

COURSE TITLE: Advanced Placement English Language & Composition (**Grade 11**)

OPTIONAL TEXT: *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*

AUTHOR: Alexandra Fuller

GENRE: Nonfiction (Memoir)

SUMMARY:

In a review for the School Library Journal, Sheila Shoup writes “Pining for Africa, Fuller's parents departed England in the early '70s while she was still a toddler. They knew well that their life as white farmers living in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time) would be anything but glamorous. Living a crude, rural life, the author and her older sister contended with "itchy bums and worms and bites up their arms from fleas" and losing three siblings. Mum and Dad were freewheeling, free-drinking, and often careless. Yet they were made of tough stuff and there is little doubt of the affection among family members. On top of attempting to make a living, they faced natives who were trying to free themselves of British rule, and who were understandably not thrilled to see more white bwanas settling in. Fuller portrays bigotry (her own included), segregation, and deprivation. But judging by her vivid and effortless imagery, it is clear that the rich, pungent flora and fauna of Africa have settled deeply in her bones. Snapshots scattered throughout the book enhance the feeling of intimacy and adventure. A photo of the author's first day of boarding school seems ordinary enough- she's standing in front of the family's Land Rover, smiling with her mother and sister. Then the realization strikes that young Alexandra is holding an Uzi (which she had been trained to use) and the family car had been mine-proofed. This was no ordinary childhood, and it makes a riveting story thanks to an extraordinary telling” (Amazon.com).

REQUIRED STUDENT ASSIGNMENT:

Students will be asked to complete an in-class timed write on this memoir during the first two weeks of class for a major assessment grade. Thus, you may want to consider annotating the memoir.

In your annotations, consider your selected memoir as a "coming of age" story like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or *Catcher in the Rye*. Draw comparisons to Huck or other young protagonists as part of your annotation. Consider the universality of the memoirist's experiences, the obstacles she overcomes, and the life lessons she both learns and imparts to readers.