

## **The Devil in the White City, Erik Larson** **Reading Guide - Summer 2010**

(Reading guide adapted from Stratford Academy, Macon, GA)

Bringing Chicago circa 1893 to vivid life, Erik Larson's spellbinding bestseller intertwines the true tale of two men--the brilliant architect behind the legendary 1893 World's Fair, striving to secure America's place in the world; and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. Combining meticulous research with nail-biting storytelling, Erik Larson has crafted a narrative with all the wonder of newly discovered history and the thrills of the best fiction. <http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/devilinthewhitecity/about.html>

*Devil in the White City* is unlike any summer reading book you've ever read. The novel centers around the 1893 "Columbian Exposition," the 400-year celebration of Columbus' famous voyage. However, the focus of the novel is the true story of two major characters, one a pioneering architect, the other, a ruthless murderer. The stories are intertwined beautifully and tell the dramatic changes that occurred not only in Chicago during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but in the United States as a whole. This book will be instrumental in your understanding of the era known as the "Gilded Age."

The summer reading component of students' grade will be 5% of the overall semester grade. This component will include this reading guide, a quiz when he returns for the first day of school, and an element of a major research project during the second quarter. **IMPORTANT: *The research project will constitute 10% of the semester grade, and completion of the summer reading is vital and necessary in order to complete the assignment.***

Please do not take this reading lightly, it is not something that can be skipped and an understanding falsified, this book will be completely integrated into the curriculum of the United States History course. If this book is not read, it will have an adverse effect on not only your summer reading grade, but your semester grade as well.

**Directions:**

- All answers must be typed and be the original work of the student.

**Identifications**

**Instructions:** Identify the following terms, all play a major role in the novel. You may use either your text book or the internet as a resource (however, be sure to cite any information you obtain, do not plagiarize). All identifications should contain **three elements**: a time period, definition, and an explanation of the item's significance. After you have defined/identified each term, briefly explain how each relates to the story told in the book.

- Jane Addams and the Hull House
- Frederick Law Olmstead
- Francis Willard and the WCTU
- Henry George and Single Tax Clubs
- Pinkerton National Detective Agency
- Samuel Gompers and the A.F.L.
- Panic of 1893
- Frederick Jackson Turner
- Pullman Strike of 1894
- Buffalo Bill Cody and the Wild West Show

**Discussion Questions:**

**Instructions:** Each of the following should be answered as a short essay. The answers should be typed and about one-half to one page in length.

1. The large-scale migration of young, single women to urban areas that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th century is a major theme in *The Devil in the White City*. What factors motivated these women to move? What made them so susceptible to the nefarious intent of someone like Dr. H.H. Holmes?
2. As described in *The Devil in the White City*, explain the major problems of urban life in American cities such as Chicago in the 1890s. How and why were these cities changing?
3. As *The Devil in the White City* notes, the Columbian Expedition of 1893 was the major story dominating US headlines for over a year. Francis J. Bellemy wrote "The Pledge of Allegiance" for students to recite on the dedication of the fair. Why was the success of this fair deemed so important to the United States and especially the city of Chicago?
4. What factors enabled Dr. H.H. Holmes to get away with his crimes for as long as he did?

**Important Note:** Below is a statement that you must sign that verifies that the work you do in responding to the previous questions is your original work and that you received no assistance from any person nor book review nor electronic media.

**My signature below verifies that the work contained herein is my own and that I received no assistance from any other source.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date