

Language Arts 10 Honors Summer Reading 2017



What is the influence of our society on how we act as males and females?

Introduction:

Do you act like a male or female? How do you know? When you were a baby, were you dressed in pink or blue? Who fed you, changed your diapers, calmed you—your mother or your father? Who earns the money in your family? Do you know how to behave in a typically masculine/feminine way? Why do we have stereotypes about girls who play football, and boys who take gymnastics?

Gender theorists point to the variations in gender roles observed among different cultures by arguing that gender—our masculinity or femininity—is a *social construct* rather than an innate biological characteristic. Because there is no universal “right” way to be a man or woman, they argue that our ways of “doing gender” *are shaped by social cues and influences*.

As we explore questions like the ones posed above—questions of family structures, of social cues about what is masculine and what is feminine, or wages and leisure activities—we will analyze cultural norms that dictate “appropriate” behavior. In other words, we will do “gender studies”—starting with the book you read this summer (Palko).

Reading:

1. All students are expected to complete the East High school-wide free choice summer reading assignment (the “one-pager”). Get that handout from your current Language Arts Teacher.
2. Your Honors 10 summer writing assignment begins with the selection of **one** of the following books to read and annotate:

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** – Maya Angelou

Jane Eyre – Charlotte Brontë

*The Kite Runner** – Khaled Hosseini

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian** – Sherman Alexie

*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe** – Benjamin Alire Saenz

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan – Lisa See

*Catcher in the Rye** – J. D. Salinger

Girls of Riyadh – Rajaa Alsanea

*Will Grayson, Will Grayson** – John Green and David Levithan

I Am Malala – Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb

Ready Player One – Ernest Cline

*Contains some mature content

Due the first day of your Language Arts class:

1. **Letter** assignment, 2-3 pages long, typed (12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1” margins)
2. The **book** you read, selected from the above list, **annotated throughout** (either in the book itself, on Post-Its, or on separate sheets of paper—indicate page numbers, if done on paper)
3. **One-Pager** assigned school-wide to all students.

Consider some of the following quotes about gender:

“Men have sacrificed and crippled themselves physically and emotionally to feed, house, and protect women and children. None of their pain or achievement is registered in feminist rhetoric, which portrays men as oppressive and callous exploiters.”

~ Camille Paglia

“In politics, if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman.”

~ Margaret Thatcher

“When you grow up as a girl, it is like there are faint chalk lines traced approximately three inches around your entire body at all times, drawn by society and often religion and family and particularly other women, who somehow feel invested in how you behave, as if your actions reflect directly on all womanhood.”

~ M.E. Thomas

“It’s my choice to be beautiful. It’s my choice to be ugly. And it’s my choice to decide what those words actually mean.”

~ Virginia Petrucci

“Gender identity is our internal response to a social construction that attempts to make a connection between a person’s biological makeup and their eventual role in society.”

~ Sam Killermann

“Girls can be athletic. Guys can have feelings. Girls can be smart. Guys can be creative. And vice versa. Gender is specific only to your reproductive organs (and sometimes not even to those), not your interest, likes, dislikes, goals, and ambitions.”

~ Connor Franta

“Guys, you don’t have to act ‘manly’ to be considered a man; you are a man, so just be yourself. Don’t let society make you believe you have to prove your masculinity to anyone because you don’t. You are you and you are worthy, full stop.”

~ Miya Yamanouchi

“How come when girls play with gender it’s a sign of strength and when boys play with gender it’s a sign of weakness?”

~ Lori Duron

“I knew in my bones that Emily Dickinson wouldn’t have written even one poem if she’d had two howling babies, a husband bent on jamming another one into her, a house to run, a garden to tend, three cows to milk, twenty chickens to feed, and four hired hands to cook for. I knew then why they didn’t marry. Emily and Jane and Louisa. I also knew what being lonely was and I didn’t want to be lonely my whole life. I didn’t want to give up on my words. I didn’t want to choose one over the other. Mark Twain didn’t have to. Charles Dickens didn’t.”

~ Jennifer Donnelly

Letter Writing Assignment:

The thematic thread running through each of these book selections is the impact of gender roles on the lives of the characters within each text. After you’ve read your book, select a character from it whom you feel has been impacted by the gender expectations set before him or her in that book.

Then, **write a letter in the first person voice** (I/me/myself pronouns) **as that character** to your audience of readers, **describing your life as a male or female in your society** (this can be inclusive of the character’s culture, family, country, community, etc.).

Note **how being the gender you are, as the character, has shaped your life**. Some ideas to consider are:

- What were you **allowed** to do **or not** do because you were male or female?
- What was your **role in society**?
- How did you **adhere to** or **defy** those **roles** or **gender expectations**?
- How has your gender **restricted** you or **given** you **opportunities**?
- **Do include** how you **feel about these gender roles** (are they positive or negative—how so?).

Your 2-3 page letter should include at least **two excerpts or quotes from the book** which help demonstrate the attitudes your character has about gender. **Be sure your letter can stand as solid evidence of a completed reading assignment** (in other words, make specific references to events within the book).

“Women have a much better time than men in this world; there are far more things forbidden to them.”

– **Oscar Wilde**

“We’ve begun to raise daughters more like sons... but few have the courage to raise our sons more like our daughters.”

– **Gloria Steinem**

“Alaska decided to go help Dolores with dinner. She said that it was sexist to leave the cooking to the women, but better to have good sexist food than crappy boy-prepared food.”

– **John Green, Looking for Alaska**

“A man is lucky if he is the first love of a woman. A woman is lucky if she is the last love of a man.”

– **Charles Dickens**

“Girls can wear jeans and cut their hair short and wear shirts and boots because it’s okay to be a boy; for girls it’s like promotion. But for a boy to look like a girl is degrading, according to you, because secretly you believe that being a girl is degrading.”

– **Ian McEwan, The Cement Garden**

“Gender roles suck,” says Swift Fox. *Then you should stop playing them*, thinks Toby.”

– **Margaret Atwood, MaddAddam**

“When you grow up as a girl, it is like there are faint chalk lines traced approximately three inches around your entire body at all times, drawn by society and often religion and family and particularly other women, who somehow feel invested in how you behave, as if your actions reflect directly on all womanhood.”

– **M.E. Thomas, Confessions of a Sociopath: A Life Spent Hiding in Plain Sight**

“You ride as a man, fight as a man, and you think as a man-”

“I think as a human being,” she retorted hotly. “Men don’t think any differently from women- they just make more noise about being able to.”

– **Tamora Pierce, The Woman Who Rides Like a Man**

“Girls can be athletic. Guys can have feelings. Girls can be smart. Guys can be creative. And vice versa. Gender is specific only to your reproductive organs (and sometimes not even to those), not your interest, likes, dislikes, goals, and ambitions.”

– **Connor Franta, A Work in Progress**

“The girls were expected to grow up to be somebody’s wife. They were also expected to read and write, those being considered soft indoor jobs that were too fiddly for the boys.”

– **Terry Pratchett, The Wee Free Men**

“How come when girls play with gender it’s a sign of strength and when boys play with gender it’s a sign of weakness?”

– **Lori Duron, Raising My Rainbow: Adventures in Raising a Fabulous, Gender Creative Son**

“It’s my choice to be beautiful. It’s my choice to be ugly. And it’s my choice to decide what those words actually mean.”

– **Virginia Petrucci**

“Masculinity is part of a binary and requires its opposite, since, in the absence of femininity, masculinity would have no meaning.”

– **Sheila Jeffreys, Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism**

“Men have sacrificed and crippled themselves physically and emotionally to feed, house, and protect women and children. None of their pain or achievement is registered in feminist rhetoric, which portrays men as oppressive and callous exploiters.”

– **Camille Paglia**

“Guys, you don’t have to act “manly” to be considered a man; you are a man, so just be yourself. Don’t let society make you believe you have to prove your masculinity to anyone because you don’t. You are you and you are worthy, full stop.”

– **Miya Yamanouchi, Embrace Your Sexual Self: A Practical Guide for Women**

“From time immemorial we’ve been cleaning up after male messes. When a man does it for a woman, it’s called being rescued. When a woman does it for a man, it’s housework.”

– **Kate Meader, *Flirting with Fire***

“Gender is not an easy conversation to have. It makes people uncomfortable, sometimes even irritable. Both men and women are resistant to talk about gender, or are quick to dismiss the problems of gender. Because thinking of changing the status quo is always uncomfortable.”

– **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

“Gender identity is our internal response to a social construction that attempts to make a connection between a person’s biological makeup and their eventual role in society.”

– **Sam Killermann, *The Social Justice Advocate’s Handbook: A Guide to Gender***

“It’s striking how many of the world’s biggest problems, and many of the small ones too, are eliminated by the simplest of solutions – having women around.”

– **Geoff Dyer, *Another Great Day at Sea: Life Aboard the USS George H.W. Bush***

“The main point of the article was that a man’s world is different from a women’s world and a man’s emotions are different from a women’s emotions and only marriage can bring the two worlds and the two different sets of emotions together properly.”

– **Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar***

“People call me a feminist whenever I express statements that distinguish me from a doormat.”

– **Rebecca West**

“In Somali culture hyper-masculinity is the most desired attribute in men. Femininity signifies softness, a lightness of touch: qualities that are aggressively pressed onto young girls and women. When a woman does not possess feminine traits, it is considered an act of mild social resistance. This applies equally to men who are not overtly masculine but the stakes are considerably amplified. If a Somali man is considered feminine he is deemed weak, helpless, pitiful: The underlying message being that femininity is inherently inferior to masculinity.”

– **Diriye Osman**

“She had done the usual trick - been nice. She would never know him. He would never know her. Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere.”

– **Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse***

“Men are not from Mars and women are not from Venus instead we are all people. Deal with it.”

– **Shahla Khan, *Friends With Benefits: Rethinking Friendship, Dating & Violence***

“Today, we live in a vastly different world. The person more qualified to lead is not the physically stronger person. It is the more intelligent, the more knowledgeable, the more creative, more innovative. And there are no hormones for those attributes. A man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent, innovative, creative. We have evolved. But our ideas of gender have not evolved very much.”

– **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**