

English 11 Honors

26-27 Summer Reading Assignment

Overview

As you read *The Jungle*, pay close attention to how Upton Sinclair uses characters, setting, and conflict to expose the realities of industrial America in the early 1900s. This novel explores themes such as the American Dream, corruption, poverty, exploitation, immigration, family responsibility, and survival. You will complete the following assignments while reading and after finishing the novel.

Part I: Reading Journal Entries (Required)

While reading, complete **7 journal entries**.

Each entry should be approximately **1 well-developed paragraph (4-5 sentences)**.

For each journal entry:

1. Include the chapter number(s)
2. Briefly summarize an important event
3. Explain why the moment matters
4. Connect the event to one of the themes below:
 1. Possible Themes
 2. The American Dream
 3. Corruption
 4. Exploitation of workers
 5. Family and sacrifice
 6. Survival and Morality
 7. Immigration and identity
 8. Power and inequality

(Part Two on Other Side)

Part II: Written Response

Choose **ONE** of the following prompts.

Your response should be **2–3 pages typed, double spaced** (Honors/AP students: 3–4 pages recommended).

Use specific textual evidence and thoughtful analysis throughout your response.

Option A: The American Dream and Naturalism

How does the novel challenge the idea of the American Dream? Use specific examples from the text to explain whether the dream is achievable for Jurgis and his family.

In your response, also analyze how Upton Sinclair uses elements of **naturalism**—such as environment, poverty, and social forces—to shape the characters' lives and choices.

Option B: Society, Responsibility, and Political Argument

What argument is the novel making about society's responsibility toward workers and immigrants? How does Sinclair attempt to persuade readers?

Consider how the novel functions as both:

- a work of literature
- a political/social argument

Analyze the effectiveness of Sinclair's methods, including emotional appeal, realism, and shocking imagery.

Option C: Power, Corruption, and Setting

Analyze how corruption affects different parts of society in the novel. Consider government, business, law enforcement, and workplaces.

In your response, discuss how the setting of industrial Chicago functions almost like its own character, influencing the lives, decisions, and suffering of the people within it.

Option D: Survival, Morality, and Transformation

How does hardship change Jurgis throughout the novel? Does he remain morally responsible for his choices, or is he shaped primarily by his environment?

Compare Jurgis's transformation to another literary protagonist you have studied. Consider how both characters respond to suffering, pressure, or societal expectations.

Option E: Literature and Social Criticism

To what extent is *The Jungle* successful as both a novel and a piece of social criticism?

In your response, analyze:

- characterization
- realism/naturalism
- symbolism
- emotional appeal
- Sinclair's purpose and message

Discuss whether the novel's literary qualities strengthen or weaken its political message.