Summer Reading Guide

Happy summer and welcome to freshman English at Hathaway Brown!

This year our summer reading is the novel *Feed* by M.T. Anderson. This book is set in a near future (perhaps 100 years or so) in which everyone is connected to the internet by a “feed” that links directly to their brain. It features two main characters: the narrator, Titus, a typical middle-class American teenager, and his friend Violet, who is a bit of an outsider with an uncomfortable relationship to the feed.

We picked this book because it fits into our freshman English themes of Journeys and the Power of Storytelling in interesting ways, and also because the issue of being connected (and sometimes over connected) to technology is so relevant to our lives right now.

The following pages offer some information and activities to help you think about *Feed* before, during, and after you read.

We look forward to meeting you at the end of August!

The 9th Grade English Team
Mr. Ciuni
Mr. Hatcher
Ms. Thayer

Feed. Before you read

Keep in mind that *Feed* is a futuristic, dystopian satire. (Say that 5 times fast!) A dystopia is a fictional world in which things have gone wrong in a society in significant ways. Some other dystopias you might be familiar with are the *Hunger Games* and *Insurgent* series, *The Giver*, and *Fahrenheit 451*, to name just a few. Satire is a genre of literature that uses humor, exaggeration, and irony as a way to highlight problems in the world and prompt a response.

What does this mean for you? If things seem strange as you start the book, know that they are supposed to. Figuring out the connections between the fictional world and our world is part of the fun. More on how to track this in a moment.

Before you begin reading, take the brief Technology Survey on the next page to get a better feel for how you think about technology in your life.
Directions: Read each of the following statements then indicate your response by checking “I agree” or “I disagree.”

**Technology Survey**

1. **Technology advances make life better for everyone.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

2. **It's important for adults to find out where their children are going online.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

3. **Computer technology makes finding information faster and easier.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

4. **If people let machines do too much for them, eventually people will no longer be able to do things for themselves.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

5. **Children should be given more freedom in deciding what they do online.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

6. **It is dangerous to place too much faith in technology.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

7. **It is impossible to become addicted to the Internet.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

8. **Children who play computer games often believe that the violent games they play portray life as it actually is.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

9. **Most teenagers are online too much. They play computer games as a kind of babysitter for their own parents.**
   - I agree
   - I disagree

10. **Those worry about the negative effects of technology should think.**
    - I agree
    - I disagree

11. **Adults too often use the computer games as a kind of babysitter for their children.**
    - I agree
    - I disagree

12. **Having the latest technology is important to success.**
    - I agree
    - I disagree
1. Permission to write in your book

We'll talk about this more once class starts, but for now know that you are allowed to and encouraged to write in your book. (Provided it's not a library copy or a treasured edition your best friend loaned to you.) Underline things you like, mark the entrance of new characters or interesting new information, write questions and comments in the margins. If you want to get fancy, you can color code different things.

Writing in your book does two good things for you: It helps you read more actively and understand more on the first pass, and it helps you find things you want to think and talk about later.

2. Language – What are they talking about?

Because he is writing about a future world, and specifically about teenagers in a future world, M.T. Anderson invented a kind of future speak to mimic the way our slang and jargon is always shifting with the times. The word and concept of the “feed” is just one example. On the first page of the novel we find words like “null” and “unit” used in unfamiliar ways:

*Everything at home was boring. Link Arkwaker was like “I'm so null,” and Marty was all, “I'm null too, unit” ...(3)*

And the characters plan to go to a fun place for “lo-grav.”

Possible translation: “I feel really unstimulated.” … “I do too, dude.” … “Let's go to that low gravity place and float around and bounce off the walls. That'll be fun.”

How would you translate this future speak?

As you read, mark new words in the book and make a list (you can use the back of this sheet of paper) of the future speak words you encounter. Write possible definitions for the ones that confuse you. After you read further, go back and compare notes with yourself. Does your sense of the definition stay the same or does it change?

M.T. Anderson also uses a rich vocabulary of contemporary English. If you would like to help yourself learn some of these words, you can use this website: http://www.vocabulary.com/lists/425557#view=notes

3. Setting – What is this world?

When a writer creates a new world in literature, they have to build that world by creating physical settings and by establishing the institutions of society (family, education, living arrangements, technology, government, entertainment and recreation, etc.) that shape the lives of the characters.

Dystopian worlds, in particular, are based on our world, but extend and exaggerate elements of our society to explore their potential outcomes.
As you read *Feed* pay attention to how he builds his world. Some things he states outright. (On page 1, the narrator tells us, “We went to the moon to have fun,” so we know right away this is a world in which travel to the moon is not just possible but available for entertainment.) Some things are implied. For instance, the ways the feed collects and supplies information about what people want to buy or what is going on in the world outside the United States.

**As you read, make a chart of these categories: family, education, living arrangements, technology, government, entertainment and recreation. Add other categories that make sense to you as you read.**

Arrange the chart so it is split down the middle. One one side, jot down notes about what the world is like in *Feed*. On the other side, write down the equivalent in our world.

Like this:

### Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Feed</em></th>
<th><em>Now</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone connected to the internet almost everywhere, but we can shut them off or put them away</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. Plot and Characters – Who are these people and where are they going?**

The two main characters in *Feed* are Titus and Violet. Titus is the narrator; Violet is an outsider to his social circle because of whom he begins to see his world differently. As you read, pay attention to how they move through physical space - what literal journeys to they go on? in what ways does Violet’s also a physical outsider - and what sort of emotional or philosophical journeys they also go on. Where is Titus at the end of the book compared to the beginning? Where is Violet?

*Feed. After You Read*
• When you finish the book, **jot down a couple of sentences about your initial reaction and any questions you have.** (This is not meant to be a formal piece of writing. Just notes for you to refer back to later. You can write on these pages or in your book or a separate sheet.)

• **Re-do the technology survey from page 2 of this pack.** Do it once for one of the characters in the book. Do it again for what you think the author M.T. Anderson would answer. (Use different ink colors so you can decode this in class!)

• In addition to this guide, you can also consult the discussion questions on pages 303-4 of *Feed* and the author's note that follows. We will talk about these more in class.

*Bring your book, this guide, and your notes and responses to school with you. You will receive initial homework credit for completing them, and we will use these for in class discussion and writing.*