About Commonplace Books: Using the links below and the excerpt from The Shallows, explore what they are, their purpose, their forms, their history, etc. Find at least five things to note and know the source. We will share these.

- http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=W3hr8Y3umF8C&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=commonplace%20books&ots=Pu-q-VKX&sig=t2QZOPtfvZGfHgLfqlwx3IhfJPQ#v=onepage&q=commonplace%20books&f=false

Creating a Commonplace Book: (source: http://www1.assumption.edu/users/lknoles/commonplaceassign.html)

How should I choose quotes for the commonplace book?

- Find a line or passage that offers a powerful statement. You are allowed to define powerful in any way you wish. Sometimes a quotation is particularly persuasive, emotional, descriptive, or meaningful but there are all kinds of other things that set one line apart from the rest. Decide for yourself what is powerful, and then think about what makes it powerful. Or
- Find a line or passage that helps you understand this text. Or
- Find a line or passage that confuses you. You find yourself wondering if you might understand the whole text better if you could make sense of this part Or
- Find a line or passage that reminds you of another text (or "voice") in the American conversation. (How is this similar to or different from the other, and how can that comparison or contrast contribute to our understanding of the conversation.) Or
- Find a line or passage that demonstrates a noteworthy way of connecting with and persuading the audience. Or
- Find a line or passage which made a strong impression on YOU. It could be something you seriously disagree with, if so, go ahead and counter the argument. On the other hand, if it's something you like, is this something you want to remember and/or live up to in your own life? Would your life be any different if you did? Or
- Find a line with a vocabulary word that you can look up and learn.

Why bother?

- By saving key quotations from each text you read, you'll find yourself reading more closely and remembering the text more effectively. It will also allow you to keep your own record of the "conversation" you hear developing among [authors]. Most importantly of all, writing in your commonplace book will give you a way of taking part in that conversation by offering your own responses to the comments that you read.
- We will be using the commonplace logs in the class as the starting point for class discussion, so be sure to note anything you find particularly significant or puzzling. By sharing your questions and even pointing out the things that confuse you you'll be helping us get right to the important points in our class discussions so that we can work together to build a better understanding of the texts.

How can I tell what a really good commonplace book should look like?

- Choice of Quotations--A really good commonplace book allows us to benefit from the observations of a really attentive reader who notices when there is something puzzling, or when there is a pattern, or when there is a moment of real power in a text. The reader can help the rest of us even by being willing to confess what s/he doesn't understand.
- Commentaries--A really good commonplace book doesn't mention what is "boring" or "interesting" or "hard" or "easy" but instead comments on the possible meanings of texts. Instead of paraphrasing what the quotation says, a good commentary comments on how particular words, phrases, or patterns in that quotation might lead us to a deeper sense of the text's meaning. Instead of saying "I agree" or "I disagree" with the text, a good commentary might offer a more thorough explanation of the reasons for agreement or disagreement. Finally, a good commentary takes into consideration the context in which the text was originally written in order to evaluate its possible meanings and effectiveness. Instead of concluding that a text is ineffective (or just plain bad) because of confusing language or politically incorrect thinking, a good commentary will consider whether anything can help us understand how the text might have been received in its own time.
- Writing--A commonplace book is serious but it is also a journal--a work in progress rather than a finished "product." Hence, it does not need to meet the writing standards for formal, completed academic projects. However, it usually is a way for the reader to practice his writing and thinking. For this reason it does need to communicate ideas clearly and persuasively. It also needs to be written in a fashion that can gain the respect of readers.
- Finally, a truly great commonplace book, although made up of separate entries about separate texts, will reflect the gradual development of the reader's understanding of literature. Logs will sometimes refer back to earlier texts in order to compare and or contrast works or to consider the evolution of a particular way of thinking or writing. As specific kinds of questions begin to strike the reader as particularly important, the commonplace logs will begin to use those questions to explore those issues on a deeper level.