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Welcome to AP Seminar! AP Seminar is for the curious and the inquisitive—the people who like to ask deep questions and search for answers. People like Tara Westover, the author of the memoir *Educated*, the book I am asking you to read this summer. In *Educated*, Tara Westover tells the true story of growing up in a survivalist family in rural Idaho. Despite not setting foot in a classroom until she was 17 years old, Tara made an education for herself that often put her at odds with her parents and siblings. This novel will bring up a variety of themes that we will explore through various lenses in our first unit. AP Seminar is a place where you'll enter into the public discourse, the debates that churn around important issues that captivate the public imagination. These debates happen in the media, in governmental bodies, on social media, in academia, and around the dinner table. You will come to recognize the terms of debate around important issues, while also identifying competing perspectives, evaluating the credibility of various arguments, and making your own contribution through writing, conversation, and presentation. It's a big, wide-ranging conversation that's happening in our culture, one that needs your voice!

As you read *Educated*, be prepared to write about it and to participate in a discussion of the book in the form of a Socratic seminar when you return to school. You'll receive specific instructions for the Socratic seminar on the first day of class, but to prepare in advance, concentrate on these two important aspects of the book as you read it:

- 1) **Complex family relationships.** In *Educated*, Tara tries to come to terms with painful relationships she has with her father, mother, and brother Shawn. What drives the conflict Tara feels with so many members of her family? How does her attitude toward these relationships evolve throughout the book? What moments from her story stand out as the most significant in understanding her relationship with her family? What larger lessons can a reader draw about family and identity based on Tara's story?
- 2) **Knowledge and education.** Tara grows up with a conspiracy-minded father who claims a special knowledge of the world, especially of the government and religion. Tara seeks out a very different sort of knowledge through her education. What drives Tara to pursue her education? What obstacles does she contend with along the way? How is Tara both challenged and strengthened by her pursuit of knowledge? Thinking about key moments from the book, what larger lessons can readers draw about education and knowledge based on Tara's story?

I encourage you to annotate (mark) passages from the book that relate to these themes as you encounter them in your reading. To prepare for discussion of the book, you might also consider taking some informal notes as you read. At a minimum, when you return to school in August, be finished reading the book and bring a copy of it with you to class.

I hope you're excited about AP Seminar – I look forward to meeting you in the fall (and to seeing some of my past students once again!) Please reach out to me if you have any questions about the summer assignment.

Sincerely,

Joy Ruckoldt

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*Discover your future.*