

## **Welcome to English I Honors 2020 -2021!**

**Congratulations!** You've certainly met and exceeded some major benchmarks!

You were recommended for this course because your teachers evaluated you and your work and found that you "are highly motivated and [...] have demonstrated advanced reading and writing skills." When you're finished with this class in June 2021, you are well-prepared for the college-level coursework of sophomore year English, AP Seminar.

You'll find that assignments are challenging but not at all impossible, and they come with fewer, restrictive guidelines and directions, as we look to encourage your innovation, creativity, and critical thinking. Scores are standards-driven and ranked rather than based on completion or effort. We don't often talk about "points." We talk about stages in the learning process and demonstrating growth through applying feedback.

As a new Honors student you may feel an uncomfortable struggle as you build critical-thinking, close-reading, and academic-writing skills, but I ask my students every year to adopt a growth mindset, one that is learning-focused rather than grade-focused. We're all happier and better for it. We practice to progress, and with progress comes growth rather than immediate perfection.

**Parents and Students:** The summer reading program for incoming English I Honors students includes and expands upon the requirements for all incoming ninth graders and further encourages an exploration of the connection between history, culture, and text through Ray Bradbury's dystopian masterpiece *Fahrenheit 451*, allowing students to demonstrate they are independent, engaged, and voracious learners and thinkers.

I am not unaware that the move to Flexible Instruction Days was quite a difficult transition for some, and some students may feel overwhelmed looking at the following tasks/timelines. This program was designed to ensure that all students, whether from private, public, or homeschool, have some level of common, foundational skills, ideas, and concepts. I strongly encourage all students to complete all parts of this framework; however, due to the vast array of differing circumstances in this year, I am mandating only one, the analytical novel study of *Fahrenheit 451*. Families should make their own decisions about the other parts of the framework as I cannot make individual decisions about students I have never met.

I've worked with Roxbury's freshmen for sixteen years, and I end every year saying, "There is no way the incoming eighth graders can even be equal to this year's kids," yet, somehow, every single year, Roxbury High School's freshman class proves me wrong. I look forward to working with all of you next year and wish you a healthy, peaceful, and happy summer.

## WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

**REQUIRED** Join the Summer Reading 2020 - 2021 English IH Google Classroom through the emailed invitation you received or by visiting the Google Classroom site and copying and pasting this code to join: [e2awe3z](#)

**ENCOURAGED** Log into the schoolwide Summer Reading program <https://roxwix.wixsite.com/summerreading> using your school email. Follow instructions for all 9th grade students and complete all three tasks by due dates indicated on the website:

Identify thematic and social studies connections to your text by completing two GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Delve more in-depth into theme and historical connections by filming a FLIPGRID video and replying to classmates,

CREATE an original item displaying the attention to detail expected of an Honors student.

**ENCOURAGED** Work toward renewing your understanding of grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure:

Students should have a solid understanding of how the English language works, from identifying the parts of speech within a sentence to identifying the subject and predicate within various sentence structures. Grammar and writing instruction begins with the expectation that these K-8 standards are mastered. IXL is available for your use throughout the summer, and my students this year found that starting grammar, punctuation, and mechanics review in the lower grades of IXL was very helpful in reminding them of the concepts previously studied, allowing them to reach expected 9th grade levels and beyond. I highly recommend using IXL to identify your areas of strengths and weaknesses in this area. The following links are useful tools to be used for review/study if necessary: [Parts of Speech Intro with helpful poem](#), [Parts of Speech Table](#), [Parts of Speech Review Quiz - Quiz](#), [University of Ottawa Parts of Speech - Review Quiz](#). In addition, many students find the [Khan Academy videos](#) to be of great help.

**REQUIRED** Begin your *Fahrenheit 451* Novel Study. Copies of *Fahrenheit 451* are available at the Roxbury Public Library, but an electronic copy is available here: [FULL TEXT of FAHRENHEIT 451 by Ray Bradbury](#)

You will hone your analytical thinking and your ability to synthesize multiple sources of information as you read the novel in three sections. Expect to work through this text rather than read it just for the story. You might not immediately “get it.” You will rethink and reread sections after reading another text or a later section, and you might “get” something completely different. You’ll be practicing the art of close, critical reading, and it does take some work, and sometimes some pain, to get comfortable with the process. But...practice makes progress and with progress comes growth.

One new process you'll focus on as you read *Fahrenheit 451* is investigating the meaning of phrases and clauses you don't immediately comprehend, understand, or "get at all." You'll be learning to recognize the literary element of [allusions](#), and soon you'll readily find that artwork and texts often mention or refer to Shakespeare and his poetry, or historical events and figures, or religious and mythological stories and figures, among many other possible outside references. What's more you will find that understanding why the author used that particular allusion is essential to wholly understanding the text, the author's purpose, and the overarching themes.

Another process is one you're very familiar with, I'm sure. I know your teachers have often given you articles and poems and asked you how they connect to a novel you've read. For example, if you read S.E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders*, I bet you read Robert Frost's poem *Nothing Gold Can Stay*. I bet you found a few ways in which the poem mirrored or connected to something in the book.

You'll be building on this skill by reading background information on the historical context for *Fahrenheit 451* and its author, Ray Bradbury. You'll also read a few chapters about the study of literature, teaching you to identify certain elements and structures in novels you read. I've also added a few video interviews with Ray Bradbury at the end of the electronic version which may give you even more insight into possible connections and themes. You'll use the [dialectical journal](#) to track the connections you make between *Fahrenheit 451*, the [historical context](#) resources, and [How to Read Literature Like a Professor chapters](#).

Then you'll have short writing assignments, ones that ask you to think through your graphic organizer, find a pattern, and develop a thesis statement that is accurate and that you can back up with evidence. This is us going a step further than you're used to - and it, too, will take some getting used to as you are developing an original idea or claim after thinking through multiple sources. No one can give you the idea - it has to come from the thinking you did. Common missteps early in this process include statements of fact and statements of opinion as the thesis. **These writing assignments are due on July 15, July 31st, and August 15th as indicated in the [dialectical journal](#), I understand that these deadlines may not work for everyone. Exercise good decision-making and email me with any needs in this area.**

I shouldn't have to say, but I will, and with a strong voice of warning, that SparkNotes and other summary/analysis sites are not substitutes for active engagement with a text. Relying on someone else's summarization of a text is not a strong enough foundation to perform well on the critical thinking and writing tasks in this Honors course.

**All your electronic sources in one place!**

[FULL TEXT of FAHRENHEIT 451 by Ray Bradbury](#)

[How to Read Literature Like a Professor chapters](#).

[dialectical journal](#)

[historical context](#)

**Final Words:** At Roxbury High School we believe strongly in education, the value of literature, and the power of the pen. We believe in critical thinking, original thought, and the desire to grow as learners. We might work really hard to improve and earn a C - and we'll be proud of our progress rather than distressed we didn't earn an A. Students are expected to be thoughtful, considerate, and respectful of others throughout the summer project and the school year. All work must be original and should not be reliant on the work or thoughts of others. Plagiarism should not even be a thought. Any student who gives another student their work or ideas to help or assist is equally guilty of plagiarism. Please don't even consider it. If you are unsure about what plagiarism entails please consult the following link: [Plagiarism 101](#)

I look forward to meeting you in September.

Sincerely,

Ms. Maria Rispoli, Ed.S.

#### **Habits of Mind of an Honors English Student**

##### *I will...*

read widely and often  
&  
write widely and often  
to  
foster my spirit of inquiry,  
cultivate my curiosity,  
and seek to understand  
while I  
make connections  
from my reading  
to history, culture, and society  
continuing to  
reflect thoughtfully  
to refine my thinking  
&  
develop my capacity for analysis  
which allows me to  
revise deeply  
&  
demonstrate originality  
While always  
working diligently  
and with integrity