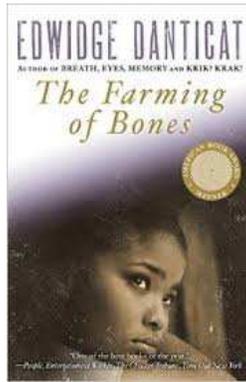


Pre-AICE English Language Summer Reading Assignment

Due: First Day of Class



American Book Award Winner

Text: *The Farming of Bones*

Author: Edwidge Danticat

ISBN-10: 1616953497

It is 1937 and Amabelle Dèsir, a young Haitian woman living in the Dominican Republic, has built herself a life as the servant and companion of the wife of a wealthy colonel. She and Sebastian, a cane worker, are deeply in love and plan to marry. But Amabelle's world collapses when a wave of genocidal violence driven by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, leads to the slaughter of Haitian workers. Amabelle and Sebastian are separated, and she desperately flees the tide of violence for a Haiti she barely remembers.

Already acknowledged as a classic, this harrowing story of love and survival—from one of the most important voices of her generation—is an unforgettable memorial to the victims of the Parsley Massacre and a testimony to the power of human memory.

Part I:

-Read the novel *The Farming of Bones* by Edwidge Danticat. Use the attached “Background and Historical Context Page” for support.

-As you read, highlight passages that deal with the following themes:

- Home and family
- The power of memory
- Prejudice

-Highlight each in different colors or label them.

Part II:

Answer the following questions. These questions must be written by hand in **at least 3-5 full sentences**. They must also include at least **one quote** from the text to support your answer.

- Write in black ink on the front side of the paper only
- Write legibly

- Your answers should not be the same or similar to anyone else's. This is solely independent work. Multiple same submissions will result in a zero for both parties.

Chapters 1-16

1. The first several chapters go back and forth between the main narrative and smaller vignettes about Amabelle's love, Sebastian (these are in bold). Compare and contrast these styles.
2. How would you describe Amabelle's relationship to Señora Valencia? How does Amabelle delivering her twins influence this relationship?
3. How do characters react differently to Joel's death? Why do you think they react in these ways?

Chapters 17-26

1. What do Señora Valencia's twins symbolize? Why is it significant that one of them dies?
2. Rafael Trujillo, aka the Generalissimo, is not a character in the novel but has a presence throughout. Describe this presence and how it changes. (Note: one good place to look might be his speech on the radio in chapter 18).
3. For a long time, Señora Valencia and Señor Pico have served as Amabelle's family. How is this idea challenged in this section?
4. In chapter 26, the Doctor Javier confirms that the Generalissimo has ordered soldiers and civilians to kill Haitians. Describe Amabelle's reaction.

Chapters 27-37

1. After Amabelle escapes Alegria, she finds herself traveling with a new set of survivors. Do you think this functions as a sort of family for her? Why or why not?
2. In your opinion, does Amabelle think it is likely that Sebastian is still alive? Do you think it is better to hold onto hope for someone you love regardless of how likely it is? Why?
3. How do soldiers use the Spanish word for parsley, "perejil," as a test?
4. Why is it so important for the survivors of the massacre to tell their stories, both at the border hospital and to the Haitian authorities?
5. How has Father Romain been affected by the massacre and why is this so tragic for Amabelle?

Chapters 38-End

1. Why is it important for Amabelle to return to the Dominican Republic so many years later?
2. Why do you think Señora Valencia tries so hard to "impress" Amabelle after she finds her again? Is this attempt enough?
3. What is the purpose of Amabelle swimming in the Dajabon River, where the massacre had occurred years earlier, at the end of the novel?

Background and Historical Context

Setting

The novel takes place in 1937 on the island of Hispaniola, which consists of two countries: Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It begins in a Dominican town called Alegria.



Rafael Trujillo, aka El Jefe, aka the Generalissimo

Rafael Trujillo ruled the Dominican Republic officially and unofficially from 1930 until his assassination in 1961. During this time, Civil Liberties were practically nonexistent. Trujillo repeatedly won elections unopposed while his detractors disappeared. Those he perceived as his enemies were routinely jailed, tortured, or killed.

Trujillo demanded loyalty and respect from Dominicans—it was common for people to name their sons after him and to see pictures of him in residences—and he renamed various monuments throughout the country after himself, including renaming the capital city. While his regime did bring about some economic prosperity in the Dominican Republic, this wealth largely stayed with Trujillo and his close friends and family.

The Parsley Massacre

In 1937, Trujillo ordered the massacre of Haitians living in the country. While the order was mostly carried out by soldiers, many firsthand accounts describe civilians taking part in the massacre as well.

The massacre occurred for a week. Because bodies were discarded hastily, it is impossible to know the exact number of deaths, but it is estimated to be between 9000 and 40,000. The Dajabon River, on the northern border between the two countries, was a site of many of the killings.

The Parsley Massacre refers to a test Trujillo devised to distinguish Haitian-born citizens: soldiers would make people pronounce “perejil,” the Spanish word for parsley. Because there is no rolling “r” sound in Haitian Creole, Haitians would tend to pronounce the word “perewil.”