



The Catholic High School of Baltimore
Summer Reading Assignment

Teacher's Name: Mrs. Petro

School Year: 2023 - 2024

Grade Level: 12

Course No.: 141

Course Name: World Literature & Composition

Academic Level (Honors/AP/CP/CPA): Honors

ASSIGNED READING

1. *The Steward of Christendom*, by Sebastian Barry
2. *On Canaan's Side* by Sebastian Barry

Purpose for Reading

I would like for you to discover and enjoy the beautiful lyrical writing style of Sebastian Barry. You will be introduced to Barry's style through *The Dunne Family Series* which consists of three novels and a play written by Sebastian Barry. Book one a play, *The Steward of Christendom* introduces the reader to both Barry's lyrical style of writing and the critical story elements of *The Dunne Family Series*. This provides a platform for understanding the nuances and complexities of Barry's other three novels, specifically book four, *On Canaan's Side* which you will read this summer and *Annie Dunne* which we will read as one of our major works during the school year.

Pre-Reading Task

Author and Culture Study: In addition to a general biographical sketch, you will address the areas of Barry's biography which influence his writings.

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Examination of Culture: You will write a brief background piece on The Republic of Ireland in contrast with the Ireland of Barry's great-grandfather, addressing the nation's history and culture. The purpose is for you to develop an understanding of the Irish people, particularly Irish Catholics, their history, and rich culture prior to reading the novel and play by the Irish writer [playwright, novelist, poet], Sebastian Barry.

The total composition should be 2-4 pages in length.

During Reading Task (optional, but highly encouraged)

Following the provided reading schedule, I encourage you to annotate as you read. Stop and jot every once in a while. Consider questions about the story elements; make self to text or text to the world connections as you read. Seek to discover Barry's use of literary devices. I will have a Google Classroom for the Summer Reading Assignment and I encourage you to engage each other as you read and explore these two wonderful works. I will monitor the Google Classroom throughout the summer and will provide you with guidance if needed.

Post Reading Task

Respond to the following prompts with properly cited textual evidence to support your response. Each prompt should be thoroughly addressed.

1. Barry is best known for his lyrical literary writing style. What is the lyrical literary style of writing? Select two examples from each of the required readings. You should explain how your examples illustrate Barry's craft of lyrical literary writing style.
2. ***On Canaan's Side***: The Irish War of Independence, WWI, The Vietnam War, and The Gulf War have all destroyed so much in Lilly's life. The Irish expression and subsequent title of Barry's novel, ***On Canaan's Side*** is an ode to the sorrows of war. How were Ed, Bill, and Lilly scarred by each of the wars listed above?
3. **The Steward of Christendom**: Compare and contrast Smith's relationship with Thomas Dunne at the beginning of the play to his relationship with Thomas Dunne at the end of the play. Why do you think their relationship evolved in such a manner?



4. **The Steward of Christendom:** Within the context of British Imperialism and British Colonial history, there is a saying within the wall of history, *It is highly probable that no other category of people (aside from non-Aryans who fought for Hitler) fall more squarely on the “wrong side of history” than the Colonial loyalist.* How is this applicable to Thomas Dunne as the Steward of Christendom? How did his choice to be an Irish Catholic Loyalist impact his family? What is the symbolism of Dublin Castle?
5. **On Canaan’s Side:** At the end of the novel Lilly has the means and sorrow to commit suicide, but Barry’s ending is ambiguous. Does Lilly commit suicide or decide against taking her own life? Do you think Lilly survives? Why? or Why not?

Book Club Bonus Point Opportunity

After completing the initial Summer Reading Assignment, if you are interested you may desire to stretch yourself and read *A Long Long Way*, book three of *The Dunne Family Series*. This reading will not have a written task, but you will be required to meet in September to discuss the book with me in a small book club discussion group.

Per The Catholic High School of Baltimore’s Honor Code, your work must be your own. Any type of academic dishonesty in completing this assignment will result in an automatic failing grade and a referral to the administration for disciplinary action.