

AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

Dear Juniors,

I am excited to be teaching and learning with you as we begin the AP English Language & Composition course together. Before we get started, it is important that you understand that the AP English Language & Composition is two courses in one; it combines the study of rhetoric with the study of American literature. All of the texts we read this year, fiction and nonfiction, will be written by Americans. We will read essays, poetry, speeches, short stories and novels all in an attempt to understand the American character and the art of rhetoric. The purpose of the summer assignment is to prepare you for this dual focus.

I look forward to seeing you in September. If you have any questions, please email me: k.gazso@holychildrye.org. Although you have a little bit of work to do, I hope you enjoy summer!

Best Regards,
Mrs. Gazso

Required Reading

1. Required Fiction

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian (Sherman Alexie): The story of a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation, Junior is determined to take his future into his own hands. He leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Based on the author's own experiences, the story, which is coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.

2. Choice of Fiction (Choose one)

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (Jonathon Safran Foer): Nine-year-old Oskar Schell has embarked on an urgent, secret mission that will take him through the five boroughs of New York. His goal is to find the lock that matches a mysterious key that belonged to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11. This seemingly impossible task will bring Oskar into contact with survivors of all sorts on an exhilarating, affecting, often hilarious, and ultimately healing journey.

The Sun Also Rises (Ernest Hemingway): The quintessential novel of the Lost Generation, *The Sun Also Rises* is one of Ernest Hemingway's masterpieces and a classic example of his spare but powerful writing style. A poignant look at the disillusionment and angst of the post-World War I generation, the novel introduces two of Hemingway's most unforgettable characters: Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley. The story follows the flamboyant Brett and the hapless Jake as they journey from the wild nightlife of 1920s Paris to the brutal bullfighting rings of Spain with a motley group of expatriates. It is an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealized love, and vanishing illusions.

The Bluest Eye (Toni Morrison): Pecola Breedlove, a young black girl, prays every day for beauty. Mocked by other children for the dark skin, curly hair, and brown eyes that set her apart, she yearns for normalcy, for the blond hair and blue eyes that she believes will allow her to finally fit in. Yet as her dream grows more fervent, her life slowly starts to disintegrate in the face of adversity and strife. A powerful examination of our obsession with beauty and conformity, Toni Morrison's virtuosic first novel asks powerful questions about race, class, and gender with the subtlety and grace that have always characterized her writing.

The Bell Jar (Sylvia Plath): *The Bell Jar* chronicles the crack-up of Esther Greenwood: brilliant, beautiful, enormously talented, and successful, but slowly going under -- maybe for the last time. Sylvia Plath masterfully draws the reader into Esther's breakdown with such intensity that Esther's insanity becomes completely real and even rational, as

probable and accessible an experience as going to the movies. Such deep penetration into the dark and harrowing corners of the psyche is an extraordinary accomplishment and has made *The Bell Jar* a haunting American classic.

The Grapes of Wrath (John Steinbeck): First published in 1939, Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic of the Great Depression chronicles the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s and tells the story of one Oklahoma farm family, the Joads—driven from their homestead and forced to travel west to the promised land of California. A portrait of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, of one man's fierce reaction to injustice, and of one woman's stoical strength, the novel captures the horrors of the Great Depression and probes into the very nature of equality and justice in America.

3. **Choice of Nonfiction (Choose one)**

In Cold Blood (Truman Capote): On November 15, 1959, in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family were savagely murdered by blasts from a shotgun held a few inches from their faces. There was no apparent motive for the crime, and there were almost no clues. As Truman Capote reconstructs the murder and the investigation that led to the capture, trial, and execution of the killers, he generates both mesmerizing suspense and astonishing empathy. *In Cold Blood* is a work that transcends its moment, yielding poignant insights into the nature of American violence.

Outliers (Malcolm Gladwell): Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"—the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different? His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band.

The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids (Alexandra Robbins): High school isn't what it used to be. With record numbers of students competing fiercely to get into college, schools are no longer primarily places of learning. They're dog-eat-dog battlegrounds in which kids must set aside interests and passions in order to strategize over how to game the system. In this increasingly stressful environment, kids aren't defined by their character or hunger for knowledge, but by often arbitrary scores and statistics. In *The Overachievers*, journalist Alexandra Robbins delivers a poignant, funny, riveting narrative that explores how our high-stakes educational culture has spiraled out of control.

Summer Reading Assignment

- I. **Annotation:** Being an active reader is a necessary, and marking up a book is indispensable to being an active, thinking reader. Your marginalia allows you to record your reaction to important words or sentences, to raise questions about the text, and to remember thoughts you had later. You can (and should) define previously unknown vocabulary, as well as record page numbers that correlate with one another. You are required to annotate each of the three texts you read this summer, and I will grade your annotations.
- II. **Essay:**
Identify one of the main arguments in your Nonfiction Choice book. Respond to this argument in the form of a multiple paragraph persuasive essay in which you take a stand on the argument (you must either agree or disagree). Support your argument with examples from the text. You may not use any other materials, and you must write in the third person. This essay will be collected on Friday, September 8.

Your essay must include the following:

- MLA-formatted heading & creative title (consult Purdue OWL if you are uncertain)

- An introduction that opens with a hook and includes the author, title, and thesis statement.
- Several body paragraphs with transitions, topic sentences, specific details from the novel, developed analysis that provides your insight into how the details from the text support your thesis. You should provide *at least six direct quotes* with parenthetical citations (MLA formatting required).
- A solid conclusion which reiterates the thesis and ends leaving the reader with something to THINK about the topic addressed in your essay.
- You will be graded on the content of your essay as well as proper grammar and spelling and MLA-formatting (including parentheticals and full citation at the end of the paper).

Summer Reading Rubric

	Excellent (12)	Good (10)	Adequate (8)	Poor (6)
Number & consistency of Annotations	Annotations cover the entirety of the reading, are well dispersed. They do not taper midway and are abundant.	Annotations are frequent but not as thorough. The text is completely covered however not as equal in coverage. Adequate.	Annotations are fairly sparse or only cover the majority of the text, missing a larger section. Average.	Text is only annotated at the beginning or the end but not throughout. Minimum.
Width: Variety of topics marked for discussion	Annotations discuss a variety of literary elements. Questions are included and annotations show a discernment of a variety of topics or themes. Above expectations.	Annotations identify several literary elements and observation of multiple topics or themes. Questions are included, but minimal. Meets all expectations.	Annotations are too narrowly focused, skipping literary elements and lacking effective questions or discussion. Below expectations.	Annotations do not identify literary elements or demonstrate tracing of a theme throughout the text. No questions are present in the annotations. Do not seem to show complete understanding.
Breadth: Significance of commentary	Not only are there notes but also comments about these notes that show depth of understanding and discussion of purpose and effect. Excellent.	The notes have an occasional insight on the overall purpose and effect of the elements. The reader seems to show a deeper understanding of reading. Well done.	The notes identify elements with only a few insightful comments on the significance of the reading. Below level.	Notes seem to only identify elements, and at that some of the notes seem purposeless. There is no commentary from the reader on purpose or effect. Poor.
Big Picture: author tone & shifts tagged for discussion, themes are identified.	Annotations identify the main ideas and provide readers' insights on the big picture.	Annotations seem to understand the big picture but perhaps not clearly or with varied focus.	Annotations seem shallow, only seeing the details without the whole. Too narrow a focus.	Annotations miss big picture overall, details identified but not analyzed as a whole.