

Summer Reading  
AP World History 2010-2011  
Tom Craig

This year's summer assignment is to read pages 9-154 of *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History* by McNeil & McNeill (father and son-both historians). It is available at all the major online bookshops.

You should purchase the book (\$16.25 at Amazon.com; about half that for used copies). In your copy you need to: 1) Annotate it with detailed notes. 2) Generate your own list of 30 thoughtful questions that will generate discussion. Bring the annotated book and question with you to the first class of the school year. 3) In the first couple of days of class you will take a test on the assigned pages to ensure that you read them. This test will be short answer (a paragraph or less) and the questions will refer to aspects of the text that would not be included in on-line summaries. Failing grades on last year's summer assignment test caused a number of students to drop AP World History. Last year's summer assignment proved very useful on the 2010 AP exam and was about twice the length of the one you have to read.

The summer assignment serves several purposes. *The Human Web* introduces you to one of the five major themes of the course as identified in the Course Description published by the College Board: Interactions between humans and the environment—Demography and disease, Migration, Patterns of settlement, technology. Given the tremendous amount of material to be covered in this class (10,000 years of history all over the world!) having a background or head start in one of the five major themes is valuable. During the course of the year you will be reading a lot of the textbook but the summer reading teaches you more of the historian's craft. I hope that by reading the summer assignment and through discussions in class you will come to recognize that history is not finite and there is no "true" history. Rather it is perhaps better seen as a dialogue between the historian and his/hers values and interests and the events of the past.

Some of you have written to me asking what extra work you can do to prepare for AP World History. Only the above assignment is required but if you like to read history and have the time you may want to read *King Leopold's Ghost* (Hocshchild), *Salt* or *Cod* (both by Kurlansky-I think *Salt* is probably the better of the two). Somewhat lighter is *A History of the World in Six Glasses* by Standage. A longer but engaging read is *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (by Diamond) which was a Pulitzer Prize winner and a New York Times best-seller.

I look forward to having you in my class.