

**2017-2018 FRESHMAN COMMON READING
HOMEGOING BY YAA GYASI**



ABOUT HOMEGOING

WINNER OF THE PEN/ HEMINGWAY AWARD

WINNER OF THE NBCC'S JOHN LEONARD AWARD

A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK

A WASHINGTON POST NOTABLE BOOK

Ghana, eighteenth century: two half-sisters are born into different villages, each unaware of the other. One will marry an Englishman and lead a life of comfort in the palatial rooms of the cape coast castle. The other will be captured in a raid on her village, imprisoned in the very same castle, and sold into slavery.

Homegoing follows the parallel paths of these sisters and their descendants through eight generations: from the gold coast to the plantations of Mississippi, from the American civil war to jazz age Harlem. Yaa Gyasi's extraordinary novel illuminates slavery's troubled legacy both for those who were taken and those who stayed—and shows how the memory of captivity has been inscribed on the soul of our nation.

-Penguin Random House

CHOICE OF TEXTS

The National Council of English Teachers advises teachers to “consider the contribution which each work may make to the education of the reader, its aesthetic value, its honesty, its readability for a particular group of students, and its appeal to adolescents.” As most books of literary merit deal with the nature of humanity, each may contain what some believe to be controversial material; however, the Common Core standards encourages students to read widely from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. We encourage parents to discuss issues or values that might raise concern.

ASSIGNMENT GOALS

We believe that we learn to read through reading. With this in mind, the purpose of the common reading assignment is multi-fold:

- ✓ Learn and practice close reading techniques and critical reading skills essential to becoming a successful student of literature and language
- ✓ Begin to comprehend more than plot, looking at how the author creates meaning through the use of diction, style structure, and literary elements

- ✓ Reap the intrinsic long-term rewards of reading, like empathy for human problems and increased vocabulary

ASSIGNMENT SPECIFICS

- ✓ This assignment is due the first day of the 2017-2018 school year to your English I teacher, unless otherwise noted.
- ✓ You may purchase any kind of bound journal (e.g. spiral notebook or marble composition) that suits your individual study style.
- ✓ You will also use this bound journal to record responses to designated tasks from the HHS M.Y.P. Freshman Summer Experience Project.
- ✓ Use blue or black ink to ensure that your thoughts and impressions are recorded permanently, but feel free to cross through, scratch out, or insert. Editing marks are perfectly acceptable and even encouraged.
- ✓ Be sure to adhere to specifications concerning length or quantity for each of the 20 entries within Part I. Only entries that meet the specifications will receive full points.
 - With the exception of the source citation entry, all entries must be at least a 1/2 page response (this equates to at least 10 lines of the page). Some entries may be shorter such as the quote analysis as they don't require in depth answers. Entry responses should reflect thorough reading of the text and should incorporate textual evidence, original thought, and page numbers where appropriate.
- ✓ Plagiarized responses will receive automatic zero as a grade.
- ✓ Be sure to label each entry with the entry number (1-20 and the bold title) for organization purposes.
- ✓ Use conventions of standard English.

PART 1: CLOSE READING ANALYSIS

ENTRY TITLE	ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS
Source Citation	Write an MLA BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRY for the book: Author's last name, first name. Title of book. Publication city: publisher, latest copyright
Title Analysis & Symbolism	1. Evaluate the title of the book. Why do you think that the author chose the word Homegoing? What is a homegoing and where does it appear in the novel? In addition to the term's literal meaning, discuss what symbolic meanings or associations the title might have in terms of a connection with our place of birth, our ancestors, our heritage, and our personal and cultural histories.
Theme	2. Explore the theme of belief. What forms of belief are depicted in the book and what purpose do these beliefs seem to serve for the characters? Does the author reveal what has shaped the characters' beliefs? Do these beliefs seem to have a mostly positive or negative impact on the believer and those around them?
Perspective	3. What perspective does the book offer on the subject of beliefs and otherness? For instance, does the book delineate between superstition and belief? Why does Ma Aku reprimand Jo after he is kicked out of church? What do the Missionary

	and the fetish man contribute to a dialogue on beliefs and otherness? Does the book ultimately suggest the best way to confront beliefs that are foreign to us?
Cultural & Societal Issues	4. Evaluate the treatment and role of women in the novel. What role does marriage play within the cultures represented in the novel and how are the women treated as a result? Likewise, what significance does fertility and motherhood have for the women and how does it influence their treatment? In the chapter entitled “Effia,” what does Adwoa tell Effia that her coupling with James is really about? In its depiction of the collective experiences of the female characters, what does the book seem to reveal about womanhood? How different would you say the treatment and role of women is today? Discuss.
Narrative Structure & Point of View	5. Analyze the structure of the book. Why do you think the author assigned a chapter to each of the major characters? What points of view are represented therein? Does any single point of view seem to stand out among the rest or do you believe that the author presented a balanced point of view? Explain. Although each chapter is distinct, what do the stories have in common when considered collectively? How might your interpretation of the book differ if the author had chosen to tell the story from a single point of view?
Setting	6. Consider the setting of the book. What time periods are represented and what places are adopted as settings? Why do you think that the author chose these particular settings? What subjects and themes are illuminated via these particular choices? How does the extensive scope of the book help to unify these themes and create a cohesive treatment of the subjects therein?
Quote Analysis- Figurative Language	7. In the chapter entitled “Quey,” Fiifi tells Quey that “[the] village must conduct its business like [the] female bird” (53). What does he mean by this and why do you think that Fiifi chooses this approach?
Quote Analysis- Plot & Characterization	8. Why was Quey sent to England? After his return home, why does Quey say that it was safer in England? Why might he feel that what he faces at home is more difficult than the challenges he faced in leaving home and living abroad?
Quote Analysis- Figurative Language	9. James’s mother, Nana Yaa, says that the Gold Coast is like a pot of groundnut soup (89). What does she mean by this?
Quote Analysis- Culture & Characterization	10. Why does Akosua Mensah insist to James, “I will be my own nation” (99)? What role do patriotism, heritage, and tradition play in contributing to the injustices, prejudices, and violence depicted in the book? Which other characters seem to share Akosua’s point of view?

Theme Analysis	11. Explore the theme of complicity. What are some examples of complicity found in the novel? Who is complicit in the slave trade? Where do most of the slaves come from and who trades them? Who does Abena’s father say is ultimately responsible (142)? Do you agree with him? Explain why or why not.
Cultural & Societal Issues	12. Examine the relationships between parents and children in the book. How would you characterize these relationships? Do the children seem to understand their parents and have good relationships with them and vice versa? Do the characters’ views of their parents change or evolve as they grow up? How do the characters’ relationships with their parents influence the way that they raise their own children? 
Characterization	13. What significance does naming have in the book? Why do some of the characters have to change or give up their names? Likewise, what do the characters’ nicknames reveal both about them and about those who give or repeat these names? What does this dialogue ultimately suggest about the power of language and naming? 
Motif	14. Explore the motif of storytelling. Who are the storytellers in the book and what kinds of stories do they tell? Who is their audience? What might these examples suggest about the purpose and significance of a storytelling tradition? 
Point of View	15. According to Akua, where does evil begin? Where else in the book do readers find examples that support her view? What impact does Akua’s opinion have on Yaw’s lifework? Does he agree with Akua’s view or refute it? Do you agree with her? Discuss. 
Historical Context	16. What is history according to Yaw? What does he tell his students is “the problem of history” (226)? Who does Yaw say we believe when reading historical texts and what does he say is the question we must ask when studying history? How might these ideas influence your own reading of Gyasi’s book and reshape your ideas about the historical subjects and themes treated therein? 
Vocabulary & Thematic Context	17. Sonny says that the problem in America “wasn’t segregation but the fact that you could not, in fact, segregate” (244)? What does he mean by this? What does Sonny say that he is forced to feel because of segregation? Which of the other characters experience these same feelings and hardships? Does there seem to be any progress as the story goes on? If so, how is progress achieved? Alternatively, what stymies and slows progress in this area?
Characterization	18. What is Marcus studying and why isn’t his research going well? What feeling does he indicate that he hopes to capture with his project? Why does Marcus go to Ghana and what does he learn from his experiences there? Marcus believes that “most people lived their lives on upper levels, not stopping to peer underneath (298). What does he mean by this? Where do we find examples of

	this elsewhere in the book? Are there any characters in the novel who defy this characterization?
Global Issues	19. Consider the book’s treatment of colonialism and imperialism. In the chapter entitled “Esi” at the start of the book, what does Esi’s mother tell her daughter that weakness and strength really are? How does her definition of weakness and strength correspond to the dialogue about colonialism and imperialism that runs throughout the book? Discuss how this dialogue expands into a deeper conversation about freedom and human rights. Have the issues surrounding colonialism, imperialism, freedom, and human rights featured in the book been resolved today or do they linger? If they remain, does the book ultimately offer any suggestions or advice as to how this might be remedied? <i>“Homage to an inspiration.” – TA-NEHISI COATES</i>
Reader Response	20. “Reader response stresses the importance of the reader's role in interpreting texts. ... Because all readers bring their own emotions, concerns, life experiences, and knowledge to their reading, each interpretation is subjective and unique.” Click this link to access this task.

PART 2: GLOBAL CONTEXTS

- ✓ Global Contexts are the “lens” through which students critically discuss literature and the world around us.
- ✓ In literature we are concerned with HOW the author reveals these through plot, characterization, and/or theme. Refer to the purple colored handout located in your Summer Academy handbook.
- ✓ Your task is to identify which Global Contexts have been employed by the author and how each is revealed within the Plot, Characterization, and/or Theme. Provide textual evidence and an explanation. Consider this sample graphic organizer for housing your responses.
- ✓ Duplicate this graphic organizer by drawing it in your notebook. You don’t need to duplicate the description column. Column sizes will vary according to the information you write.

Global Contexts	Description	How It is Revealed through Plot	How It is Revealed through Characterization	How it is Revealed through Theme
Identities and Relationships	Who we are- An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.			

Orientation in space and time	<u>Where we are in place and time</u> - An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations, and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.			
Personal and cultural expression	<u>How we express ourselves</u> - An inquiry into the ways we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.			
Scientific and technical innovation	<u>How the world works</u> - An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.			
Globalization and sustainability	<u>How we organize ourselves</u> - An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.			
Fairness and development	<u>Sharing the planet</u> -An inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution			