



Sager Classical Academy

9th-12th Grade Summer Reading
The Thief by Megan Whalen Turner
Paragraph and World Building Exercise

Why We Choose to Read

In his 1952 essay entitled “The Great Conversation,” Robert Maynard Hutchins describes how great books are vital to education:

We are as concerned as anybody else at the headlong plunge into the abyss that Western civilization seems to be taking. We believe that the voices that may recall the West to sanity are those which have taken part in the Great Conversation. We want them to be heard again—not because we want to go back to antiquity, or the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance, or the Eighteenth Century. We are quite aware that we do not live in any time but the present, and distressing as the present is, we would not care to live in any other time if we could. We want the voices of the Great Conversation to be heard again because we think they may help us to learn to live better now.

Sager Classical Academy deliberately reads and studies these same voices—these books—not to dream of bygone eras, but to glean the wisdom and eternal truths that are present. Truth remains truth through the ages.

This year in Humanities our summer read imitates the best of quest stories from ancient Greece and Rome. In a fictional land, the people speak a common language and worship common gods but have divided themselves into three separate states: Sounis, Eddis, and Attolia. Our lead character, Eugenides, must choose who he will aid in the quest for ultimate power in this ancient region.

***Reader’s Caution! Our characters do swear on occasion and say things like “Damn the gods!”

ASSIGNMENTS

Please read the entire book and feel free to use an audiobook as you follow along in the text. You have **two assignments** to complete as you read the novel. You may either type or write these by hand. If you choose handwritten, please use your best handwriting and write on the front side of your notebook paper only.

1. **Write an extended paragraph (minimum 10 sentences)** explaining how Gen changes over the course of the book. Include specific details from the story to support your ideas.
2. **Create an ancient setting and world as if you were writing a novel.** World building creates depth and realism while helping a story feel more immersive. Create an ancient world using the following guidelines.

Enjoy the creative process! If you feel a bit stuck, read the first pages of a novel or another fantasy or science fiction book you have at home. Notice how these authors immerse their characters without sounding like an encyclopedia entry.

For this assignment, begin by answering the following questions. For your first pass through the questions, simply take notes. You will **not** turn in these notes or your answers to the questions:

What landmass will you choose? Island? Mainland? Peninsula?

What surrounds this mass? It does not have to be water.

What is the terrain like? Rivers? Lakes? Trees? Other geographical features?

Who lives there? And where do they live specifically? Is it heavily populated? Underpopulated?

What animals live here? Range of wildlife?

I want you to imagine you are in this world right now. You are standing somewhere within it where there is a panoramic view. Are you somewhere high? Low? What can you see? What kind of day is it? Is the sun warm? Is there a sun? What can you hear? What can you smell? What do you sense? Is anyone else with you? How do you feel?

Who rules this world? Is it governed by anyone? Is it autonomous or occupied? What is the dynamic? Finally, what is happening in the moment? What has gone wrong? Or what are you, the character, wrestling with? Draw us in to your story!

Once you've jotted down your notes, write an opening scene to this ancient story. You are the main character. Include everything you have just imagined. There are no rights or wrongs, but it must feel and seem ancient based on what you describe. Please write or type (double-spaced) a full page or more.

FORMAT

Please begin your assignment with the following heading:

Luke Skywalker (your name)
Mr. Kenobi (teacher name)
Lightsaber 101 (class name like Humanities 7)
4 May 1977 (current date)

Summer Reading Paragraph and World Building (center this title)

1. Analyze Gen in one paragraph.
2. Write the beginning scene of an ancient story. Minimum one page.

Do email Mrs. Norvell if you have any questions at christine.norvell@sageracademy.com.

Happy reading!