

Tremper Summer Reading Assignment
AP Language and Composition
Mrs. C. Stein
Email:cstein@kUSD.edu

Dear students and parents,

This summer's reading is a nonfiction piece that will introduce students to both the complexities of nonfiction reading as well as the reading selections of the New York Times columnists who authored the book. **Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything** by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Debner, is the revised and expanded large print edition. It is the only version of the updated book that is not in hardcover.

Besides purchasing the text, you must have a **composition notebook**, not a spiral notebook or 3 ringed binders. You will put your assignments in this reader's journal and continue to use it during the school year.

The book is well-written and entertaining, but has a specific message and author's purpose that you will investigate this summer and together we will apply these new concepts which will form the basis for beginning the arduous process of preparing for the AP Language and Composition exam in the May 2010.

The assignment:

Read the book and as you read keep a list and define unfamiliar terms. Dictionary .com is a helpful source. I will be creating my own list and we will compare and discuss our lists in the fall.

As in every piece of writing there are always **important people** that you should be able to identify and explain their importance to the text by the end of your reading. You will keep an annotated list of those people in your composition book. Annotated means to give an explanation of each person listed so if I had not read the book I would be able to understand who he or she is and their importance to the book.

Again, remember that there are **important places/objects** that need to be recorded for further reference. Annotate these as you did the important people.

There are numerous themes in the text some of them include:

Incentives are the Cornerstone of Modern Life
The Conventional Wisdom is Often Wrong
Dramatic Effects With Subtle Causes
Experts Serve Their Own Agendas
Knowing What to Measure
Conventional Wisdom
Incentive
Cause and Effect

Be able to identify and give examples of these themes. Put them in your composition book.

Be able to identify style elements and cite examples from the text:

Point of View-Freakonomics takes the very complicated theme of economics and distills it down into concepts that are easily understandable by the layperson. Identify these concepts and explain them.

Structure-How is the text structured? How do the themes fit with the chapters?

Studies and Research-What is the book dedicated to? What is it studying?

Historical Context-identify and give examples of historical allusions used in the text.

Personal Profiles-How are they used to weave the chapters together? Give examples.

Important quotes-Explain each of the following:

“Morality, it could be argued, represents the way people would like the world to work-whereas economics represents how it actually does work.” Introduction, pg. 13.

“If you learn how to look at data in the right way, you can explain riddles that otherwise might have seemed impossible. Because there is nothing like the sheer power of numbers to scrub away layers of confusion and contradiction.” Introduction, pg. 14.

“Since the science of economics is primarily a set of tools, as opposed to a subject matter, then no subject, however offbeat, needs to be beyond its reach.” Introduction, pg. 14.

“This isn’t a book about the cost of chewing gum versus campaign spending per se, or about disingenuous real-estate agents, or the impact of legalized abortions on crime. It will certainly address these scenarios and dozens more, from the art of parenting to the mechanics of cheating, from the inner workings of the Ku Klux Klan to racial discrimination on *The Weakest Link*. What this book is about is stripping a layer or two from the surface of modern and seeing what is happening underneath.” Introduction, pg. 12.

“It is well and good to opine or theorize about a subject, as humankind is wont to do, but when moral posturing is replaced by an honest assessment of the data, the result is often a new, surprising insight.” Introduction, pg. 13.

“Economics is, at root, the study of incentives: how people get what they want, or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing. Economists love incentives. They love to dream them up and enact them, study them and tinker with them. The typical economist believes the world has not yet invented a problem that he cannot fix if given a free hand to design the proper incentive scheme. His solution may not always be pretty-it may involve coercion or exorbitant penalties or the violation of civil liberties-but the original problem, rest assured, will be fixed. An incentive is a bullet, a lever, a key: on often tiny object with astonishing power to change a situation.” Chapter 1, pg. 24.

“For every clever person who goes to the trouble of creating an incentive scheme, there is an army of people, clever and otherwise, who will inevitably spend even more time trying to beat it. Cheating may or may not be human nature, but it is certainly a prominent act: getting more for less.” Chapter 1, pg. 28.

Freakonomics ends with the observation that there is a random aspect of life that precludes researcher from predicting with certainty how a particular child will turn out. Defend or challenge this idea in a response in which you use sources from the book to defend or challenge the aforementioned statement.

At the end of the text are articles from “The New York Times,” written by the authors of the text. Read each article and identify the audience and purpose of each essay. Add this to your composition book.

Good luck and enjoy your summer read.

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