

# Dual Credit Creative Writing

Summer Reading Assignments

Due first day of class. No exceptions.

Ms. Darnell

Rm #232

Erica.Darnell@jefferson.kyschools.us

Drinking Coffee Elsewhere by: ZZ Packer (local writer)

**DIRECTIONS:** Answer the following questions thoroughly including page numbers and specific references to the text. Your answers should be word processed, and each response should be 1-1 ½ pages in length. Use Times NR size 12; 1.5 or double space.

1. In what ways do the eight stories in *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* complement each other? What situations, problems, and themes recur in the collection? What qualities make it such a cohesive collection?
2. At the end of "**Brownies**," the narrator recalls her father exploiting a group of Mennonites and suddenly knows there is *"something mean in the world" she could not stop [p. 28]*. What is that meanness? Why does she recall her father's experience at this point in the story? In what ways does her father's behavior illuminate the girls' experience at camp?
3. What ironies are suggested by Lynnea's struggle, in "**Our Lady of Peace**," to get her students to talk about Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a classic African American novel, rather than *"their neon fingernail polish or the Mos Def lyrics in front of them"[p. 54]*?
4. What are some of your favorite images in the collection? Discuss how the metaphors contribute to the stories' themes.
5. Many of these stories are about sexually innocent characters who must confront their fears and desires for the first time. For example, in "**Drinking Coffee Elsewhere**," Dina runs away, dropping her packages when a boy offers to walk her home, and she also appears to be afraid to explore her feelings toward Heidi. And in "**Every Tongue Shall Confess**," Sister Clareese's music feels dangerous, even as it moves Pastor Everett. How is the theme of sexual innocence linked to other themes in this collection? How is the loss of innocence characterized in these stories?
6. At the end of "**The Ant of the Self**," the narrator watches a small boy "jump up and down with delight" when he hears the "All aboard!" call at the train station. *"He is the happiest I've seen anyone, ever. And though the urge to weep comes over me, I wait-holding my head in my hands-and it passes" [p. 103]*. Why does this scene affect him so strongly? What might he be thinking here about his own father, his own experience as a boy?
7. In "**Speaking in Tongues**," Tia flees the oppressive world of Pentecostal fanaticism, where she is locked in a closet and forced to accept the Holy Spirit, to the mean streets of Atlanta, where she encounters a world of drugs and sexual exploitation. In what ways are these apparently dissimilar

worlds alike? Why does Tia feel so out of place in both? Do other alternatives exist for her?

8. The stories in *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* are set in a range of places—from Japan to Yale University, from the Million Man March to girl scout camp. How do the settings, and the characters' relationships with their setting, inform the themes in various stories? Do these various settings relate to a larger theme in the collection?
9. "**Doris is Coming**" ends with a striking image. As Doris walks home, after her spontaneous one-woman sit-in, she knows she should hurry, *but "she had to stop and look. The sky had just turned her favorite shade of barely lit blue, the kind that came to windows when you couldn't get back to sleep but couldn't pry yourself awake" [p. 238]*. Why is this an appropriate image with which to end the story and the collection? In what sense is Doris, or the other characters in the collection, in a state between sleeping and waking?
10. All these stories involve African-American characters in similar situations, and yet, their predicaments are universal, which can be seen in "**Doris Is Coming**," with the man from Lithuania. Does this collection perhaps, provide some insight into people who live their life straddling two worlds? Taken together, what do the stories of and the *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* say about the relationship among education, religion, struggle for personal freedom?

## CREATIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2

*Middle Stories* by: Sheila Heti

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose three separate stories from the book to complete this assignment. Your work should be word processed. Keep this assignment separate from assignment #1; also due the first day of class. Use the same font and spacing requirements as assignment #1.

- Choose a character that Heti has already created, and put them into an awkward position/situation. Have that character express their thoughts through a monologue 3-4 minutes. (2-3 pages double spaced) You will share this with the class.
- Choose a chapter/story in which you could create an alternate ending. Steal one of Heti's sentences, and write an ending to her story using your own ideas. Ending should include the use of dialogue, scene, and narration.
- Choose a story and create a double quote journal entry in which you identify a quote with the page number on one side, and you write a response on the other side.

Quote #1 and page #	Respond how it relates to your life
Quote #2 and page #	Respond how it relates to your life
Quote #3 and page #	Respond how it relates to another book
Quote #4 and page #	Respond how it relates to another book
Quote #5 and page #	Respond how it relates to pop culture
Quote #6 and page #	Respond how it relates to pop culture

**\*\*\*Please be sure to purchase the book, *Beginning, Middle, and End* by: Nancy Kress\*\*\* This will serve as a text book for this course.**