

Dear AP English (Honors) Student,

Hello! Congratulations on your academic success over your first two years at Depew High School. I know right now you're looking forward to your summer vacation, but I'm also hoping you're looking forward to next year's English class, because I'm looking forward to being your teacher.

A few years ago, English 11 Honors at Depew High School was turned into an Advanced Placement course called English **Language** and Composition (formerly called **AP English 11**). The course focuses on more non-fiction texts than you've studied in the past, and on rhetoric, which means strategies writers use to make a point or to persuade an audience. In this class we will read, analyze, and enjoy (I hope) the finest literature mankind has produced. We'll have two goals in the course, in order of importance: 1) to open our minds to all that these classic texts have to offer us---morally, intellectually, and socially; 2) to earn college credit by passing the AP English Language exam. In order to achieve the second goal, *it is necessary to read and write at the collegiate level*. This will require a tremendous amount of dedication on your part, as many of the texts are challenging and there is little tolerance for careless mistakes in your written work. You need to *earn the college credit* by reading actively and writing well. If you are up for the challenge, I can promise you a stimulating learning environment. Our mode of learning will be guided discussion, not lecture. Class participation during discussions is vital on your part. Try to be as active in class as you can, by both asking and answering questions.

Even though most of our course curriculum is non-fiction, there will be room for novels and plays as well, starting with your summer reading. You are to read two books this summer, F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby and the (non-fiction) biography Into the Wild, by Jon Krakauer. In addition to reading both books, you need to complete an assignment on them (below). You'll turn in your summer reading assignment and be tested on the books (factual recall of plot, characters, settings, etc.) during the **first week of the school year**. Then we'll spend a week or so discussing each book in depth and your reactions to them (answering questions you may have, going over the deeper aspects of it, such as themes, symbols, etc.). Before we begin new reading in September, we'll have a unit test on what was discussed in class about both The Great Gatsby and Into the Wild. My advice to you is to try to make personal connections to each story, even if they at first seem strange or unfamiliar. What do you find most interesting? Why?

Enjoy the summer and enjoy your summer reading. I'm excited about the terrific year we'll have together in Junior Honors/ AP English 11.

Sincerely,

Mr. Endres

PROJECT: You are to keep a **READING JOURNAL** while reading both books. Your journal can be either a Google Doc or, if you prefer physical pen/pencil and paper, an actual "marble-covered" composition notebook, or any type of notebook. You need a minimum of one journal entry for each chapter you read. Each entry should start with the date and the chapter number and be *at least 8 sentences long*. Each entry should *not* simply summarize what → happened in

each chapter; instead you should give your **personal reaction** to what happened in each chapter. You should be using the words *I, me, my* in your responses. If you're responding to something very specific in the chapter, include a quote and page number as well. You're free to write on anything that you find interesting, impressive, or even challenging in the book you're currently reading. If you have trouble coming up with something to write about, here are a few suggestions to stimulate your thinking:

- Connections to your life (explain how you can personally relate to something specific in that particular chapter)
- Connections to history or current events
- Connections to pop culture (something in the chapter that reminds you of a particular movie, TV show, song, meme, etc.)
- Connections to other works of literature (explain how something in the chapter reminds you of another story or a poem you've read)
- Literary elements and techniques (noticing when the writer used one and then trying to figure out *why* the writer used it---what effect does the LE/LT have on the reader?)
- Noticing things that are repeated in the story, and trying to figure out why
- Possible themes: a statement in a chapter that seems so true, important, or even profound
- Things you disagree with or even take exception to
- Anything else you can think of; be creative in your thinking and journal entries

{NOTE: you should read The Epilogue of Into the Wild and do a journal entry on that as well, which would be chapter 19. You do *not* have to read or have a journal entry for the Afterword.}