

## Summer Reading and Assignment for American Literature and Composition Honors

Students, please read with your parents or guardians regarding the texts:

Students must build on learning from Survey of Literature and Composition in close reading and critical analysis while also being introduced to some of the concepts of rhetorical analysis to achieve success both in this class and future English classes. Even as Survey gave students a view of very different cultural values across thousands of years of human history, American Literature and Composition examines works that are specifically seminal and critical to this young nation.

Additionally, because literature and its relationship to the unique past and present of the United States is the focus, brushing up against controversial subjects is not only inevitable, but must also be embraced at times. As a nation of diversity, Americans are often part of a nation that is both united and divided.

Certainly, no one would deny that both the United States and how its citizens view the rights and privileges of its citizens—in light of ethnicity, gender, spirituality, economics, and a myriad of other factors—have evolved over nearly 250 years of history. Although we are a nation founded on the premise that “all men are created equal” (Jefferson), many of the “unalienable rights” that we should possess are new to some of us, and arguably still being fought for by others. The struggles to achieve them have been documented in our history books, but often, the impetus to seek them has been inspired by our artists and authors. Such works are those that we must and will explore. A piece of literature worth reading either was, or still is, controversial to at least some of its potential audience.

Social, mental, and emotional growth all result from examining our beliefs, yet reading a work and understanding its viewpoint does not necessitate acceptance of it. In other words, neither the course nor the instructors seek to persuade anyone to share a particular belief that is subjective in nature.

Finally, terms and dialect that would, from a contemporary view, be considered coarse, insensitive, or unacceptable will also invariably appear in some texts. To understand where we are and where we are heading, we must always be willing to confront where we came from, even if it was ugly.\* Lincoln himself acknowledged that the work of Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was partially responsible for the Civil War and the necessary changes that began after its conclusion. We trust that the merit of any given text that we select outweighs its flaws when considered summatively and through context. The College Board and numerous accredited academic institutions advocate using the same or similar texts.

\*However, if at any time, a student or a student's guardian is uncomfortable with the nature or language within a work, written notice to the teacher (email is fine) will immediately result in an alternative work that all parties agree upon replacing the work in question.

Assigned Short Stories: “Young Goodman Brown” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Seven People Dancing” by Langston Hughes, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce, and “A & P” by John Updike. Third quarter is dedicated solely to women’s studies; thus, female authors and poets may be somewhat underrepresented in other units.

For each short story, there is a close reading and annotation assignment as well as a writing assignment. What students are looking for varies from story to story. Which section of the text is theirs respectively to close read and annotate depends on the first letters of their last names—this also dictates which written responses they should complete following the stories too. All of this, as well as examples of how to annotate using Google docs, has been laid out for them on each story.

WHEN YOU FOLLOW THE LINKS TO THE GOOGLE DOCS, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS TO **MAKE YOURSELF A COPY BEFORE DOING ANYTHING ELSE**. AFTER YOU MAKE THE COPY, CLOSE THE ORIGINAL SO THAT YOU DO NOT ACCIDENTALLY EDIT IT. ONLY EDIT YOUR OWN COPY. IF YOU EDIT THE ORIGINAL, YOU WILL THROW OFF OTHER STUDENTS, AND YOUR NAME WILL BE IN THE EDIT HISTORY AS THE ONE WHO DID SO.

[“Young Goodman Brown”](#)

[“Seven People Dancing”](#) –contains slang language that is considered offensive today

[“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”](#)

[“A & P”](#) –contains slang language and innuendo that is considered offensive today