

AP Government and Politics – Summer Assignment 2026

Directions –

- Read “The Children’s Story” by James. A. Clavell.
- Below you will see many of the themes we’ll explore in class this year, with prompts connected to the reading.
- Choose FOUR of the Core Reflective Questions to respond to, and ONE of the Extension Questions.
 - Make sure you respond to all parts of the prompts.

Expectations – The expectation is NOT that you have high-level academic responses because we haven’t learned all this, yet! The expectation IS that you respond **in your own words** about what you think, feel, or ponder about the question. It’s ok to be a little stream-of-consciousness in your responses and there are no right or wrong answers. This is an exercise to get your brain chewing on course themes.

If you have any burning questions, please email Mrs. Bennett at benneta@pwcs.edu. It may take several days (because summer), but you will get a response.

Prompts –

Core Reflective Questions (Democracy, Fragility, Civic Responsibility)

1. Democratic Norms - What specific democratic norms or freedoms do you see quietly eroding in the story, and why might people fail to notice when those norms are being weakened in real life?
2. Civic Vigilance - What responsibilities do ordinary citizens—especially young people—have in recognizing when something is “off,” even if it feels small or harmless at first?
3. Authority and Trust - Why do the children trust the new teacher so quickly? What does this suggest about how authority figures can shape political beliefs, especially when people are not paying attention?
4. Propaganda Techniques - Which persuasion strategies used in the story would be most effective on a modern audience, and why? What makes people vulnerable to them?
5. Fragility of Democracy - Based on the story, what do you think is the “weakest point” in a democracy — institutions, citizens, education, media literacy, something else? Why?
6. Role of Education - How does the story illustrate the power of education in shaping political identity? What happens when civic education is shallow, passive, or taken for granted?
7. Rights vs. Comfort - In the story, people give up freedoms in exchange for comfort, clarity, or simplicity. Do you think this is a realistic danger in real democracies? Why might people choose ease over liberty?
8. Symbols and Loyalty - How does the story use symbols (flags, pledges, rituals) to shift loyalty? What role do symbols play in maintaining a democratic culture — and how can they be manipulated?
9. Slow vs. Sudden Change - Is the takeover in the story more frightening because it is subtle rather than violent? What does that suggest about how democratic erosion might look in the real world?

10. Your Role - After reading the story, what is one concrete action you think young citizens should take to strengthen democratic culture? Why that action?

 Extension Questions (For deeper AP-level thinking)

11. Social Contract - How does the story challenge the idea that citizens consciously consent to their government? What happens when consent becomes passive or uninformed?

12. Checks and Balances - What “checks” fail in the story? What does that reveal about the importance of institutional safeguards in preventing authoritarian drift?

13. Political Socialization - How does the story illustrate the process of political socialization? Which agents (school, authority figures, peers) seem most powerful?

14. Civil Liberties - Which civil liberties disappear first in the story? Why might those be the easiest for a government to target?

15. Resistance - What forms of resistance are possible in the story’s setting? What forms of resistance are possible in a real democracy — and which requires the most courage?