The Preview Assignment

**Overview:** Experienced readers rely on a variety of strategies to help them choose what they’ll read, how they’ll read, and even when, where, and why they’ll read. These readers preview texts: they study book covers, read opening lines and pages, seek friends’ recommendations, and search for opinions in published reviews. Your task is to work with two classmates to prepare and present a preview of an assigned text. It is your job to pique our curiosity, to generate interest in the selected author and text, and to inform our reading.

**Goals:** The main goals for this project are for you (1) to learn more about the text selection and independent reading processes that skilled readers use and (2) to use your insight and creativity to help motivate and inform others’ reading of a selected text.

**Audience:** Your classmates. Your document should help students in this class to be interested in this text and should give them information that will help them decide how best to read it.

**Procedures and Requirements**
1. Sign up on the Preview schedule on Courses@Dordt—with two partners—to claim responsibility for one of the assigned texts for this class. (See the list on the reverse.)

2. Learn what background information you can about your selected text. Then read your text and think about what others ought to know about it before they begin reading. Consider what would motivate and inform their reading.

3. Create your Preview. Combine key elements that experienced readers rely on when previewing texts. Demonstrate a careful and thoughtful reading of the text, as well as creativity, insight, and attention to detail. Your preview must combine:
   - **Visual elements:** Using PowerPoint, create a front cover for the literary text. This should include the title, the author’s name, other short snippets of written information typically included on book covers, and a visual that helps convey important ideas while also sparking our interest in the book. Go beyond the obvious in your visual; choose images that are connected to important ideas in the text.
   - **Verbal elements:** Prepare a talk of 60-90 seconds that lets us know what to expect from this text and author and that gets us interested without spoiling the story. You’ll present this while displaying your cover. You may have a notecard, but use it only as a backup—not to read to us.

4. Post your PowerPoint to the Courses@Dordt forum labeled “Previews” by the due date listed for your text on the sign-up schedule. Your due date: _______________. On that date, also hand in one typed analysis for your team (about 350 words) that answers the following questions:
   - What is it about this text that you wanted to communicate to your classmates?
   - **How** do the visual and written elements of your Preview document communicate these things? (Be specific! Discuss how you chose your image, font, written information, and the information you included in your verbal presentation.)
**Grading:** This project is worth 5% of your final grade. I will grade your project holistically, meaning I will take all of the components (the PowerPoint, the presentation, and analysis) together into account. Quality Previews will:

- Let the class know what to expect from this text and author.
- Get us interested in the reading--without spoiling the text.
- Demonstrate careful and thoughtful reading.
- Exhibit creativity and insight in your choice of visual.
- Present visual and verbal information that is informative, interesting, and relevant.
- Use effective organization and a polished style to enhance your communication.
- Exhibit a developed and accurate understanding of the principles addressed in class, in the assigned readings and activities, and in my responses to your work.

Additionally, the written analysis will explain, in detail, the logic of your visual and verbal presentation.

**A note on collaboration:** While working with a group can be an enjoyable and productive experience, it can also be challenging. Talk in advance with your group about your expectations. How much time will you spend on the project? Will you try to divide the work, to do everything together, to collaborate via e-mail, or some combination of the above? When and where will you meet? What will you do if one of you is unable to meet a deadline? What will you do if a group member’s work doesn’t meet your expectations? Discussing these things in advance can help. It can also be helpful to finish your project early and then decide together what things you still want to revise.

**Preview Due Dates:**
- September 29: O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”
- October 4: O’Connor, “Greenleaf”
- October 11: Mouw, “Not a Stranger”
- October 11: Alexie, “Because My Father Always Said He Was the Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play The Star-Spangled Banner at Woodstock”
- November 8: Egan, “Great Rock & Roll Pauses”
- November 10: Hansen, “Wickedness”
- November 10: Atwood, “Happy Endings”
- November 22: Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron”
- November 29: Skipper, “The Runt”
- December 1: Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter”
- December 1: Updike, “Outage”

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