English II and English II Pre-AP, Summer Reading

2020-21

**Kindred**

By Octavia Butler

* **Publisher:** Beacon Press (2003)
* **ISBN-10:** 0807083690
* **ISBN-13:** 978-0807083697

“Kindred” is a time travel story written by the African American writer Octavia Butler (June 22, 1947 – February 24, 2006). The protagonist, Dana, travels to a Maryland plantation in the early 19th century. While the depiction of plantation life for slaves is realistic and does involve some scenes of violence, none are excessive or gratuitous. There is also historically accurate use of the ‘n—‘ word. While these themes and language can be difficult, it is definitely worthwhile. One of the critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy is racism, calling it an “evil that affects us all.” *Kindred* explores ways this evil affects people, both in the past and today. It is an exploration of the human soul, its depths, the tragedies in which it enmeshes itself, and its capacity for unexpected grace and transcendence.

Students should prepare both:

A. Creative Response

B. Interpretive Response

**A. Creative Response**

Choose and create one of the following options:

* Newspaper article
* Obituary
* Editorial
* Letter to the editor
* Advice column
* Magazine article
* Local News Report
* Travel Brochure
* Cartoon/comic strip/graphic novel
* Visual art—a unique (not copied) drawing

While this piece must accurately use information from the book, it should extend, adapt and develop that information creatively.

**B. Interpretive Response**

1. Choose one of the Focus Questions from the list below. Compose and write an essay that adequately responds to the question and interprets the book.

Your answer to this question will be the thesis of your essay.

2. Your essay MUST:

Answer the question adequately.

Explore at least three incidents/passages in depth.

Kindred, Focus Questions

1. Does the author want us to see Dana’s killing of Rufus more as a kind of success or a kind of failure?

2. According to the author, did the time travel accomplish its purpose?

3. Are we supposed to think that Dana is any better off for having had this time travel experience?

4. Why does Rufus decide to ‘have’ (rape) Dana?

5. According to the author, was Dana’s plan to have Rufus learn that blacks are as human as whites (twentieth century values) doomed to fail?

6. Is Dana more a part of Rufus’ successes and virtues or failures and vices?

7. Why doesn’t the author ever describe or explain the force that drives Dana’s time travel and connects her to Rufus?

8. Is the connection between Rufus and Dana (that draws her back in time) something dedicated more to Rufus’ survival and growth or something dedicated to containing and limiting his life and influence?

9. Is the time travel more concerned with Rufus or Dana?

10. Is the time travel in “Kindred” more of a malevolent or benevolent force?