

Dear student,

Congratulations on your choice of Pre-AP English 2 for your sophomore year. I am looking forward to working with you on what is sure to be the beginning of a challenging but rewarding year together.

The summer reading assignment for this year will be the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The book was published in 1960, and it has become a classic of modern American literature. Read this book slowly and thoughtfully; do not read it the night before school begins. Take weeks to read and digest it. It takes place in Alabama, a lot of it during the summer, so maybe try reading some of it outside (don't forget the lemonade or sweet tea!)

You can borrow a copy of the text in room C111 any time before May 25, or you may purchase your own copy so you can make notes in the book. You need to complete the project and be prepared for a test over the novel within the first week of school.

As you look over your summer assignment, I want to share with you two principles of scholarship that undergird almost everything we do in English class. I think you are familiar with them, but I hope you'll bear with me as I believe it is important for you to understand my perspective on typical academic temptations.

Principle One: Academic Honesty

Throughout the school year, I will expect you to complete many essays and writing assignments, and for each one of them, plagiarism will be an option you'll need to resist. Plagiarism is taking someone else's work and pretending it is yours, which means everything from research papers to worksheets can be plagiarized. It goes without saying that I believe plagiarism is wrong, but I mention it because I want to make clear how it affects our goals in the classroom.

When we as people are under pressure to excel, we often choose to whitewash the surface and make things look okay when they're not. If you're stuck, for example, and the paper is due tomorrow, taking someone else's ideas may seem like a feasible way to cover your lack of ideas, to rid yourself of your predicament and move on without anyone knowing what lies beneath the veneer. When such a temptation arises, please remember this: I would always rather read **your** weak idea or **your** sloppy paper than someone else's great idea you are pretending is yours. Dishonesty completely undercuts the student-teacher relationship and makes teaching impossible. If I don't know the truth about what you understand and know, how can I help you learn?

Principle Two: Shortcuts

Related somewhat closely to plagiarism, but slightly different, is students' use of "shortcuts" like Spark Notes and Shmoop. Most of the books we will read in Pre-AP English 2 are available in summary form on Spark Notes and elsewhere on the internet, so the temptation to read the summaries will always be present. While a Spark Notes summary can have useful applications, it is not a substitute for reading a book. I think of Spark Notes and Shmoop as places for those who want to *appear* as though they have read, not for those who actually *want* to read. If you *want* to read, and if you want to learn to comprehend what you read more effectively and intelligently (definite goals of ours in this class), then you'll need to discipline yourself and make time to read the actual books. If not, then Pre-AP English 2 may not end up being the best fit for you.

That being said, I do not plan to overwhelm you with reading assignments. I am convinced that Alan Jacobs is right when he proclaims, "We should not underestimate what can be accomplished by those who are willing to read more slowly and with greater care." In this class, if you will determine to read what I assign, I will vow to keep reading assignments reasonably sized, so that together we can learn to read with greater care.

What follows is your summer assignment for our class. I cannot stress this next part enough:

**If you get stuck, please do not hesitate to text (preferred) or call me for clarification.
My cell phone # is (713)501-5150.**

YOU ARE NOT BOTHERING ME WHEN YOU CONTACT ME ABOUT SCHOOL WORK. I will be glad to help if I can. I would much rather hear from you over the summer than find out on the first day of school that you were unable to complete your assignments and will no longer be enrolled in our class.

Remember, both assignments are due on the first day of school, August 28. Failure to complete both assignments will result in automatic removal from the class. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Have a wonderful summer. I look forward to learning with you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Laura Nix

Assignment 1: ABC Book

Objective: To create an alphabet book using major characters, symbols, setting, figurative language, literary devices, rhetorical devices, etc. from *To Kill a Mockingbird* in order to gain deeper insight and understanding of the novel.

Book will include:

- Decorated front cover
- A page about author Harper Lee, using at least three different sources, with proper MLA documentation (parenthetical citations and works cited). DO NOT MERELY CUT AND PASTE INFORMATION! Synthesize material from at least three distinct sources.
- Decorated back cover
- 26 separate pages for letters
- Binding
- 26 decorated letters
- 1 sentence assigning the topic to the letter. (Example: A is for Atticus.)
- 3 sentences for each Letter including your opinion about your chosen letter subject, direct textual reference (quote) from the novel pertaining to your letter subject with proper MLA documentation, and commentary about your subject (opinion – quote with MLA doc – commentary/analysis chunk). See below for example.
 - Opinion and commentary sentences should go beyond mere summary. Offer analysis of the characters, setting, themes, motifs... For example, don't write "A is for Atticus. He is Jem and Scout's father." ...Duh! We all know that. Analyze his character; tell me how he is significant to the plot, theme, and/or the novel in general.
 - Don't use first or second person pronouns. Phrases like "I think" are unnecessary as they state the obvious.

As you read, consider using sticky notes to mark important passages referring to these elements. It will make the project much easier to complete if you have already marked these elements. For example, when the Radley Place is described in Chapter 1, write "Radley Place" on a sticky note and place it next to that description in the book. When you prepare your ABC book, you can use "R is for the Radley Place" and you'll know exactly where to go to find a quote because you already have it marked.

You have leeway for design and assembly; the contents, however, must be true to text, quoting with proper MLA documentation. Each letter must be decorated and creatively represented. Although the format is childishly simple, the elaboration of each letter and corresponding visual should not be. Your sentences should be error-free and written in a mature, educated style. This project should be approached not as a parody but rather a serious study of the novel.

An Example from *Lord of the Flies*:

Decorative Letter

This sentence describes/assigns the letter of the alphabet.

3 Sentence Chunk – Connecting to Meaning – Essay Format:

1. Opinion
2. Quote with MLA Documentation
3. Analysis/Commentary

Illustration

Please visit the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) site for more information about MLA citations.

Assignment 2 – selections from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*:

***A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines, Revised Edition* by Thomas C. Foster**

If you had Ms. Wyatt for Pre-AP English 1, you should already own a copy of this book. If not, you will need to purchase one, as you will continue to use it throughout your time in the AP English program at NHS.

These excerpts are an interesting nonfiction read that should help enlighten you on your journey with literary analysis. This year's assigned tasks are set forth are below. You may either type your answers or write them in blue or black pen; do not write on the back of your paper. You should respond with using complete sentences, and your answers should be thorough. Each chapter does NOT need its own page; however, please label each section that requires a response, and please include the questions with your responses. Content from these chapters will be referenced in class throughout the year.

Chapter 2 -- Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

1. What does "communion" mean?
2. For what reason does Foster suggest that authors often include meal scenes?
3. What does a failed meal suggest in literature? Explain thoroughly.

Chapter 3: --Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires

1. What is literal vampirism?
2. What is symbolic vampirism?
3. What are the "essentials of the vampire story", and what do they represent?

Chapter 9: -- It's More than Just Rain or Snow

1. How can weather be symbolic in literature?
2. How can weather serve as a plot device in literature?
3. What are some of the common "meanings" of various types of weather?

Chapter 23 -- It's Never Just Heart Disease...And Rarely Just Illness

1. What are some of the symbolic possibilities associated with the heart? Explain thoroughly.
2. What elements make for a "prime literary disease"?
3. What are some of the conventional symbolic meanings of various illnesses?

Chapter 25 -- Don't Read with *Your* Eyes

1. Why did I italicize "your" in the chapter title above?
2. What is Foster's main point in this chapter?
3. Do we have to accept the values of another culture to accept the impact those values had on the writing? Explain thoroughly.