

So you may prepare, here are the directions to help you write your essay when you return to school. You will write about one of the two remaining books (the creative project is for the book from the English “Choice” list, and you will NOT write about that book). Be prepared to write about either of the two remaining books! You will be allowed to use your book while writing, so annotate it, use colored tabs, etc., to help you organize your ideas.

### **Upper School Summer Reading Essay (in class)**

#### **Theme**

Virtually every piece of literature has a theme or themes. A theme is a general statement about life or people, and it is a complete thought. For example, “jealousy” is not a theme of Shakespeare’s Othello. “Jealousy” is merely a topic. A thematic statement would look more like this: “Jealousy **is a destructive force in human relationships.**”

The thematic statement takes the topic and makes a specific point about it. Notice that the literary work is not mentioned in the thematic statement. That is because the statement is generalized, meaning that it applies to life outside of the book.

All literary works are intended to make some kind of point about life or people in general. However, the author rarely comes right out and says what the point of a book is. Instead, you as a reader have to infer the point.

#### **Assignment**

Annotate your book, making notes about setting, characters, imagery, point of view, etc.; you may use highlighters, colored tabs, etc., to help you quickly find items to cite in your essay. For your in-class essay, you will develop a possible theme for one of your books (it may have more than one possible theme – if so, pick just one). You will need no formal introduction. Begin your essay by using your thematic statement as the thesis of your paper. Be sure you are not just writing about a topic – make a **specific point** about the topic.

After you have stated your thesis (your clear point of view regarding what the book is trying to say about life or people), use the body of the essay to explain how the various elements of literature (plot, setting, characterization, tone, etc.) work in the book to get the theme across to the reader. **Be sure to give specific examples from the book as evidence to support the points you are trying to make.** Also be certain to **EXPLAIN** how the examples you use make your point – do not just expect the reader to make the connections.

**\*Your essay should be no shorter than 350 words. Be sure to include your name, the class, the date, and the specific assignment in your heading. This information should appear in the top-left of the first page. Your essay will count for 1 test grade. Check the rubric for grading standards.**