

Bellbrook High School Summer Reading Assignment: English 9 Honors

Incoming 9th grade Honors English students will read two books for their summer reading assignment:

- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

Complete the assignments listed on the pages below.

Submit the Huck Finn essay to Mr. Erwin electronically (email mark.erwin@bss.k12.oh.us) before the first day of school.

Bring the Huck Finn reading questions the first day of school.

Bring the Annotated *Of Mice and Men* book the first day of school.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Part I Reading Questions

While you read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* , complete the following questions:

1. Name the three most important events that occur in the book. Why is each event important?
2. Who are the most important characters? Identify the protagonist / antagonist. What are their strengths and weaknesses and dominant character traits?
3. What kinds of conflicts does the plot contain or the characters encounter? (The conflict types include man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. nature, man vs. God / supernatural force, man vs. society, man vs. machine). Explain in detail how these conflicts affect the characters.
4. Where does the story take place? Provide specific information about the place, time, and social context of the book.

(This will require some research!)

5. What are some of the important symbols in the book? What kinds of objects does the author describe frequently?
6. What did the main character/s learn about life? What did you learn about life from the novel?
7. What do you think that the author's theme or message is? What is he/she trying to tell you by writing this book?
8. In what ways do the author's life experiences influence the book? And/or what seems to be the author's purpose in telling this story? (Once again, do some research!)

Part II--Essay Response for Huck Finn

Choose one of the following prompts to respond to in a well-written essay in which you provide textual support from the novel. Your essay should be typed in Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced font. Please put your name in the upper left corner with the date you wrote the essay and the prompt number. Title your essay.

1. While traveling down the Mississippi, Huck meets a wide variety of people. Based on Huck's interactions with these people and his description of them, write an essay on whether Mark Twain's view of society/humanity is positive or negative. Which characters have redeeming qualities and which don't? Be sure to use specific examples to support your answer.
2. Write an essay in which you explore how and why Twain uses symbolism in the novel.
3. Huck Finn has been called the "Great American Novel." However, it is the sixth most frequently banned book in the United States. Discuss why this masterpiece is banned. How would you defend it being taught in high school classrooms?
4. Write an essay in which you explain whether or not any of the characters in the novel are heroes.

Explain your answer with a thorough definition of what a hero is and specific examples that demonstrate how that character does or does not match the definition.

5. Huck Finn is very much a satire. What comment/s is Twain making about society? How does he use humor to create the satire?
6. Trace Huck's moral development throughout the novel. Your essay could examine Huck's lies, Huck's decisions regarding Jim, Huck's refusal to be "sivilized," Huck's relationship with Jim, or the differences between individual and society.

When writing an essay (or an extended response), there are several things to keep in mind:

DO:

- Focus your ideas around one central point.
- Stick to the prompt. All your ideas in your essay should answer the main point you're trying to make which should answer the question or questions asked in the essay prompt. Avoid tangents.
- Use specific examples from the text to support your ideas. Examples clarify and extend your point.
- Use present tense when talking about what happens in a literary text.
- Use apostrophes to indicate possession. Ex: My mom's car.
- Use double quotation marks (" "). Single quotes are only used inside a double quote.
- Keep your punctuation inside the quotes.
- Allow your pronouns to agree with their antecedents. Ex: A person likes to eat his/her own spaghetti. Some people

like their spaghetti.

DON'T:

- Say “I think” or “I believe,” even if the prompt asks “What do you think?” This is your essay. Every thing should be what you think or believe—that’s the point!
- Use weak words like could, may, seem. Take a stand! The stronger words you use to present your ideas, the more convincing your essay can be.
- Summarize more than is necessary. Too much summary shows you are avoiding answering the prompt.
- Use parentheses. Often, the ideas in parentheses don’t need to be set off with that type of punctuation. Consider this: if it’s in parentheses, then it probably doesn’t need to be said.
- Say “you” or “we.” Rephrase your sentences to avoid a second person construction.
- Throw bricks at me! Avoid obvious statements that tell me what you’re about to say or what you have already said. Example: “In my essay, I am going to tell you about...” or “And that is I think...”

Of Mice and Men

Reading and Annotations

You will need to purchase a new copy of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. This book will do a couple important things for us. It is a great "gateway book" that explores some techniques and themes you will find in several other novels. Additionally, it is a title that will allow you to practice annotation before you get to class. Before you begin reading, consult the following to get you prepared for the annotation assignment.

*First read "**How to Mark a Book,**" By Mortimer J. Adler, Ph.D. From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 6, 1941. You can find it at

http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~pinsky/mark_a_book.htm

Mortimer's essay helps with the "why" of annotation. Being able to annotate as you read will help you to better comprehend and recall everything you read. This is something that we will do in class all year long, and is one of the most helpful "prepare you for college" skills you can learn in highschool."

*After that, look at "An Annotation Guide."

https://www.covcath.org/uploaded/06_Students/Annotation_Guide_AP_Language.pdf

And this "how to annotate" video on youtube

https://www.google.com/search?q=how+to+annotate+a+novel&rlz=1C1GGRV_enUS759US760&oq=how+&aqs=chrome.69i59j69i57j69i61j69i60j0l2.2478j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=1

These are really nice examples of "how" to annotate a book. Both are good combinations of highlighting and writing (which is important). Simply coloring pages with a highlighter, randomly underlining sentences, or writing a word or two without thinking do not constitute annotation, and are a massive waste of your time.

Finally, Annotate *Of Mice and Men* from beginning to end. If you would like to use one of the systems given in the examples on this page, that is fine, but the most helpful thing for you would be to find a system that works for you (see youtube video). Feel free to experiment with one or more systems (or research another and use it). Make sure that you write your thoughts (often), and please understand that something noteworthy almost always happens on every page.