

Millennium Charter Academy

English II

Summer Reading Project

Dr. Roberson



Tristan and Isolde Sharing the Potion, J.W. Waterhouse, 1916

## 10th Grade English II Summer Reading Assignment

**Book:** *Tristan and Iseult*

### Materials Needed

- (1) The Book
  - a. Please read the translation by Hilaire Belloc.
  - b. You can find an online copy [here free of charge](#):
  - c. You can purchase a printed version [here](#):
  - d. You can get a free [Kindle version here](#):
- (2) The Journal
  - a. Please purchase a journal. It can be very inexpensive. Just be sure it is something you like and that you'd like to use for the summer (steer clear of steno pads and spiral bound notebooks).

\*Note: contemporary cinematic versions of this story are not true to the text. I strongly suggest that you stick to the book on this one. I also recommend that you purchase the book itself even though you do have other options above.

### Introduction

Many sources state that the story of Tristan and Iseult is of Celtic origin. The oldest known French version of the story was composed around the middle of the 12th century by Thomas d'Angleterre as a poem and later modified by Beroul. Now, why would a Celtic legend be composed in French in the kingdom of England by a guy whose last name is French but means "from England"? I'll leave that to you to figure out, but it has something to do with William the Conqueror!

There are various spellings of both "Tristan" and "Iseult" -- due in part to the translation of the story into multiple languages during the Medieval period, and due in part to the absence of standardized spelling during the same era. So, you may see Tristram for Tristan, or Isolde for Iseult. Likewise, there are different versions of the story. The one we are reading comes from the Anglo-Norman tradition and differs from the Germanic tradition. Hilaire Belloc, an early 20th c. man of letters, translated the version we are reading from Beroul's text.

The story is set in the mythical time of Arthur, deep in the Anglo-Saxon period when what we now call the British Isles were ruled by various and sometimes warring kings. Arthur makes a cameo appearance in our story, while Tristan sometimes shows up in Arthurian legend.

When you read this story, you will be reading along with centuries of other readers and lovers of this tale. *Tristan and Iseult* was, around the time of Dante (1265-1321), the most widely owned book in Europe. Imagine that -- a book written in French in the kingdom of England during the mid-1100's was the most widely owned book on the continent almost 100 years later! Dante refers to this story in the *Inferno*. Christopher Marlowe, a contemporary with Shakespeare, wrote a play based on the story, though it is no longer extant. In the 19th c., Wagner composed an opera based on the German tradition of the story. The romance has inspired many visual works of art as well, including the 1916 painting by J.W. Waterhouse above.

The story, then, has a long and rich history in which you now get to participate.

## Assessments

1. I would like for you to keep a summer journal. In this journal, you are describing and reflecting on your summer break: everything from vacations and friendships to “mundane” chores and daydreams. As part of your journal, however, I’d like for you to engage with the world of *Tristan & Iseult*. You can ask them questions, write quotes from the story and reflect on those quotes, and explore various themes in the story that connect to your own life. Be creative here! You may not drink a magical potion and fall in love with someone, but you might relate to other human experiences from the text such as certain good or bad character traits (including minor characters) or how to (or how not to) resolve conflicts in your life. Perhaps you note something ironic in the story that can relate to an ironic situation in your own life. So, while your journal does not have to be about romance, it should include meaningful thoughts and experiences from your own life this summer coupled with connections to characters and themes of the story. Please see the rubric below for further details.
2. Within the first week of school, you should be prepared to take a reading quiz over the book. We will be reviewing the book before the quiz.

## Summer Journaling Rubric

The following criteria would reflect mastery and result in an A for the summer journaling project.

1. You should write *at least 5* entries into your journal that include the date of the entry (try to spread out your entries throughout the summer), the chapter and page number of the book (when relevant to your entry), and a title for the entry that expresses its main idea. You are welcome and encouraged to write as many entries as you would like!
2. Each entry should include a text-to-self connection to some aspect(s) of *Tristan & Iseult*. Try to find connections at different points throughout the story. Along with a personal text connection (which is required and explained above), I also strongly encourage you to go the extra mile and make text-to-text connections (i.e. connect T & I to another play or novel you’ve read or a historical figure you’ve studied) and / or text-to-world (i.e. connecting T & I to a world event or something in society).
3. For the *Tristan & Iseult* entries, you should demonstrate comprehension of the text as well as a solid understanding of how it connects to your own life. Along with giving important details from the story, try to tease out important themes, as well.
4. Each journal entry should contain at least four sentences exploring a particular idea or theme. You should include action in each entry (if relevant), but also reflect and connect questions and themes from the story to your own life. While the minimum requirement is four sentences, it may take quite a few more sentences to flesh out your experience in relation to a theme or character in the story.

I am excited to meet you and work with you this year! I am also eager to see what you create with this project over the summer. Feel free to contact me if you have questions: [rustyroberson@mcacademy.com](mailto:rustyroberson@mcacademy.com)

*Best Wishes and Happy Reading (and journaling)!*

**Notes on Suggested Reading:** *Ywain and Gawain* is a wonderful Middle English Arthurian tale, complete with all of the marvels you expect from a Medieval story! You are not required to read it, but you are welcome to do so and to use it during the journaling exercise. [You can find \*Ywain and Gawain\* online at this hyperlink.](#)