

Tips for reading Divakaruni
wayne.smith@csun.edu
[updated: Wednesday, May 23, 2012]

Course: *UNIV 100*
Title: *Freshman Seminar (3 units)*

“I want everyone to realize that we each have at least one amazing thing in our lives. I want my readers to search through their lives and find their own amazing thing, and to appreciate it—and their unique, wonder-filled lives.”

---Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (p. 225)

Preface

The purpose of this document is to assist students in progressing through and comprehending the novel for this course—Chitra Divakaruni’s “One Amazing Thing”. These tips are not exhaustive. Each student progresses differently, and each student comprehends differently. More important, all approaches are valid from both an academic perspective and a literary perspective.

Tips

1. We need to finish this book in time to develop our various information competency projects and possible Freshmen celebration projects. Also, this particular book “works better” as a discussion upon completion rather than a granular dissection throughout the book. Further, we need to start in about week 3, and we need to end at or near the middle of the semester. We want to end well before the end of the semester, because time both in- and out-of-class will become compressed due to additional assignments in this course and in other courses. Also, we want to finish early enough so that we can reflect on the book and refer to it for our end-of-semester projects. So, let’s plan on finishing the book by Week 11 with a contingency of Week 12.

2. This book is 220 pages in length.

Therefore, I’ve split up the reading by approximately 30 pages per week. This means that you need read about 10 pages every other day, or perhaps 15 pages on the weekend, and 15 pages throughout the week. You need to make a deliberate and committed choice. No matter which approach you take, you *cannot* fall behind in the reading. So allocate enough time for reading this fiction novel book in your time budget for the semester.

3. You should summarize the thesis of each natural section break-points of the book. Initially, this will probably be a single paragraph on paper. By the middle of the book or so, you will be able to do this in your head.

4. Be prepared for class. Assume that you will need to summarize the required reading, comment upon the book's narrative, critically analyze the author's position or perspective, or answer questions about various words (vocabulary).
5. There will likely be two kinds of readers of this novel. The first kind of student proceeds slow and steady, and while interested in the text, isn't moved by any particular aspect of the story or characters. But by approaching the text methodically, the student never falls behind and is ready to discuss the latest and most salient aspects of the text. The second kind of student perhaps starts slowly, but becomes passionately interested, often near the middle of the book. The delight in the novel is so compelling that the student cannot "put the book down." This latter student usually reviews the required pages a few days before class.

And, of course, either kind of student is just fine. One aspect of a novel is to constantly reassess, challenge, and develop individuals. And if you don't learn anything else at a University, learn this—no two individuals are exactly the same in any dimension, especially intellectual acuity, introspective passion, reflective breadth, and analytical depth.