

Rising 12th Grade Summer Reading

Fred Chappell's *Brighten the Corner Where You Are*

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Part 1

Writing Assignment

During or after reading *Brighten the Corner Where You Are*, please answer three of the following questions, choosing one from each category. Your answers should be typed and double-spaced with an MLA-style heading in the upper left corner. Answers should be 150-300 words each, thoughtfully presented in your best short-essay style, using complete sentences, proper spelling and grammar, and indenting new paragraphs when necessary.

Category 1

A. *Brighten the Corner Where You Are* employs a southern Appalachian regional dialect. What does your dialect say about who you are?

B. How important is it that we speak our native tongue well? Why?

Category 2

A. How is humor generally used in our culture? How does Fred Chappell use humor to communicate deeper truths in *Brighten*?

B. When is humor appropriate? When is it inappropriate? Are certain types of humor off limits? Why?

Category 3

A. Re-read Joe Robert's "philosophy" on page 35. How does this philosophy compare and contrast with your own?

B. Comment on this novel's crucial relationship with history. How does it suggest that history ought to be taught and/or learned? What should history ultimately mean to those who teach or study it? And what about the novel's take on science?

Part 2

After some class discussions on the questions from part 1 and review, as well as a day or two spent organizing, we will have a class discussion based on the following:

One piece of advice that Fred Chappell gives to people who want to write stories in memorable and meaningful ways is to seek not only the literal truth but also the greater truth. Near the end of the novel, the governor's representative is happy to have Joe Robert's feat of saving a drowning girl "rise in status" in newspaper reports—for political reasons, of course. (p. 190) As a class, we will discuss where and when we as human beings draw the line between telling things exactly as they are and making changes to improve the story. Also, what did reading *Brighten the Corner Where You Are* teach us about the difference between storytelling as a means of telling a lie and storytelling as a means of revealing the truth?