

Dear students of English 10,

This summer, amidst vacation, time with family and friends, Netflix, and sleep, you will be reading some of the best short stories and novels of American literature. To assist you in making the reading more meaningful and memorable, based on feedback from previous English 10 students, I have prepared an introductory handout for each of the summer reading novels. Many students shared that they would have appreciated the novels even more if they had a short plot overview and quick explanation of the plot structure. Before you begin the novels, please read through the introductions. I hope they will help you enjoy the books even more!

Some practical notes:

- 1. As you read, make mental notes of the characters and plot; you may find it helpful to have a notebook handy and jot down a couple quick notes as you read or after you finish a story. You'll be quizzes on the novels and short stories during the first week of classes. Feel free to record your thoughts along the way (if you fancy keeping a reading journal), or parts of the novel/stories you find interesting.*
- 2. You will likely encounter some unfamiliar words, especially when reading the short stories. Hawthorne and Irving, writing in the 19th century, have a tendency of using even MORE archaic words to project the reader imaginatively into the past. Have a dictionary handy (a physical book or an app or website using phone/computer) so you can quickly look up the words. It's actually fun!*

Overall, the most important part of summer reading is to ENJOY the works. Try reading in a comfortable spot inside or outside, or chat about what you read with your parents/siblings/fellow classmates! As you read this summer, keep these questions in mind:

- What does this work reveal about the human experience (i.e., LIFE)?*
- What light does this work shed on man's relationship to God?*
- What virtues does this work inspire / What vices does this work condemn?*

I look forward to your return in August to dig into and discuss these works of American literature. In the meantime, have an exciting and relaxing summer! Make memories and rejuvenate so that you may return to school refreshed and ready to engage in your vocation of study!

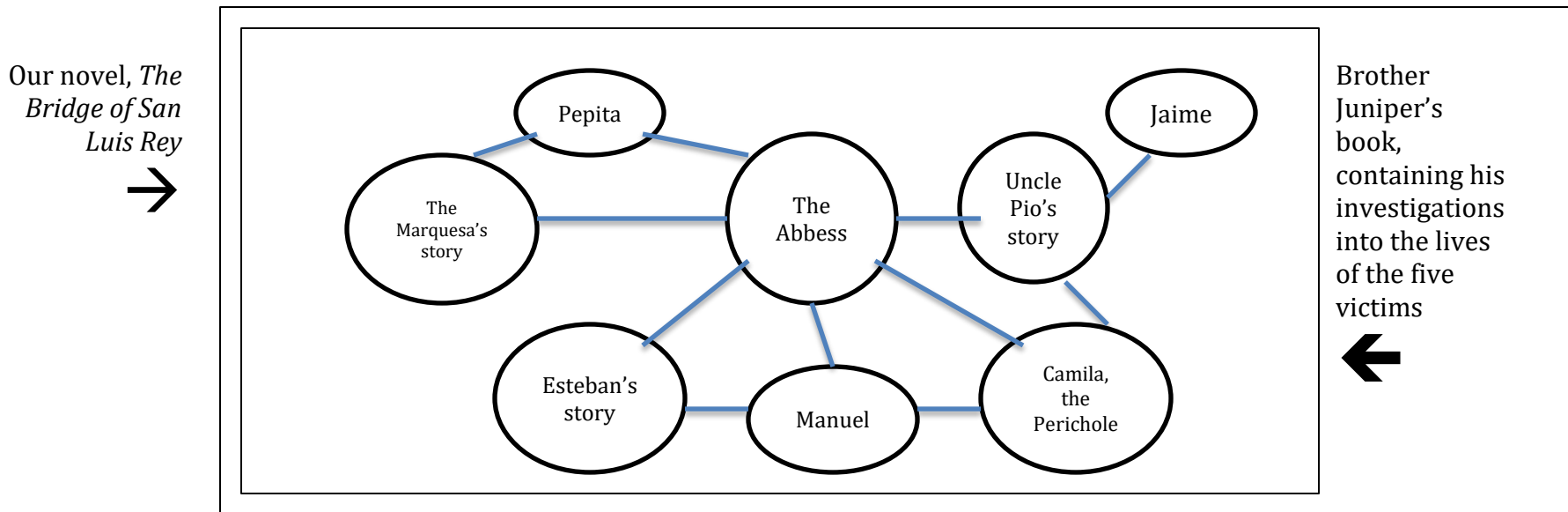
Verso l'alto!

In Christ,

Miss Bonutti

An Introduction to Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*

Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* has what *seems* to be a very simple plot: a bridge in Peru collapses, five people die, and a witness (Brother Juniper) wants to make sense of this tragedy. The narrative structure of the novel, however, can be complex. The novel itself is a story made up of stories all within a story. The unnamed narrator tells us, the readers, about Brother Juniper and his collection of stories, in which Brother Juniper unfolds the lives of the five bridge collapse victims. You could think of it as a group of five one-act plays bound together, or a series of interviews, or a five-episode Netflix mini-series. The diagram below may help you to visualize the plot.



Your challenge as the reader is to enter into the mystery of the tragedy alongside Brother Juniper. You'll get to know the five persons that perished in the bridge collapse, as well as the people closest to the victims. Like a detective, you'll be attempting to connect the dots and discover the common ties amongst the characters. "We examine the lives of Pepita, a teenaged orphan; Esteban, a mysterious twin who suffers an identity crisis; Uncle Pio, the wordly, theater-loving adventurer; Jaime, the young son of a famous actress Pio nurtures and guides to stardom; and the Marquesa, an overbearing mother and respected letter-writer" (NEA's *The Big Read: The Bridge of San Luis Rey*). The novel will also prompt to you wonder about deep, meaningful mysteries about human existence (as any good novel will do).

As you read, consider the following:

- Are we guided by fate, by chance, or by the providence of God?
- Are tragedies the will of God, or something more random and terrifying?
- What is the relationship between science and religion, between faith and reason?
- How does *love* bind people together? What forms of love exist?

Happy reading!

Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*

Fighting, revenge, ambition, courage, chases, escapes, mutiny, desertion, love, loyalty, loss...all on the high seas! Get ready for this classic sea voyage epic in which a weakling bookworm, Humphrey van Weyden, is whisked aboard a seal-hunting schooner with a crew of devious shipmates and a cruel captain that is, perhaps, the most purely ruthless villain ever created in literature. Watch as Humphrey van Weyden is shaped by harsh experiences at sea into an unlikely hero that faces Wolf Larsen in battles of strength and mind, of fists and philosophy. Who will survive?

PLOT

SHORT SUMMARY:

CONFLICTS: (list at least three)

MATERIALISM: Life exists only in this material world; there is no afterlife, nothing else; therefore, there is no reason for virtuous or right living. Ties in w/ social Darwinism: all living things seek to eat/destroy weaker things in order to survive. The only point in life is to accumulate MORE power, wealth, etc., and destroy anything in your way.

IDEALISM: Objective truth exists. Strive for right living, cultivate virtue, help one's fellow man, care for your community. A sense of justice and fairness. God, heaven, and the afterlife exist (for Humphrey); therefore, there is more to life than this material world.

1. As you read, refer to the descriptions above of two philosophical viewpoints, represented by the two main characters.
2. Is Wolf Larsen as evil as he is depicted to be?
3. What do you think of Maud Brewster and the love-story element of the novel? Is it realistic or overwrought (over-the-top)? Does it add to or distract from the novel?
4. Do you find yourself aligned in philosophy with Wolf or Humphrey?
5. Where does the Catholic, Incarnational viewpoint fall on the spectrum between Humphrey and Wolf?