**English I Summer Reading**

As your summer reading assignment, you will be reading *O Pioneers!*, marking your text, and completing the corresponding set of study questions. Please follow the directions carefully:

**Annotation/text marking** – As you read, highlight or underline passages and words that are important to the development of plot, characters, and foreshadowing. Also, make marginal notes about characters, important events and dialogue, questions and opinions you have, etc. If you need some direction about what to annotate, start with annotating the answers to the study questions as you find them in the text.

**\*Note**: a book with only highlighting or underlining—no marginal notes—will receive no higher than a 50%.

**Study Questions** – These do not have to be in complete sentences. However, **you must answer ALL of each question and make sure your answer is complete with evidence from the text** (either specific examples or quotes)**.** I will not expect you to have all the answers entirely correct, but you must make a clearly concerted effort. We will be discussing the answers in class before we take the test.

**\*\*Accountability\*\*** – The marked text and assignments are due the second day of school, when you have a quiz over the book. The text will be a quiz grade, and the questions will be a test grade. You will also be tested over the material. I must warn you not to “work together” on this assignment; having identical or very similar answers (such as same wording) is considered cheating and will be handled accordingly.

**\*Contacting me:** My email address is **Lknezek@firstdallas.org**. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I will respond as quickly as I can.

*O Pioneers!* Study Questions

**Part 1**

Chapter 1

1. What does the diction of the opening paragraph suggest about life in Hanover, Nebraska?
2. How is Alexandra characterized in this chapter? (give two examples from the text)
3. How is Carl characterized? (again, two examples from the text)

Chapter 2

1. John Bergson’s view of the land has been deeply influenced by his hardship. What has happened during his years of toil and how has it changed this view?
2. Why does Bergson choose Alexandra, his daughter, to depend on rather than her brothers?

Chapter 3

1. Why does Alexandra trust Ivar and seek his advice, despite the fact that he is “eccentric” and her brothers don’t approve?

Chapter 4

1. According to Cather on p. 19, what is the difference in a true pioneer and “most of their neighbors”? (you may quote the book here, but provide your analysis as well)
2. What does Alexandra believe is the “only way one person can ever really help another?” (this will have significance later in the book)
3. At the bottom of p. 24, Alexandra alludes to an old saying about men being discontent. Discuss the male characters’ discontent as already shown in the book.

Chapter 5

1. Alexandra seems to have a love for the land that no one else does. Cite examples from this chapter about how she views land. What is the major literary device used to describe it?

**Part 2**

Chapter 1

1. Explain the changes that have occurred in the last 16 years.

12. What are some signs of a flirtation between Emil and Marie?

Chapter 2

13. In this chapter, Ivar states that “The way here is for all to do alike.” He refers to the judgmental nature of the neighbors, including Alexandra’s relatives. This is in direct conflict, however, to the “pioneer spirit.” Discuss this irony.

Chapter 3

14. Alexandra’s family members are very concerned with “emblems of prosperity.” Why do you suppose they are so concerned with material things and Alexandra is not?

Chapter 4

15. How is Carl still discontent?

16. What are the pros and cons of country and city life, as outlined by Alexandra and Carl?

Chapter 5

17. This is a chapter of foreshadowing. When you get to the end of the book, come back to this question and cite examples of foreshadowing found in this chapter.

Chapter 7

18. Given the previous chapter’s enhancement of the contrast between Marie and her husband, what is ironic about Chapter 7?

Chapter 8

19. What evidence is there that Marie and Emil have strong feelings for each other?

20. How does Emil seem to be reacting to the fact that they cannot be together? What is Marie’s attitude?

Chapter 9

21. How are the French characterized in this chapter?

22. Make a prediction about what the last line of the chapter is foreshadowing.

Chapter 10

23. Why are Oscar and Lou upset about Carl’s presence? What has their obsession with wealth done to their perceptions?

Chapter 11

24. Why is Emil really going to Mexico?

25. Why are Emil and Alexandra unable to “help” each other at this point? (see question 8)

Chapter 12

26. Carl says to Alexandra, “To take what you would give me, I should have to be either a very large man or a very small one, and I am only in the middle class.” What does he mean by this?

**Part 3**

Chapter 1

27. Marie opens up about the unfortunate nature of her marriage to Frank. What is wrong between them?

Chapter 2

28. What is missing from Alexandra’s life? (give examples from the book to back this up)

**Part 4**

Chapter 1

29. Explain Frank’s problem as outlined on p. 87.

Chapter 2

30. Marie explains to Emil why she married Frank and then says, “When one makes a mistake, there’s no telling where it will stop.” What does she mean by this, and how does it apply to her?

Chapter 3

31. Why do Lou and Oscar resent Emil so vehemently?

Chapter 4, Chapter 5

32. Explain the irony here.

Chapter 6

33. What spiritual epiphany does Emil have here?

Chapter 7

34. Explain the progression of feelings and resulting actions that Frank goes through after shooting his wife and Emil.

Chapter 8

35. What is the judgment in Ivar’s words in the last sentence of the chapter?

**Part 5**

Chapter 1, Chapter 2

36. Why does Alexandra forgive Frank and petition for his pardon? What does the novel’s attitude toward sin and responsibility seem to be?

Chapter 3

37. Alexandra and Carl finally decide to marry. Describe their relationship.

**Broader questions:**

38. Given Alexandra’s dream about the strange being that carries her (which seems to be some kind of human manifestation of the land) as well as the other male/female relationships in the book. What does Cather seem to be saying about the relationship between men and women?

39. Carl says at one point, “there are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves.” Discuss this in relation to the characters in the novel.

40. What does the author’s attitude seem to be about land (i.e. what is the author trying to say about land)? Cite specific passages.