

Summer Reading -English II Honors

Dear Sophomore,

Welcome to Honors English II. This year's summer reading includes three American classics. My Antonia, by Willa Gather, recounts a young immigrant girl's assimilation to the plains of Nebraska **in the late** 1800's; Ernest Hemingway, a voice of the Lost Generation of the 1920's, speaks to the disillusionment of his generation in A Farewell to Arms and John Steinbeck depicts the poignant struggle of the Joad family in his Depression era novel, The Grapes of Wrath.

Read the novels carefully, and take notes on characters, themes, and style. Cull quotations that seem to reveal the author's purpose. The novels and writing assignment should be completed by the first day of school. There will be a test on each book during the first weeks of September. Some ideas to consider for each novel:

My Antonia by Willa Cather

- the unusual narrative technique and unplotted novel
- the maturation process in Jim and Antonia
- Gather's use of figurative language
- the immigrant experience
- the differences between the Burden family and the Shirmerdas

Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

- the colorful minor characters
- traits of the Hemingway hero as seen in Lt. Henry
- war story vs. love story
- use of nature/weather to reflect characters
- objective, journalistic style

Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

- the change in family dynamics and individuals
- the labor movement
- the evolving philosophy from "I" to "We"
- use of symbols--nature and Biblical
- the "Joad" chapters vs. the "intercalary" chapters.

Upon completion of the novels, you are to write ONE *essay*. The essay is due the first day of school, and it will be evaluated using the attached rubric. Choose *from* the following topics:

- Morally ambiguous characters -character whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good -are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a character whose moral ambiguity plays a pivotal role in one of the summer reading novels. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole.

- B. Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. Choose the novel in which such a character plays a significant role and show how the alienation of the character reveals the society's assumptions and moral values.
- C. From one of the novels, choose a character whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.

Good luck! Enjoy your summer. If you have any questions, you may e-mail at dtinquist@roxbury.org. The following websites, article, and rubric may be helpful to your study of these authors and novels.

My Antonia

My Immigration Story: <http://myimmigrationstory.com/default.htm>

The Willa Cather Home: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/cather/>

Grapes of Wrath

Center for Steinbeck Studies:

<http://www.steinbeck.sjsu.edu/works/The%20Grapes%20of%20Wrath-Q.jsp>

Dust Bowl Photography by Dorothea Lange:

http://www.weru.ksu.edu/new_weru/http://www.steinbeck.sjsu.edu/works/The%20Grapes%20of%20Wrath-Q.jspmultimedia/dustbowl/dustbowlpics.html

Farewell to Arms

The Timeless Hemingway : <http://www.timelesshemingway.com/links.shtml>

The Code Hero:

http://www.owatonna.k12.mn.us/Classroom/OHS/Language%20Arts/eitheim/Pre%20AP%209%20hemingway_code_hero.htm

	Weak	Average	Strong
Introduction			
Hook (interesting opening)			
Thesis			
Names Author/title			
Plan of development			
Body Paragraph 1			
Transitional phrase			
Topic Sentence			
Supporting evidence/direct quotations			
Clincher			
Body Paragraph 2			
Transitional phrase			
Topic Sentence			
Supporting evidence/direct quotations			
Clincher			
Body Paragraph 3			
Transition phrase			
Topic Sentence			
Supporting evidence/direct quotations			
Clincher			
Conclusion			
Restates thesis			
Renames author/title			
Jury statement(Broad generalization)			
Style			
Point of view (No I or You)			
Sentence clarity/variety			
Appropriate, varied vocabulary			
Mechanics/Usage			
Spelling, punctuation, capitalization			
Usage-- tense, agreement. sentence structure			

1. Try to read during that time of the day when you are more alert. Poor performance on quizzes or in class discussion may simply be because you are not reading at an optimum time for your comprehension.
2. Buy a good collegiate dictionary and use it when you come across unfamiliar words. Sometimes a word's meaning can be determined from the context, but be careful about letting too many unknown words go by. One word can sometimes seriously shift the context of what you are reading. You may even want to write the definition in your margin.
3. As you read, if something in the plot or characterization confuses you or strikes you as odd, make a note of it. Authors sometimes use strange methods of bringing our attention to things they want to emphasize, so don't just ignore something that you don't immediately understand. Those things often can be keys to reading text, so try to figure them out. Always ask, "Why did the author do this in this way? What purpose might this serve?"
4. Pay attention when ideas are repeated, or when words are repeated, for these may be clues for understanding the character or the plot, or an underlying point of the author, etc. If a character is consistently described with some quirk, for example, take note of it—it may be significant. Ask yourself why the author would want to repeat such a description.
5. Take notes as you read, and note passages that you think might be important.
6. Determine, if possible, the time period during which the work takes place, the location in which it is set, and when it was written. Read the author's autographical head note, if the text provides one because often an author writes about a different time period (for example, Hawthorne often places the settings of his works in time periods other than his own). A historical understanding of the time period can often give insight into a work.
7. Pay close attention to beginnings and endings—these often can help you to understand what the story might mean. Authors many times will put key encounters between characters or significant dialogue or crucial moments of perception at the beginning or ending of their work because they know beginnings and endings are so effective at emphasizing points. Avoid the tendency to rush through the ending (as we so often do if we are tired) because you might miss some valuable information or insight.
8. Play the identifying audience: ask yourself questions like, "Which character or characters do I identify with here?" (Sometimes this is the protagonist, but not always) and "What points about this character do I find agreeable? What points seem disagreeable?" Then, figure out which characters you definitely do not identify with in any way, or which characters seem to carry a negative weight in the text. Exactly what is it that is negative about these characters? Do these characters have any redeeming value at all? Why are they in the story?
9. This is one of the most important: Remember that an author does not always really admire his/ her protagonist: sometimes the leading character in a story is there for the author to show us some key flaw in that character's personality. So never, ever, simply assume that the author agrees totally with the ideology or mindset of his/ her protagonist. Think of the characters in a story as enacting some point or problem that the author means to convey. Be very careful not to assume that Hemingway is Lt. Frederick Henry, for example. Sometimes authors may closely identify with their lead characters, but often this is not the case, so to be safe always keep the author separate from the characters when you think and write about them. By the same token, you will find that sometimes a first person narrator is guiding you through a story—be wary of assuming that this voice is the author's voice as well. For example, Edgar Allen Poe often uses the first person to narrate his stories, but please realize that Poe himself is not exactly performing the acts of his first person narrator; he may be using first person to coax you to identify with a character who will turn out to be flawed. You should refer to "the narrator" as separate from the "author" in writing about fictional prose and in poetry. Of course, the author is usually the same as the narrator in nonfiction journals.
10. If you don't understand a work at all, review the above reading hints and then read the work again keeping these tips in mind.