

## **Incoming 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Pre-AICE level Summer Reading:**

As an incoming 8<sup>th</sup> grader going into an advanced ELA class, you will be expected to read and complete the summer reading program. This program is designed to not only prevent the “Summer Slide”, but to also prepare you for the rigor and level of expectations in the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Pre-AICE classroom. Additionally, many of the high school programs in the area will require summer reading in the future as well, so consider this a warm-up!

You will read one of the four books below; as you are reading the book you are to answer the guided reading questions in well-developed paragraphs with integrated text evidence (According to the book it states, “...” On page 125 the text reads, “...”). After reading the book you will then write an essay according to the book specific prompt, and you will complete the art integrated project as well.

### **Scythe** (*Mature content-violence*)

Two teens must learn the “art of killing” in this Printz Honor–winning book, the first in a chilling new series from Neal Shusterman, author of the *New York Times* bestselling *Unwind* dystology.

A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery: humanity has conquered all those things, and has even conquered death. Now Scythes are the only ones who can end life—and they are commanded to do so, in order to keep the size of the population under control.

Citra and Rowan are chosen to apprentice to a scythe—a role that neither wants. These teens must master the “art” of taking life, knowing that the consequence of failure could mean losing their own.

*Scythe* is the first novel of a thrilling new series by National Book Award–winning author Neal Shusterman in which Citra and Rowan learn that a perfect world comes only with a heavy price.

**Essay Prompt:** *Citra and Rowan, for lack of a better term, “murder” people as their job. Explain how both of them justify and keep their “humanity” as they take the lives and witness the death of other people. Be sure to use details from the novel.*

**Art project:** Design your own Scythe robe. This can be done with an actual robe/gown or digitally. Be sure to explain the details that you have selected and to also include your Scythe name as well and why you have chosen it.

## Guided Reading Questions:

1. The first entry from the gleaning journal of H. S. Curie states, “We must, by law, keep a record of the innocents we kill. And as I see it, they’re all innocents. Even the guilty.” Why does Curie see mankind as both innocent and guilty? In your opinion, does that matter?
2. Citra thinks, “No surprise that people bent over backwards to please scythes in every possible way. Hope in the shadow of fear is the world’s most powerful motivator.” Do you agree? What role does hope have in motivating others? In what ways do people strive to accommodate and influence scythes?
3. Consider what you’ve learned about Citra and Rowan. What is it about these two teens that make them seem like appropriate candidates as scythe apprentices? In what ways are they similar, and how are they different? Given what you discover about them, is there one character you like better than the other? If so, why?
4. After meeting Rowan for the first time at Kohl’s gleaning, Faraday tells Rowan, “You stood your ground for a boy you barely knew. You comforted him at the moment of his death, bearing the pain of the jolt. You bore witness, even though no one called you to do so.” Why does this act impress Faraday so much?
5. Did learning that Scythe Faraday attends the funerals of those he gleans surprise you? For what reason do you think it’s significant that he does this?
6. In the instructions Faraday gives Citra and Rowan, he tells them, “You shall study history, the great philosophers; the sciences. You will come to understand the nature of life, and what it means to be human before you are permanently charged with the taking of life. You will also study all forms of killcraft, and become experts.” What do you believe are his motivations to have his apprentices study both the arts and sciences? How does this benefit them and their potential future work?
7. Volta states that Scythe Goddard is “the future.” Given what you have learned about the new guard of scythes, what makes that so disconcerting? What do you believe motivates Goddard to behave the way he does?
8. Why does Citra become so committed to understanding the details of Faraday’s last day? Do you think she is right to grow suspicious about his death? Consider the consequences of her actions: How does her need to learn what happened put her in danger, and why are those involved in his death so worried the truth will be revealed? What was your reaction to the realization that things may not be as they appear?
9. Compare the ways in which Citra and Rowan deal with each other and their apprenticeships. What can be learned about the character of each from these interactions and relationships?

**Concrete Rose** (*mature content warning: violence, adult situations, drugs*)-

International phenomenon Angie Thomas revisits Garden Heights seventeen years before the events of *The Hate U Give* in this searing and poignant exploration of Black boyhood and manhood.

If there's one thing seventeen-year-old Maverick Carter knows, it's that a real man takes care of his family. As the son of a former gang legend, Mav does that the only way he knows how: dealing for the King Lords. With this money he can help his mom, who works two jobs while his dad's in prison.

Life's not perfect, but with a fly girlfriend and a cousin who always has his back, Mav's got everything under control.

Until, that is, Maverick finds out he's a father. Suddenly he has a baby, Seven, who depends on him for everything. But it's not so easy to sling dope, finish school, and raise a child.

So when he's offered the chance to go straight, he takes it. In a world where he's expected to amount to nothing, maybe Mav can prove he's different. When King Lord blood runs through your veins, though, you can't just walk away. Loyalty, revenge, and responsibility threaten to tear Mav apart, especially after the brutal murder of a loved one. He'll have to figure out for himself what it really means to be a man.

**Essay Prompt:** *Maverick is dealt with quite a dilemma and tries to do the right thing each step of the way. In a well-developed essay, explain how Maverick succeeds or fails in doing the "right" thing.*

**Art Project:** Create a mural for Maverick and his family/friends. Use details from the novel to create this. This can be done on a large poster board or done digitally using any type of design program. Briefly explain each element of the mural.

### **Guided Reading Questions:**

1. Much like Thomas's other novels, *Concrete Rose* is a first person, dialect narrative, in the present tense, yet the events take place over a long period of time. Discuss the way in which the story is told. What is Thomas's aim in writing in this style? What impact does it have on the reader, to hear the story in Maverick's own voice? How significant is it for the novel to be written in a voice that has rarely been given the status of being 'literary'?
2. "It's like Lisa sees this version of me that nobody else do." Pg. 299 Compare the world seen through Maverick's eyes with the portrayal of real-life neighborhoods and communities like Garden Heights via the news, or other media or narratives. Discuss which is a truer reflection of those communities, then consider the impact that these different portrayals have on the communities they represent.

3. ““Son, one of the biggest lies ever told is that Black men don’t feel emotions.”” p.151

““Don’t grow up too fast. You’ll miss being a kid.”” p.181

Explore the representation of Black manhood throughout *Concrete Rose*. How does this compare to other representations of Black manhood? Consider the importance of these two quotations, and what they mean for Maverick. How does the pressure of ‘being a man’ impact his life, the way he is perceived and the decisions he makes?

4. ‘Mr. Wyatt know we claim King Lords. It’s pretty normal around here, messed up as that is.’ p.60

How does Thomas create tension throughout the narrative, reflecting the uneasy balance between the community’s tolerance of gang culture and the varying levels of involvement that characters have within that world?

5. “Roses can bloom in the hardest conditions.”” p.308

““They could easily survive without any help. We want them to thrive.”” p.96

The novel is divided into three parts: ‘Germination’, ‘Growth’, and ‘Dormancy’. Discuss the meaning of the analogy of roses throughout the book – what or who does the rose represent? Consider the relationship within the analogy between gardening, parenthood and Maverick’s own development. What does the word, ‘Dormancy’, imply? What does it suggest comes next?

6. ““You know what your name mean,” he said. “Bet her name don’t mean shit.””

The significance of names is a recurring theme in Thomas’s novels. Why do you think this is? What importance and significance do the characters’ names have on the development of the story, or the actions they take? Was King destined to want the ‘crown’? Does Maverick’s name help him make independent choices? Compare the significance of characters’ names in other works of fiction, or using real-life examples or personal experience.

7. ‘The Garden take somebody from everybody, and we still go hard for it. I guess it’s ‘cause it’s all we know.’ p.140

‘At Friday night football games, it don’t matter if you rep gray or green. Only the school colors matter.’ p.152

Loyalty is a key theme within Thomas’s novel: loyalty to family and friends, gang-affiliation, the neighborhood, reputation, even schools. Often these loyalties are conflicting, transitory, or hierarchical. Discuss Maverick and the community’s various loyalties, and how these influence the narrative. Compare this to other examples, or to personal experience of conflicting loyalties.

8. Thomas’s novel is explicitly American in its portrayal of Garden Heights, but the book explores far more universal and wide-reaching themes. Compare the experiences of the characters or key moments within the text with examples from the UK, such as teenage pregnancy, community spirit, gang culture, perceptions of young Black men or earning a living. Consider how the setting of the book allows Thomas to explore aspects of the human condition that speak far beyond the limits of Garden Heights.

**Renegades-**

A high-stakes world of adventure, passion, danger, and betrayal . . . . From #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author Marissa Meyer comes the *New York Times*-bestselling YA novel *Renegades*.

*Secret Identities.*

*Extraordinary Powers.*

*She wants vengeance. He wants justice.*

The Renegades are a syndicate of prodigies—humans with extraordinary abilities—who emerged from the ruins of a crumbled society and established peace and order where chaos reigned. As champions of justice, they remain a symbol of hope and courage to everyone...except the villains they once overthrew.

Nova has a reason to hate the Renegades, and she is on a mission for vengeance. As she gets closer to her target, she meets Adrian, a Renegade boy who believes in justice—and in Nova. But Nova's allegiance is to a villain who has the power to end them both.

Essay Prompt: Nova is a complex character, in fact she is a round character (Round characters are fully realized characters that come into conflict with each other and other characters in believable ways, spurring character development. ... While a round character is a character with a complex personality, a dynamic character is one that changes throughout the course of a story.) In a well-developed essay explain how Nova is justified in her infiltrating the Renegades. Be sure to use examples from the novel.

**Art Project:** Design your own superhero/villain costume. You can either make your own physical one, draw it, or create one digitally. Be sure to explain the details of the costume and to include the name of your superhero/villain.

### Guided Reading Questions:

1. *Renegades* builds a world in which mortals rely—perhaps too heavily—on superheroes. Imagining superheroes in our world, describe some scenarios in which mortals might lean on superheroes to solve problems both big and small. What are the potential pros and cons of assistance from superheroes?
2. Along with superheroes, Gatlon City is home to a population of villains. How are the villains and Anarchists able to survive among the Renegades? Is it possible for good to exist without evil? Can heroes be “bad,” and can villains be “good”?
3. The Renegades are by no means perfect. What does Nova learn about how the Renegades operate that surprises her—and possibly surprises readers as well?
4. Nova’s rage toward the Renegades stems from a horrible, traumatic event in her childhood. Are her rage and her desire for revenge warranted?

5. Adrian, too, was dealt a terrible trauma as a child. What are the repercussions of that in terms of how he lives in the present? If he had been brought up the way Nova was, how might his outlook be different?
6. The line, “Do you have what it takes to be a hero?” appears early in the book. Discuss the ways in which this question relates thematically to both Nova and Adrian’s stories.
7. Nova wants to hate Adrian, but finds herself questioning her feelings. What makes up her attraction to him? And why is Adrian attracted to Nova?
8. Marissa Meyer has said that the scene in the library was in part inspired by the fact that destruction and war “can lead to travesties beyond the already tragic loss of human life and freedom”. What is the symbolism of setting this scene in a library?
9. Who is your favorite superhero, and why? Why are superheroes such mainstays of our culture—in books, comics, movies, and television?

***Murder on the Orient Express***—The Queen of Mystery has come to Harper Collins! Agatha Christie, the acknowledged mistress of suspense—creator of indomitable sleuth Miss Marple, meticulous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot, and so many other unforgettable characters—brings her entire oeuvre of

ingenious whodunits, locked room mysteries, and perplexing puzzles to Harper Paperbacks...including *Murder on the Orient Express*, the most famous Hercule Poirot mystery, which has the brilliant detective hunting for a killer aboard one of the world's most luxurious passenger trains.

**Essay Prompt:** What are the characteristics of a well-written murder mystery? How do readers respond to such a novel? Is *Murder on the Orient Express* a well-written murder mystery? Why or why not? Write a definition essay that outlines the characteristics of a well-written murder mystery using specific textual evidence from the book to explain your ideas.

**Art Project:** Visually recreate the murder scene from the novel. Include clues that pertain to each character in the scene. Identify the clue and how it represents the character.

### **Guided Reading Questions:**

1. How is the diversity of American society shown through the passengers? How does this diversity create an interesting and unusual case for Poirot?
2. One issue that is alluded to in Christie's novel is the role that prejudice and profiling play in criminal investigation. M. Bouc, in particular, is quick to assign characters guilt or innocence based on what he perceives as the characteristics of their nationality. Find examples that demonstrate this point in the novel.
3. Why did Agatha Christie set the murder on a train? What does the train symbolize in the novel?
4. Agatha Christie based parts of her novel on the real-life kidnapping case of Charles Lindbergh. What are the similarities and differences between the true crime story and the fictional Armstrong kidnapping?
5. Name two comedic characters in *Murder on the Orient Express*. How are they comedic and how do they help propel the plot?
6. How are working-class people portrayed in the novel? What differences do you see between working class and non-working-class individuals?
7. Daisy Armstrong, despite the fact that she never appears in the book, is one of the most important characters. How does her death affect all those around her?
8. Before she is revealed as Linda Arden, what behavior or descriptions might indicate Mrs. Hubbard is an actress. What is the difference between revenge and justice?
9. Where are the murderers justified in killing Mr. Ratchett?
10. Why did Poirot choose not to report the crime and punish the criminals?

## ***Orphan Monster Spy*** (war violence/situations)

**Her name is Sarah. She's blonde, blue-eyed, and Jewish in 1939 Germany. And her act of resistance is about to change the world.** After her mother is shot at a checkpoint, fifteen-year-old Sarah meets a mysterious man with an ambiguous accent, a suspiciously bare apartment, and a lockbox full of weapons. He's part of the secret resistance against the Third Reich, and he needs Sarah to hide in plain sight at a school for the daughters of top Nazi leaders, posing as one of them. If she can befriend the daughter of a key scientist and get invited to her house, she might be able to steal the blueprints to a bomb that could destroy the cities of Western Europe. Nothing could prepare Sarah for her cutthroat schoolmates, and soon she finds herself in a battle for survival unlike any she'd ever imagined. But anyone who underestimates this innocent-seeming girl does so at their peril. She may look sweet, but she's the Nazis' worst nightmare.

**Essay Prompt:** *At the end of the novel Sarah questions 'Who were the right people? The ones who had left a trail of corpses behind them and a teenager strapped to a hospital bed? The monsters who ran the country, or the monsters who battled them?' Are the actions of Sarah and the Captain justified across the novel? Can the means ever justify the end? Can killing ever be for the best?*

**Art Project:** Create a mural of five characters in the books. Include a character description of each and their role in the story. Use details from the novel to create this. This can be done on a large poster board or done digitally using any type of design program. Briefly explain each element of the mural.

**Guided Reading Questions:** (Use text evidence to support your answer)

1. Sarah agrees to work with the Captain even after realizing he was partly responsible for her mother's death. What was her strongest motivator for this decision?
  2. What purpose does the character of the Mouse serve?
  3. How trustworthy is the Captain? Use examples from the story to justify your answers.
  4. You could describe Sarah as the ultimate underdog – does she transcend that by the end?
  5. Discuss the importance of Sarah's internal (mental) "box" throughout the story.
  6. Frau Klose is an interesting character. Discuss how her life has been affected by the Nazi regime, and how this impacts on her views of Sarah.
  7. After the river run, the Ice Queen says "I was very wrong about you, Haller...and you go on surprising me. I mistook your size for weakness, your obstinacy for pride. But you are fearless." Who underestimates Sarah throughout the novel, and why do you think they make this mistake?
  8. Discuss the relationship between Elsa and her father. How does he manipulate her to achieve his own means? Are there any similarities between Elsa's father and Sarah's mother?
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**Essay Rubric:**



Purpose, Focus, and Organization	Purpose, Focus, and Organization	Purpose, Focus, and Organization	Purpose, Focus, and Organization	PFO	SCORE
4	3	2	1	0	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I stay focused on my topic throughout the essay and make a clear claim without irrelevant material.</li> <li>I really know my audience and write like my audience is intelligent but doesn't know the subject of my claim.</li> <li>I clearly have a coherent and effective organizational structure that enhances my writing, and I have a satisfying introduction and conclusion.</li> <li>I skillfully use a variety of transitional strategies.</li> <li>I effectively address the counterclaim of the argument to make my own claim stronger (argumentative essays)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I stay focused on my topic throughout the essay and make a clear claim.</li> <li>I write to an audience that is intelligent but doesn't know the subject of my claim.</li> <li>I have a clear and balanced beginning, middle, and end to my essay.</li> <li>I vary my use of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between my ideas.</li> <li>I address the counterclaim of the argument in order to make my own claim stronger (argumentative essays).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I stay focused on my topic or claim but I don't sustain it and it is sometimes hard to see a clear point.</li> <li>I often include extra and unrelated details in my writing that do not fit my main idea or claim.</li> <li>I do not have a strong introduction or conclusion and it is hard to see a structure to my essay.</li> <li>I rarely use transitional strategies, or else I use only very basic transitions like the words "first" or "second".</li> <li>I do not sufficiently address counterclaims (argumentative essays).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My claim or main idea is confusing and I waiver back and forth between a clear point or else I don't even have a point.</li> <li>I include random and unrelated sentences that do not fit my topic and make it hard to understand what I am saying.</li> <li>I do not organize my essay and do not understand the purpose of my writing or what I am supposed to actually write about, or I write so little that my essay doesn't have a beginning, middle, or end.</li> <li>I do not use any transitional strategies.</li> <li>I never discuss counterclaims (argumentative essays).</li> </ul>	No zero	
Conventions of Standard English	Conventions of Standard English	Conventions of Standard English	Conventions of Standard English	CSE	SCORE
4	3	2	1	0	
No four	No three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I occasionally have minor mistakes in grammar, but I do not make the same mistakes over and over again.</li> <li>I know how to use proper punctuation and capitalization.</li> <li>I spell most words correctly although I may spell a difficult word incorrectly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I sometimes make the same mistakes over and over because I don't know the rule well.</li> <li>I am sometimes correct with punctuation and capitalization and am sometimes wrong; I am pretty inconsistent!</li> <li>I misspell some grade level words.</li> </ul>	I have so many grammar and spelling errors that people do not know what I mean!	
Evidence and Elaboration	Evidence and Elaboration	Evidence and Elaboration	Evidence and Elaboration	EE	SCORE
4	3	2	1	0	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I provide strong evidence for my claim or my main idea through the use of sources, facts, and details.</li> <li>• I smoothly synthesize the evidence from the text with my own ideas on the subject.</li> <li>• I use both direct quotes and paraphrasing, and I always explain and develop the idea.</li> <li>• I use a variety of elaborative techniques to fully develop my point and show a deep understanding of the topic and text.</li> <li>• I use appropriate content vocabulary and show a wide knowledge of high level words.</li> <li>• I vary my sentences to create a smooth and interesting piece.</li> <li>• I cite the evidence (see last page for ideas)* that I use in the text and include precise reference to sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I provide adequate evidence for my claim (argumentative) or my main idea (informative) through the use of sources, facts, and details.</li> <li>• I integrate and synthesize the evidence from the text with my own ideas on the subject.</li> <li>• I sometimes use direct quotes that I explain and develop and I sometimes paraphrase.</li> <li>• I use elaborative techniques to fully develop my claim (argumentative) or main idea (informative).</li> <li>• I use appropriate content vocabulary in my writing.</li> <li>• I vary my sentences.</li> <li>• I cite the evidence (see last page for ideas)* that I use in the text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I partially provide uneven evidence for my claim (argumentative) or my main idea (informative).</li> <li>• I do not integrate evidence effectively and rarely develop the evidence with my own ideas.</li> <li>• I do not give much evidence to support my ideas.</li> <li>• I am repetitive and do not elaborate on my ideas.</li> <li>• I sometimes use content vocabulary incorrectly or inappropriately.</li> <li>• I mostly use simple sentences without a lot of variety.</li> <li>• I do not consistently cite the evidence that I use in the text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I provide very little (or even no) evidence for my claim (argumentative) or my main idea (informative).</li> <li>• Any evidence I do provide is irrelevant and random or incorrect.</li> <li>• I am vague and unclear, and my essay is confusing to read.</li> <li>• I rarely use content vocabulary correctly and do not use grade level vocabulary overall.</li> <li>• I use very simple sentences without variety.</li> <li>• I do not cite any evidence.</li> </ul>	No zero	
<b>Comments</b>					<b>Total Score</b>

**Art Project Rubric:**

Topic	Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average
<b>Details explained/supported</b>	There are at least 5 details in the project that are explained in detail and are supported with text evidence when required	There are at least 4 details in the project that are explained in detail and are supported with text evidence when required	There are at least 3 details in the project that are explained in detail and are supported with text evidence when required	There are 2 or less details in the project that are explained in detail and are supported with text evidence when required
<b>Care and Neatness</b>	It is overly apparent that the student took his or her time in completing the project.	The project is well done and looks neat but may have one area that could have been done better.	The project is well done and looks neat but may have two areas that could have been done better.	The project does not look like the student spent adequate time in completing.
<b>Visual Appeal</b>	The Project is visually appealing and utilizes space well	The project is visually appealing but did not utilize space well.		The Project is not visually appealing and did not utilize the space well

## **Concrete Rose** (mature content warning: violence, adult situations, drugs)-

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Until, that is, Maverick finds out he's a father. Suddenly he has a baby, Seven, who depends on him for everything. But it's not so easy to sling dope, finish school, and raise a child.

So when he's offered the chance to go straight, he takes it. In a world where he's expected to amount to nothing, maybe Mav can prove he's different. When King Lord blood runs through your veins, though, you can't just walk away. Loyalty, revenge, and responsibility threaten to tear Mav apart, especially after the brutal murder of a loved one. He'll have to figure out for himself what it really means to be a man.

**Essay Prompt:** *Maverick is dealt with quite a dilemma and tries to do the right thing each step of the way. In a well-developed essay, explain how Maverick succeeds or fails in doing the "right" thing.*

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### **Guided Reading Questions:**

1. Much like Thomas's other novels, *Concrete Rose* is a first person, dialect narrative, in the present tense, yet the events take place over a long period of time. Discuss the way in which the story is told. What is Thomas's aim in writing in this style? What impact does it have on the reader, to hear the story in Maverick's own voice? How significant is it for the novel to be written in a voice that has rarely been given the status of being 'literary'?
2. "It's like Lisa sees this version of me that nobody else do." Pg. 299 Compare the world seen through Maverick's eyes with the portrayal of real-life neighborhoods and communities like Garden Heights via the news, or other media or narratives. Discuss which is a truer reflection of those communities, then consider the impact that these different portrayals have on the communities they represent.

3. “Son, one of the biggest lies ever told is that Black men don’t feel emotions.” p.151

“Don’t grow up too fast. You’ll miss being a kid.” p.181

Explore the representation of Black manhood throughout *Concrete Rose*. How does this compare to other representations of Black manhood? Consider the importance of these two quotations, and what they mean for Maverick. How does the pressure of ‘being a man’ impact his life, the way he is perceived and the decisions he makes?

4. ‘Mr. Wyatt know we claim King Lords. It’s pretty normal around here, messed up as that is.’ p.60

How does Thomas create tension throughout the narrative, reflecting the uneasy balance between the community’s tolerance of gang culture and the varying levels of involvement that characters have within that world?

5. “Roses can bloom in the hardest conditions.” p.308

“They could easily survive without any help. We want them to thrive.” p.96

The novel is divided into three parts: ‘Germination’, ‘Growth’, and ‘Dormancy’. Discuss the meaning of the analogy of roses throughout the book – what or who does the rose represent? Consider the relationship within the analogy between gardening, parenthood and Maverick’s own development. What does the word, ‘Dormancy’, imply? What does it suggest comes next?

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‘At Friday night football games, it don’t matter if you rep gray or green. Only the school colors matter.’ p.152

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8. Thomas's novel is explicitly American in its portrayal of Garden Heights, but the book explores far more universal and wide-reaching themes. Compare the experiences of the characters or key moments within the text with examples from the UK, such as teenage pregnancy, community spirit, gang culture, perceptions of young Black men or earning a living. Consider how the setting of the book allows Thomas to explore aspects of the human condition that speak far beyond the limits of Garden Heights.