

Summer Reading & Writing Tasks

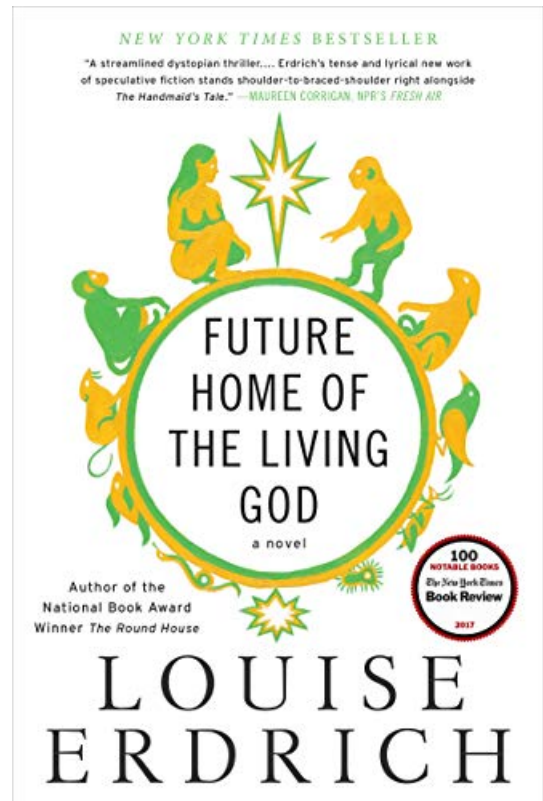
Required Text: *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich (ISBN 978-0-06-269406-5)

Pre-Reading Writer's Notebook Prompts

As an introduction to how we will often work in class, we'd like you to spend some time reflecting before you begin the novel.

Please purchase a single-subject notebook (ideally with perforated pages) that you will use exclusively for this class. Your pre-reading work will be the first entries in this notebook.

This is informal writing; no need to attend to language conventions, spelling, or anything that takes you away from generating ideas. Try to write continuously for at least 5-6 minutes for Parts 1 & 3. This will be primarily private writing (i.e., you won't be turning it in), though you will be asked to share some ideas from it in class.



Part 1:

Novelist and journalist Jason Heller writes,

Post-apocalyptic books are thriving for a simple reason: The world feels more precariously perched on the lip of the abyss than ever, and facing those fears through fiction helps us deal with it. These stories are cathartic as well as cautionary. But they also reaffirm why we struggle to keep our world together in the first place. By imagining what it's like to lose everything, we can value what we have.

(If you're interested, you can read the full article here:

<https://www.npr.org/2015/05/02/402852849/does-post-apocalyptic-literature-have-a-no-n-dystopian-future>)

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this explanation for the now decade-long excitement around dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction. Do you agree? Have you found your past experiences with this type of fiction to be both “cathartic” and “cautionary”? Or would you describe it some other way? Do you find such fiction to be motivational in terms of your actions to preserve our world?

Part 2:

Make a list of the dystopian stories you've considered. Think about texts in any genre, films, TV series, even music. Add as many titles as you can think of.

Part 3:

Anglo-American poet T. S. Eliot concludes his work “The Hollow Men” with these lines:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

Do you think the world will end with a bang or a whimper? And what will that bang or whimper be? That is, do you imagine a sudden collapse or a slow decline, and what brings it about? What in our present moment feels potentially catastrophic to you?

As You Read

You'll see that the post-reading task asks you to work with 3-4 (or more) quotations from the novel, so as you're reading, be on the lookout for passages you find appealing, intriguing, or disconcerting, even if you can't say exactly why. Mark these in any way that makes them easy to return to.

Post-Reading Writer's Notebook Task

As with the pre-reading task, this will be informal, private writing/creating from which you will develop a longer, more polished piece of writing when we begin class. For now, focus on generating as many ideas as possible; let your thinking spill onto the page, trying not to censor yourself.

Choose one of the quotes you found and copy it into your notebook. Then engage with the quote in one (or more) of the following ways (or in some way that you dream up):

- Use it as the first line of a poem or story or reflection
- Talk back to it—push, question, challenge, disagree
- Define a word or phrase from the quote in detail—what it means in this context, in other contexts, to you personally, to Erdrich
- Connect it to a present personal, societal, political, or philosophical concern
- Draw, doodle, paint, compose, sculpt, collage, or create something non-textual
- Create a found poem or a blackout poem with the surrounding pages
- Make a short film enacting, evoking, or reacting to it
- Turn it into performance art or choreography
- Use it as the caption for a series of photos

Then repeat this process with 2-3 more passages, choosing a different form of engagement for each.

On the first day of class, please bring your copy of *Future Home of the Living God* and your English notebook.

We look forward to seeing you again in August!

Mr. Kaye & Dr. Vap