

The Spirit of the Age: Decadence and Disillusionment

Part One: Zeitgeist--The Spirit of the Age

Before you begin your summer reading assignment in earnest, you need to have a clear concept of what is meant by the term “zeitgeist”. In essence, “zeitgeist” means “the spirit of the time; general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period of time” (dictionary.com). The word comes from the two German words that mean “era” and “spirit”. This trend of thought is manifested in art, literature, and popular culture of any period.

In order to better understand this concept, go to Google. Google annually produces short videos called *Years in Search* that visually depict the most popular searches of a calendar year, the idea being that these popular searches speak to the spirit, positive and/or negative, of a year. As a result, the films capture (or at least attempt to capture) the political, social, ethical, cultural issues and discussions that engaged society’s minds and hearts over the course of that year.

We would like you to start by watching *The Year in Search 2018* and *The Year in Search 2019*. Watch more if you’d like; they’re always interesting and often fun. The objective is to show you the kinds of things we want you to research and apply to your summer reading annotations. Yours, however, will focus on the zeitgeist of the book’s setting, post-World War I Europe.

Part Two: The Sun Also Rises Research

This reading (and likely rereading) of The Sun Also Rises will require you to examine it through a philosophical and historical lens. It is expected that you will have your own perceptions of what we read; however those interpretations and reactions must be informed by an accurate and thorough background knowledge. In order to view Hemingway’s work as both a product of and an influencer of the cultural zeitgeist from which it springs, the second part of this summer assignment is to research aspects of the atmosphere in which the novel takes place.

Some suggested points of pre-reading research are:

- The Great War
- The “Lost Generation”
- Paris in the 1920s
- Ex-patriots
- Spain’s running of the bulls/Pamplona (The following link will be a helpful but tame resource in learning about what some consider a questionable tradition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQzmlgPvuLY>)

As you read, continue your research of people, places, and ideas on a self-directed, “I-need-to-know-this” basis as they are mentioned. One way to identify an area to research would be to ask yourself why an author who is best known for his brevity includes particular details.

Part Three: Typed, Parenthetically-cited Annotations and Works Cited Page(s)

Free e-texts of this novel are available on-line, and ebooks can be taken out of the New Britain Public Library. However, if you feel more comfortable with a hard copy, that is acceptable as well.

As you read, keep chronological, annotative notes of what **cultural information one would need to thoroughly understand and appreciate The Sun Also Rises**. These annotations should take the form of a journal. On average you should have an entry for every ten or so pages of the novel, or one per chapter. If you are reading an e-text, this would amount to about twenty-four entries.

We do not want a series of definitions for terms or notes drawn directly from any single source. Nor is this to be a journal of your emotional reactions or connections to ideas, events, and characters in this book because at this level, it is expected that you already read interactively. Rather, it is a series of annotations that is responsive to ideas and events in the book and that fills in holes in your knowledge of the cultural atmosphere of Europe in the 1920s. Do not simply note a piece of cultural information, but note it and explain how it impacts your interpretation or understanding of the novel.

Each annotation should include the page number from The Sun Also Rises where the content inspired you to research, relevant information that you discovered, and a brief explanation of why this info is important to better appreciate the book.

You may find that something you didn't realize at the time of your first reading of the book was important. Therefore, as with other works we'll be reading in this class, you may want to go back and reread parts or all of this novel. Your second read-through will be informed by your knowledge of how the book ends and, therefore, you will know better what details it is most important to annotate and why.

Page # from TSAR

Annotation (with your researched sources cited)

Page 11

(if you read an etext w/o pagination, cite the appropriate chapter number.)

Princeton - a high selective, Ivy League university in Princeton, New Jersey. It is one of the oldest and most highly regarded educational institutions in the United States. At the time that the events in TSAR occur, Princeton was an all-male school, which educated almost exclusively wealthy, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. These facts are relevant because they establish the narrator's position as an "in" member of the society of the book and, further, posit Cohn as an outsider who desires a way in. (Greenholt 37)

Clearly, since parenthetical citations of your research are required, so too is a Works Cited list. This should follow MLA format precisely. Refer to the Purdue OWL online for clarification of MLA format.

This will be graded using the school-wide reading rubric, and will be due the second Friday upon our return. Although we are using the reading rubric, as opposed to the writing rubric to grade this assignment, it's always important to be mindful of the quality of your expression.