

AP US History Summer Reading Assignment #1: 1491 by Charles C. Mann

1491 is a groundbreaking study that radically alters our understanding of the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans in 1492, and a necessary book for understanding the long, remarkable story of the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

Traditionally, Americans have been taught that the ancestors of the people who inhabited the Western Hemisphere at the time of Columbus's landing crossed the Bering Strait thirteen thousand years ago, existed mainly in small, nomadic bands, and lived so lightly on the land that the Americas were, for all practical purposes, still a vast wilderness.

But in fact, in 1491 there may well have been more people living in the Americas than in Europe, many of them in urban complexes bigger and more sophisticated than London or Paris. Older, too: Indian cities were thriving before the Egyptians built the great pyramids. Native people of the Americas developed ways of breeding corn and using the land that were far ahead of other civilizations. In the Amazon, Indians learned how to farm the rain forest without destroying it, a process scientists are studying today in the hope of reviving the practice. 1491 is full of new knowledge about the pre-Columbian Americas that will utterly change readers' visions of the past.

1491 is a dense book and is an example of the types of materials you will deal with regularly in APUSH at SCPA. Do not leave this assignment for the night before school starts, you will fail it. Instead, break up the reading of the text over a few weeks of summer. As you read, answer the following questions thoroughly. You are required to answer only 12 of the following 17 questions; you may choose any five you wish to skip. These will form the basis of thoughts you will share with the class during our study of Native Americans at the beginning of our course.

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Mann begins the book with a question about our moral responsibility to the earth's environment: Do we have an obligation, as some green activists believe, to restore environmental conditions to the state in which they were before human intervention [p. 5]? What does the story of the Beni tell us about what "before human intervention" might mean?
2. What scientists have learned about the early Americas gives the lie to what Charles C. Mann, and most of us, learned in high school: "that Indians came to the Americas across the Bering Strait about thirteen thousand years ago, that they lived for the most part in small, isolated groups, and that they had so little impact on their environment that even after millennia of habitation the continents remained mostly wilderness" [p. 4]. What is the effect of learning that most of what we have assumed about the past is "wrong in almost every aspect" [p. 4]?
3. There are many scholarly disagreements about the research described in 1491. If our knowledge of the past is based on the findings of scholars, what happens to the past when scholars don't agree? How convincing is anthropologist Dean R. Snow's statement, "you can make the meager evidence from the ethno historical record tell you anything you want" [p. 5]? Are certain scholars introduced here more believable than others? Why or why not?

4. Probably the most devastating impact from the contact between Europeans and Americans came from the spread of biological agents like smallpox. Of Mann's various descriptions of the effects of foreign diseases on the Americas' native populations [pp. 96—124], which are most shocking, and why? How do you respond to his questions on page 123: "In our antibiotic era, how can we imagine what it means to have entire ways of life hiss away like steam? How can one assay the total impact of the unprecedented calamity that gave rise to the world we live in?"
5. In the nineteenth century, historian George Bancroft described pre-contact America as "an unproductive waste. . . . Its only inhabitants were a few scattered tribes of feeble barbarians, destitute of commerce and of political connection" [pp. 14—15]. To what degree is the reflexive ethnocentrism of earlier times responsible for the erroneous history of the Americas we have inherited?
6. When Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto brought pigs along on his expedition in order to feed himself and his men, the pigs carried microbes that apparently wiped out the Indian populations in the southeast part of the current United States [p. 108—09]. While this episode illustrates the haphazard quality of biological devastation, how does it also connect 1491 to our contemporary world, in which the media reports daily on scientists' fear of diseases like avian flu jumping from animal to human populations? In our present global environment, are we as vulnerable as the Indian tribes discussed by Mann? Are there, as he suggests, moral reverberations to be felt as a result of the European entrance into the Americas five centuries ago [p. 112]?
7. Several of the cultures discussed by Mann honored their dead so highly that, in effect, the dead were treated as if they were still alive. What is most interesting about the attitudes toward death and the dead found in the Chinchorro [pp. 200—01], the Chimor [p. 264], and the Inka [p. 98] cultures?
8. Much of America's founding mythology is based on the idea of the land as an untouched wilderness, yet most scholars now agree that this pristine myth [p. 365] was a convenient story that the early settlers told themselves. What kinds of actions did the myth support, and how did it serve the purposes of the settlers?
9. Because of the lack of documentary and statistical evidence for the mass death caused by disease in the New World, experts have argued about the size of the pre-Columbian population. The so-called High Counters, according to their detractors, "are like people who discover an empty bank account and claim from its very emptiness that it once contained millions of dollars. Historians who project large Indian populations, Low Counter critics say, are committing the intellectual sin of arguing from silence" [p. 112]. Yet those who count low, Indian activists say, do so in order to diminish not only the mass death suffered by indigenous peoples, but also the significant achievements of their pre-contact cultures. Which side does it seem Charles Mann leans toward? Which side do you find more believable?
10. Consider Mann's remark about what was lost because of the destruction wrought by Cortés and others: "Here, at last, we begin to appreciate the enormity of the calamity, for the disintegration of native America was a loss not just to those societies but to the human enterprise as a whole. . . . The Americas were a boundless sea of novel ideas, dreams, stories, philosophies, religions, moralities, discoveries, and all the other products of the mind" [p. 137]. How might the world have been different had the ancient cultures of the Americas survived into the present?

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11. Mann writes, “Native Americans were living in balance with Nature—but they had their thumbs on the scale. . . . The American landscape had come to fit their lives like comfortable clothing. It was a highly successful and stable system, if ‘stable’ is the appropriate word for a regime that involves routinely enshrouding miles of countryside in smoke and ash” [p. 284]. Why did the Indians burn acres of land? Does Mann suggest that there are the ecological lessons for our own time in the Native Americans’ active manipulation of their environment?

12. Using the words of Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson, Mann explains that a “keystone” species is one “that affects the survival and abundance of many other species”; Mann adds that, “Keystone species have disproportionate impact on their ecosystems” [p. 352–53]. Indians were a keystone species in most of the hemisphere before the arrival of Columbus. What force led to their greatly diminished importance in the evolution of the hemisphere’s ecosystems? If our species now has an even greater impact on the world ecosystems, does Mann suggest ways to avoid disasters such as those he delineates in 1491?

13. Discussing foreign environmentalists’ opinions about saving the Amazonian forests, Mann raises a problem with the whole environmental movement: Those in poverty-stricken areas like Amazonia want development and jobs; wealthy, well-educated people in the U.S. and Europe tend to want to preserve these forests [pp. 363–64]. How can this problem be resolved?

14. The Gitksan Indians of Canada’s Northwest have argued a case in the Supreme Court of Canada that “the Gitksan had lived there a long time, had never left, had never agreed to give their land away, and had thus retained legal title to about eleven thousand square miles of the province” [p. xi]. What are the implications of such a claim for the various peoples and tribes that Mann discusses in 1491, and for the descendants of European settlers?

15. What does Mann mean in saying, “Understanding that nature is not normative does not mean that anything goes. . . . Instead the landscape is an arena for the interaction of natural and social forces, a kind of display, and one that like all displays is not fully under the control of its authors” [p. 365–66]?

16. People have long believed that being in the wilderness conveys a sense of the sacred. Mann explains, “The trees closing over my head in the Amazon furo made me feel the presence of something beyond myself, an intuition shared by almost everyone who has walked in the woods alone. That something seemed to have rules and resistances of its own, ones that did not stem from me” [p. 365]. What happens to this idea of a non-human force in nature if, as Mann concludes, the concept of nature is a human creation?

17. Why does Mann end 1491 with a coda on the Haudenosaunee “Great Law of Peace,” and what resonance does it have for the book as a whole?

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AP US History Summer Reading Assignment #2: True Grit by Charles Portis

You may choose **ONE** of these topics to write a 2-4 page essay response on. Use as many direct references from the text as possible to support your thesis. This essay will be graded based upon the strength of your thesis, the quality and applicability of your citations from the text, your integration of information from outside the text and your ability to use proper grammar, spelling and formatting for clarity.

Option #1: Revenge – Revenge, especially for the murder of one’s father, has been a frequent theme in literature, from the Oresteia of Aeschylus in the fifth century B.C., through Shakespeare’s Hamlet, to the present day. American History is no exception to this truth. How is the theme treated in True Grit? Is there anything in the novel that presents an alternative to Mattie’s view of the subject? Does the revenge described in the story align with America’s values of freedom, justice and liberty? Why or why not?

Option #2: Attitudes toward others early in the novel - Mattie observes that, “There is no knowing what is in a man’s heart,” but her judgments about other people, many of which are negative, seem to contradict this insight. Do the events of the novel tend to reinforce her assumptions about others? What do Mattie’s judgments tell us about what Americans valued and respected during this period of American History? Have those values and that respect changed in the intervening years between the book and the present day?

Option #3: Simply a Story - “True Grit is a great read and a terrific story, but nothing more than that.” Write an essay in which they either defend or dissent from this statement, citing at least five specific pieces of evidence.

Option #4: Money Talks - When Ned Pepper threatens to kill her, Mattie tells him, “There is some mix-up here. I am Mattie Ross of near Dardanelle, Arkansas. My family has property and I don’t know why I am being treated like this.” What does this comment tell us about Mattie’s character and values? How is Mattie representative of many wealthy members of American society today who feel that their wealth gives them some measure of power or privilege that the less wealthy do not enjoy?

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Summer Work - Chapters 1-3 of “The American Pageant”

Follow directions on the handouts at the end of this packet to complete outlines for the first three chapters of the text. Optimal length for the outlines is between 2 and 4 pages (front and back) handwritten notes or 1 and 3 pages typed. You are required to complete these notes in Cornell style as illustrated later in this packet.

You are required to sign up for the APUSH 2020-21 Google Class. Using your school email address, log in to classroom.google.com and click join class. Then, enter this code: nezzdr5. You will find electronic versions of these assignments and more on the class site.

Signing up for the Remind messaging system is required for all APUSH students. If you have a smartphone, get push notifications. On your iPhone or Android phone, open your web browser and go to the following link: remind.com/join/bh8e349 . Follow the instructions to sign up for Remind.

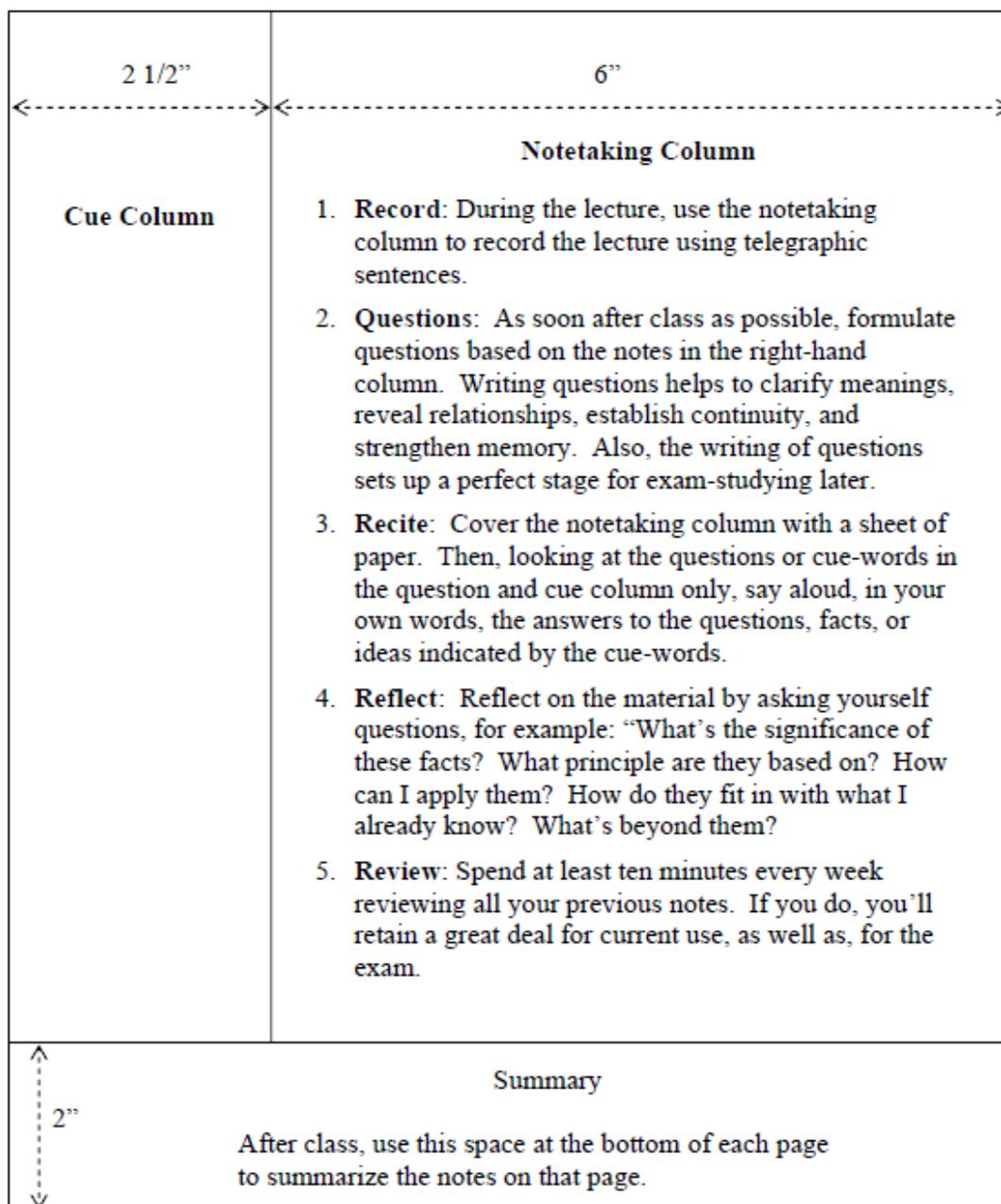
Alternatively, if you do not have a smartphone, get text notifications. Text the message @bh8e349 to the number 81010. If you are having trouble with 81010, try texting @bh8e349 to (513) 206-8335.

If you have any questions about your summer assignments, please see me or email me at digianb@cps-k12.org.

TIPS FOR FINDING SUMMER READING ON THE CHEAP

- Visit the Friends of the Public Library Warehouse in Hartwell. They have hundreds of thousands of books that are library surplus and donations. Also, the purchases you make support continued library programs like guest speakers and summer programs for kids.
- Check out used book stores. Don't pay retail for a book you will use for a few months. Buy used and mark up the book to your heart's delight.
- Check out Amazon, but scroll down and click on the “Used” offerings. Much cheaper and guaranteed to be in good enough condition to read.
- You may borrow the eBook versions of these texts from the library to read on your phone or tablet device. You can even make notes on the text depending which reader app you use! Go to the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County website or look up the “Libby” App on the App Store. All you need to access millions of texts, movies and more is a library card!
- If the books present a financial hardship to you, please speak to Mr. Digiantonio privately. He will acquire the necessary materials at no cost to you.

The Cornell Note-taking System



Cornell Notes Guide

Divide the paper into three sections.

- Draw a dark horizontal line about 5 or 6 lines from the bottom. Use a heavy magic marker or ink pen so that it is clear.
- Draw a dark vertical line about 2 inches from the left side of the paper from the top to the horizontal line.

Document

- Write course name, date and topic at the top of each page

Write Notes

- The large box to the right is for writing notes.
- Skip a line between ideas and topics
- Don't use complete sentences. Use abbreviations, whenever possible. Develop a shorthand of your own, such as using & for the word "and".

Review and clarify

- Review the notes as soon as possible after class.
- Pull out main ideas, key points, dates, and people, and write them in the left column.

Summarize

- Write a summary of the main ideas in the bottom section.

Study your notes

- Reread your notes in the right column.
- Spend most of your time studying the ideas in the left column and the summary at the bottom. These are the most important ideas and will probably include most of the information that will be tested.