

Honors American Literature

Required Summer Assignment

Congratulations on selecting Honors American Literature as your English class for the upcoming school year! We hope that you will find this course challenging yet rewarding. The summer assignment will give you an opportunity to sample a typical Honors American Literature assignment; and hopefully, it will prevent your brain from hibernating over the summer. Your summer assignment is due on the first day of school. The summer assignment is NOT optional; it will be graded and entered as 2 test grades in your 1st six-weeks grade. Late assignments will not be accepted. Assignments that are not turned in on the first day of school will result in a zero in the grade book. Please read the instructions carefully.

1. Choose a novel from the list and read it.

- a. Find a book that suits you. Spend some time exploring your options before choosing your book. We have provided you with a wide variety of novels to choose from so that you will be able to find one that appeals to you. If you begin reading and find that you have chosen a book that does not interest you, try again. Some of these books may include controversial, sexual, or violent elements. You may or may not be willing to expose yourself to these materials, and your parents need to be part of your decision. For this reason, please ask a parent to approve your book before you begin reading. Fill out the attached permission slip and have it signed by a parent before you begin your reading. For additional guidance, you may want to visit the library. The librarians can usually help you to find a book that is appropriate for you.
- b. Expect a challenge. All of the books on the list are challenging in some way. This reading assignment will take concentration and effort on your part. Navigating your novel may not be easy, but it should not be impossible as long as you allow yourself ample time to read (and maybe even reread).

2. Complete a Dialectical Journal as you read.

- a. Background. The Greek word dilektos means "conversation, discussion" in search of the truth. That defines the relationship between readers and text when they use the dialectical notebook. In essence there is a tension between reader and text, so that the reader becomes engaged in the content. It is this engagement that creates meaning.
- b. Assignment. Divide your paper into two columns. One column is labeled Text, and here you will record chronologically what you consider to be the most important points of the novel. When you finish, you will have a summary of the novel.

The second column is titled Response. This column should run parallel with the Text column and contain your personal reactions, which occur at the moment you are reading the text. Literally, it is your internal conversation with the text put on paper. Ask questions, make comments, and record ideas next to that part of the text that has piqued your interest. By the time you have finished, this column represents an intellectual history of your reading experience. The Response column should NOT merely summarize the text. Instead, it should provide insight, analysis, and compelling questions about the reading. Refer to the end of this packet for a sample dialectical journal.

Please provide at least 20 text/response entries that reflect careful reading. These entries should reflect the novel as a whole from beginning to end (i.e. don't respond only to the first few chapters and quit once you have 20 entries). Your dialectical journal may be neatly handwritten in pen or typed. It will be important to write as you read, so make sure that the method you choose is available to you while you read.

3. Close Reading: Passage Annotation and Analysis (2 required)

The focus of your reading should be centered around the theme of Coming of Age:

COMING-OF-AGE STORY: A novel in which an protagonist comes to adulthood by a process of experience and disillusionment. This character loses his or her innocence, discovers that previous preconceptions are false, or has the security of childhood torn away, but usually matures and strengthens by this process.

a. After you have finished reading your novel, choose a significant passage from your novel to study more closely. The passage could be one that is rich with detail, fraught with tension, broiling with conflict, or interesting in some other way. The passage that you choose for your close reading should be about two pages long.

b. Photocopy your two-page passage so that you can annotate it. Annotating a text forces you to think more deeply about it. When you annotate a text, you generate a record of response to your reading. Such a record can prove valuable to you later when you proceed to analysis.

c. How to annotate. Annotating a text is NOT the same thing as underlining a few words or highlighting several lines. Annotating a text involves interacting with a text's language and images. This approach should help you to discover what you find important, what you want to explore, and/or what you find puzzling about a text.

Approach a text as if you were entering into discussion with it. While a text cannot literally speak, its written words, images, and phrases do indeed communicate. At certain points a particular text's meaning may be clear, while at other points it may be unclear. Either way, you can note such encounters and offer comments. Your discussion with a text occurs as you initially engage with and subsequently think over its words, phrases, and ideas. These thoughts can find their way onto the text's margins and between the lines. As you underline telling phrases, note ideas, link portions of the text, and raise issues and questions around particular observations, you establish a written record of your interactive discussion. After annotation, you will be better able to identify the text's message and discern both its purpose and significance.

Techniques for annotating a text will vary since each reader generates his or her own reading, each person will identify different portions of a text as noteworthy, interesting, or remarkable.

Here are some questions to guide your annotations:

What's remarkable?

Where do you engage with this text?

Is a character developing or changing? How? Why? The result?

How does the author use language?

What effect does the word choice or sentence structure have on the reader?

What point of view is being used? Why?

How reliable is the narrator?

Do you notice any repetition of words, phrase, actions, or events?

What do you notice about the narrative pace, timing, or sequence of events?

What does the author do to establish a mood or tone?

Do you notice any contrasts, contradictions, juxtapositions, or shifts?

How does the setting contribute to this passage?

Do you notice any figures of speech or literary devices at work?

4. Consider purchasing your own writing guide to keep at home (optional). Many excellent writing guides are available online, but many students like to have a printed version to refer to while they are typing up their assignments. Online bookstores offer gently used versions of these guides for reduced prices. You may also be able to find used versions through college bookstores.

Due on the first day of class:

Signed Permission Slip

Dialectical Journal

Annotated Passages

Please staple these together in the order listed above. Late work will not be accepted. If one of the above sections is missing from your packet, it will be reflected in your quarter grade. You will need to bring your novel to school.

Good luck and enjoy your reading! We look forward to meeting you in August.

Here are your options for the summer assignment:

1. Little Women – Louisa May Alcott
2. Something Wicked This Way Comes - Ray Bradbury
3. March - Geraldine Brooks
4. The Perks of Being a Wallflower-Stephen Chbosk.
5. Middlesex - Jeffrey Eugenides
6. The Sound and the Fury – William Faulkner
7. The Fault in Our Stars - John Green
8. The Art of Fielding - Chad Harbach
9. Their Eyes were Watching God — Zora Neale Hurston
10. The Bell Jar-Sylvia Plath
11. Call Me Zelda - Erika Robuck
12. Cutting for Stone - Abraham Verghese

All questions should be directed to Mr. Burns at nburns@cameronisd.net

Assignment is due 1st the day of class, Monday, August 22nd, 2016. Failure to complete the assignment will result in a grade reduction and possible removal from course.

Honors American Literature Summer Assignment Permission Slip

Dear Parents,

As part of the Honors American Literature class, students are asked to read a book, keep a journal, and annotate multiple pages of the text. This is a requirement of the class. Students have the choice of 12 books to read for this assignment. Some of these books may include controversial, sexual, or violent elements. You may or may not be willing to expose your child to these materials, and so we would like you to be part of your child's decision. For additional guidance in choosing a novel, you may want to visit the public library. The librarians should be able to help you to find a book that suits your child's interests while advising you of controversial content.

Once your child has selected a book from the list, please sign this permission slip so that your child may return it along with the completed summer assignment on the first day of school.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Burns

I give permission for _____ to read _____ for the Honors American Literature and Composition Summer Assignment.

Signature: X _____

(Parent Signature)