a summary. (See sample)
- Choose books on your own that interest and challenge you.
- Properly cite bibliographic information on your annotated bibliography.

Sample Annotated Bibliography

(please include the required books you read for class)

I included one required and one PR book to show you the type of books that should be included in the bibliography. See page 265 in *Writer's Inc* for additional information about bibliographies.

1. Mukherjee, Bharati. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove Press, 1989.
This is a story of the life of an Indian girl. She was widowed early in her life, and smuggled herself into America to escape from her husband's murderer. When she comes to America, she accepts the American culture, and changes the way she acts, dresses, and talks.
2. Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*. New York: Anchor Press, 1997.
This is a tragic story of the death of Chris McCandless. He gave up everything that he had, hitchhiked to Alaska, and walked into the wilderness, following his beliefs. His body was found later by Alaskans.

Proper ->
header
(see p. 277
Writer's Inc.)

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Tanaka 1

Proper -
citation ->
format MLA.
(see p. 265
Writer's Inc.)

Filipovic, Zlata. *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo*. New York: Penguin, 1995.

50-word ->
synopsis
(see p. 277
Writer's Inc.)

In this 197-page book, Zlata Filipovic describes her city of Sarajevo as it is torn apart by war. She began keeping her diary just before her eleventh birthday. In her journal Zlata writes about her days, from school to piano lessons, skiing to watching her favorite TV shows, all American. She decided to keep a diary of her experience just as Anne Frank did, finding in her diary a comfort she could not find elsewhere.

LOSS

500-word ->
essay on a
theme in the
book.

Everyone experiences loss at some point. We lose people, objects, and even games. People lose things everyday. If one loses something unwanted, such as an unwanted sickness, then a loss can certainly be positive. But one can also lose something important to them, a friend for instance. Such a loss is negative. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines loss as: "the condition of being deprived of something or someone."

Zlata experiences a tremendous amount of loss in her life. There is a key cause for her loss, and that's the war that is being fought on the streets right outside of her house. This war prevents Zlata from continuing with her daily activities. She can no longer go to school, play outside, or even enjoy music, because it is unsafe. Coping with the loss of her regular everyday life is very hard for Zlata, but she manages well under the circumstances. She finds new ways to occupy her time. The many restrictions imposed on everyone by the war make finding new activities difficult for her. You can say that her whole city, Sarajevo, lost its freedom.

Surviving for Zlata becomes a challenge. Water, electricity, and food all become scarce. This is just one more loss which Zlata learns to accept. Fresh fruits and vegetables are rare and hardly get into the hungry town of Sarajevo. Even going into the kitchen to use the appliances is dangerous, for Zlata's kitchen faces the street, making it easy to see. Therefore she must keep a low profile at all times. Even if it were safe to enter the kitchen, the electricity would probably be unavailable. Zlata's family finds new ways of cooking to keep from starving. This is almost impossible because Zlata spends much of her life during the war in the cellar, which is the safest place because it is hard to find and out of sight of any invaders. Because of the war, Zlata has even lost her own home.

Zlata lost many things during the war, the most tragic of which were her friends and family. She can no longer see them or even talk to them. Those people most important to Zlata fled to safety in other parts of the world, while others died in the war. Such losses affect Zlata the most and are the hardest to overcome because of the anger and depression they cause her. The war stole Zlata's childhood, leaving her only the terrible memory of complete loss which she records in her diary.

Recommendation
(see p. 222
Writer's Inc.) ->

I recommend this book enthusiastically. Zlata is a remarkable girl. High school students would find this story inspiring and exciting. She never loses hope, even as her city is destroyed. If you liked *The Diary of Anne Frank* you will love this book.