The Second Assignment
Writing About Foer's Message

Name: _____ **Period:** _____

Joshua Foer's "Secrets of a Mind-Gamer" is an essay about his experiences training to become a "mental athlete." In it, he gives us a glimpse of his introduction to the world of memory athletes, his training, and his experience competing in the USA Memory Championship. Yet his account provides us with something else: an illustration or a picture of what it looks like when someone sets out to learn something difficult or acquire a new skill. In short, he is teaching us something. He is saying "Here is this thing I set out to do; this is what I did to learn it; and here is what happened."

In the last part of this study, you will have a chance to take on, and report about, your own learning project. If we are going to use Foer's text as a model for these reports, then we need to take time to look at what—and how—he is teaching us and how he goes about doing that teaching.

For this assignment, please work with a partner to compile a set of notes and questions in response to the following question:

Imagine that Foer is trying to show or teach us something. What does Foer's account teach us about learning something difficult?

Afterwards, you'll have time to use your notes to compose a brief, one-page quick write in response to the question. The following steps will help you organize your work:

1. Work with a partner to reread Foer's report and mark or highlight key moments where he seems to be teaching us something or contributing to an overarching argument about what is involved in learning or acquiring a new skill. (Remember that rereading is a powerful tool for making sense of texts that are challenging. Be sure to make use of the tracking and retelling work done in previous sessions as well. Your tracking sheets and the retelling work will be particularly useful here.)
2. Work hard to answer the following questions:
    - What are his claims?
    - What key examples does he use for evidence?
    - What are his conclusions?

    Use these questions to guide your note-taking during the rereading.
3. Pull your notes together in a brief quick write. You won't need to compose a finished paper, but you should still be prepared to point to important moments in Foer's text as you explain your answer to the question.

After you have finished your quick write, you will have an opportunity to try out your ideas on your peers and to listen to their ideas in a whole-class discussion.

[Start task below]

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