

Vocabulary List for Author's Note (xvii-xviii)

From
The Emperor of All Maladies
By
Siddhartha Mukherjee

In order of appearance:

Chronicle: historical account

Clandestine: marked by secrecy

Metamorphosed: changed

Lethal: deadly or causing death

Entity: a being or the existence of a thing

Imbued: to permeate or influence

Metaphorical: symbolic

Immortal: exempt from death

Demystify: simplify

Eradicate: to do away with completely

Fundamental: essential

Commonality: similarities or the same features

Incarnations: forms or states of cancer

Modest: limited or smaller enterprise

Immunology: science that studies the immune system and cells

Envisioned: to picture to oneself

Epicenter: the very center

Chemotherapy: the use of chemicals for the treatment of disease

Socialite: a person who is prominent or important in society

Adversary: enemy or opponent

Pervasive: spreading through every part of something

Hubris: exaggerated pride or self confidence

Resilience: an ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change

Frontispiece: the front of a book

Disclaimer: a denial of a legal claim

Primacy: the state of being first

Oncologist: one who studies tumors

Confounded: confused

Writing Assignments For English 90/98/110

The author calls this book a “biography of cancer.” This implies that he sees cancer as a character. In one paragraph, with a clear topic sentence and specific points of support, explain why he describes cancer as a character.

Write a paragraph on how cancer has touched your life. Do you know someone who has this disease? With which types of cancer are you familiar?

Compare and contrast cancer with another common illness. How are the two diseases similar? How are they different?

Write a paragraph showing a causal relationship between cancer and something else. Is cancer the cause, or the effect? Start by drawing a causal chain, and then decide which cause and effect relationship would be most interesting to write about.

Write a 9 line poem, with 3 stanzas of 3 lines each defining cancer. Begin with the line “Cancer is . . . “

Write an argumentative paragraph supporting or refuting that the American government is or is not adequately financing cancer research. Is it the government’s job to find a cure for a disease that affects so many of its citizens? Why or why not? Make sure your topic sentence clearly states your position.

Most American bankruptcies are due to the expenses of serious illnesses. Research the cost of a three night stay in an American hospital, including doctor’s visits and a ride in an ambulance to get to the hospital. Argue that the cost of American health care is appropriate, or too expensive for the average middle income American family.

Psychologically, how do you think patients feel when their doctors give them a prognosis of cancer? Imagine hearing, “You have cancer.” Sociologically, how do you think American society treats people who have cancer?

Why do you think doctors would want to go into Oncology, knowing some of their patients will die?

What kind of person would choose to become an Oncology nurse or doctor, or even more dramatically, a hospice nurse or doctor, where patients are at the very end of their lives?

Historically, how do people treat others who have serious illnesses? How did they treat people with AIDS? Are they fearful? Compassionate? Helpful?

Reading Excerpt from Pages 60 to 69

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This excerpt is about William Stewart Halstead, born in 1852. Halstead experimented with and promoted the radical mastectomy. In his admirable desire to cure cancer, he progressively cut more and more of the breast away. His theory was that the more he cut, the less likely the cancer would come back. In his enthusiasm, and his experiments to find an effective surgical anesthetic, he became addicted to cocaine. He then tried to cure his addiction with morphine, which caused another addiction. Ultimately his radical mastectomy did not cure cancer, or even stop it from coming back. The surgery disfigured women, and left about a 50% death rate. The surgeon's job is to cut. But cutting so much of the breast tissue did not help women with cancer any more than cutting out small tumors.

Why do you think Halstead was allowed to continue experimenting on women with these aggressive surgeries? Find quotes from this passage that support your point.

Create a Double Diary where you write a quote from the passage on the left side of the page, and your interpretation of that quote on the right side. Enter at least three quotes and interpretations and be prepared to show them on the document camera and explain them to the class.

Class discussion: Why do you think surgeons are still performing radical mastectomies?