

Wichita East Senior IB World Lit

Summer Reading 2023

***Circe* by Madeline Miller**
(ISBN: 9780316556347)

Your summer reading book, *Circe*, will be used to ground our study of literature in the first weeks of school, and **we will start with it on the first day. This is an IB curriculum book**, so while I want you to enjoy it (and I think you will), you should read and reflect on it with care because you may end up using it for an IB assessment.

Read thoughtfully and reread when you need to. There are some questions to think about below. *Circe* is a revisioning of Greek mythology through the eyes of a powerful and frequently maligned female demi-goddess and witch. You may be aware of her from reading *The Odyssey*. In Odysseus' tale she plays a minor, but vital, part when she transforms his men into pigs, and later guides Odysseus safely through the trap of Scylla and Charybdis so he can speak to Tiresias in the land of the dead.

Make sure you take a few moments to look up any terms, names, ideas you are not familiar with as you read. You are reading both to restart your literary criticism skills after the summer and to think about the novel as a carefully constructed artwork with something to say to its readers.

- **Millers's *Circe***

Read the novel carefully and enjoy it. It is a rich, slow burn of a story, so prepare yourself with the right setting and beverage. You don't want to read this in the dark, comfy sanctuary of your bed. The lyrical nature of the writing, intended to reflect the poetry of Homer can be mesmerizing. Pay particularly close attention to these ideas:

- Look up Daedalus. You should know about his craft, skill, and his son—Icarus—who flew too close to the sun.
- Look up the Myth of the Minotaur and Ariadne.
- Research any aspect Greek mythology that intrigue you. Do you know about Prometheus and how he ignited human culture? Have you heard of Helios and his beautiful herd of perfectly white cattle? What do you know of Athena beyond her moniker and epigrams? How do the Greek gods reflect or contradict humanity?
- Plants, flowers, and herbs play a vital role in the novel. Some have specific properties that are easily verified with a quick Google search. Some are imbued with magic to enhance natural properties. Historically flowers and plants are symbolic. Consider looking up the Victorian language of flowers and find images of the vegetation described in the text to help you see the story more clearly.
- How is the pacing and time frame reflective of the life Circe leads? What is a just and fair punishment? How is power expressed and orchestrated within the novel?
- Circe's long life—a gift of her heritage—allows her to witness so much of the history happening around her, but it also isolates her and mires her in time. How is time constructed and deconstructed? How do we construct and deconstruct time? What is the impact of the compression and elongation of time throughout the text?

- How is family both a gift and a curse? What is the role and duty of a parent? A child? A sibling? How does family shape who a person is and who they become?
- How much of the mythology in the novel is based on extant myths and what is new, brought to the character by the modern world and contemporary author? What is the effect of the fluctuation between the parts firmly rooted in familiar and ancient myths, and the effect of the elements imagined by Miller?

Content Warning: this novel contains references to torture, sexual assault, oppression, childbirth, infidelity, and single motherhood. They are not gratuitous and are integral to the story, themes, and overall effect of the novel.

- **Assignment 1:** There will be an objective test over the book in the first week of school. If you've read it with reasonable care and have done some reflection on it, you will be fine. Be ready to write answers to some of the questions above.
- **Assignment 2:** Choose TWO passages, approximately one page in length each and do the following:
 - annotate each passage as if you were about to write about it (mark important text, make marginal explanations and reflections—you'll receive a grade for this as well)
 - For EACH passage, type (double-spaced, MLA format) a well-written paragraph (that's two paragraphs total—one for each passage) explaining the following:
 - a. the passage's meaning and significance—that is, an interpretation
 - b. quoted text that includes language that conveys meaning and significance in the passage
 - c. explanation of how literary elements and authorial choices in the passage contribute to your interpretation
 - d. By "well-written paragraph" above, I'm suggesting that your ideas should be integrated and coherent as a prose paragraph.

There will be several additional writing assignments upon your return to school that depend upon you reading the book and completing TWO passage-analysis paragraphs.

PLEASE do not hesitate to email me with questions. I'm happy to help: emlotkiewicz@usd259.net

PLEASE join my class Remind. I will use it frequently to communicate with you.

Text @23-24IB12 to 81010 or join using @23-24IB12 on the Remind app. I cannot recommend this highly enough. I will use Remind over the summer to send you the entire syllabus and let you know when all the books are in at Watermark.

About acquiring your books:

Watermark Books & Café will have all next year's books on hand by the end of summer (I can send a Remind when they're in). I recommend you buy your books for the entire year to save yourself trips (except the summer reading book which should be available now if you'd like to get an earlier start on it). You can also order from Watermark online at their website:

<https://www.watermarkbooks.com/school-year-ib-seniors>. If household finances make buying the books impossible for you, please call the IB office (973-7289) or send Mr. Boykins an email (mboykins@usd259.net).