

Dear Honors English II Students,

With only a few days left in the school year, we need to talk about your summer assignment. Oh, yes! I LOVE to read, especially in the summer, and I know you are JUST as enthusiastic as I am...uh, excuse me? Did I just hear *whining*? Could it be that some of you are *resistant* to the idea of reading a book over the summer? Could it be (gasp!) that you don't **LIKE** reading? Oh, dear. Well, that could cause a bit of a problem, I suppose, but given that you are stellar students, eager to impress me with your astute minds when we gather in E209 in September, I am certain you will happily and eagerly complete the following assignments.

You are to read a novel and an essay this summer. The novel is F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, available in any bookstore or from any online book vendor. Copies will also be available in the Main Office all summer if you wish to borrow one.

Before you tackle the book, though, I would like you to read the essay entitled, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire: Changing Concepts of the American Dream" by Matthew Warshauer. Warshauer is a Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University, and what he has to say is relevant to the novel as well as our lives as Americans today. The essay appears on the website **American Studies Today Online**. Here is the URL. Type it very carefully!

http://www.americansc.org.uk/Online/American_Dream.htm

Read the essay online so you can follow the links that direct you to informative footnotes. You should also print the essay so you can highlight key ideas and make notations in the margins. Be sure you can identify Warshauer's main ideas!

Next, read the novel. Attached is a guide to enhance your understanding and appreciation of the novel as you read. This is for your use only; you do not have to give it to me.

Strong suggestion: If you are unfamiliar with the period of American history called the Jazz Age (1920s, post-World War I, Age of Prohibition, pre-Depression), Google it. You will understand the novel much better.

As you read the novel, keep Warshauer's ideas in mind. Start thinking about how they relate to the novel.

Within the first week and a half of school, you will be assessed in three ways:

- 1) an objective (did-you-actually-read-the-novel) test on **The Great Gatsby**
- 2) an in-class essay on **The Great Gatsby**
- 2) a take-home writing assignment based on Warshauer's essay and the novel

Finally, the study of vocabulary is a key component of the Honors English II course. Anyone who already taken the SAT or PSAT knows that an extensive vocabulary is critical to success in the verbal section. Unfortunately, it is a struggle to complete all of

the units because we have so many other areas of study that demand our attention. In order to jumpstart our vocabulary work, you will complete Units 1, 2, and 3 in the book you are receiving today, **Vocabulary Workshop F**. Please use the attached sheets to complete the exercises for each unit. These units are due on the first day of school. We will have a test the following week.

We are going to be spending 10 months together, working hard through four marking periods. I want to share some of my educational philosophy before we begin our journey.

1. ***Relationships are of the utmost importance.*** An open, honest, safe, and trusting environment is critical to the educational process. We will be spending time getting to know one another, sharing our histories as learners, and expressing our fears, our needs, and our expectations for the coming year. Be ready. Be open.
2. ***Education has no easy short-cuts.*** Learning can be a long, difficult process, but in the end you have something of great and lasting value. Resolve to do your best and to do your own work. No Sparknotes, no BarronsBooknotes, no Bookrags, no Wikipedia, no Answers.com, etc. No cut and paste assignments! Nothing can possibly be so difficult that you are forced to cheat. If you are struggling with an assignment, speak up. I am always available to help you.
3. ***Never settle for mediocrity.*** The higher you set your own expectations, the better you are going to feel about yourself when you achieve them. You can live **down** to expectations as well as **up**. This elevator only goes one way: **up!**
4. ***Be there!*** And I don't mean physically. You have to do more than occupy a seat. Be actively and intentionally engaged in your own learning. Take responsibility for your education. As teenagers, you are struggling continually for independence. Education is absolutely necessary for you to achieve that goal.

Now, let us review. Over the summer, you are going to—

- 1) read the internet essay on the American Dream.
- 2) read [The Great Gatsby](#)
- 3) complete the vocabulary exercises for Units 1, 2, and 3

Questions or concerns over the summer can be directed to me via my school email: **Arowland@bhprsd.org**. I am also in the process of developing a blog at blogger.com. My blog name is **HRHS Drama Queen**. Visit and feel free to comment. Tell me about yourself, share a good story, recommend a movie, or tell me a joke (a clean one, of course). Check out my links (including one for the Warshauer essay). I look forward to getting to know you. Have a great summer!