



June 2009

Dear Class of 2013 Student,

Congratulations on your admission to the Humanities House! We are so excited to welcome you to the program, and we look forward to working with you and watching you grow over the next four years.

Transitioning to high school, and a magnet program at that, will be exciting, challenging, and rewarding. Your freshman year will lay the foundation for many of the skills and ideas that you will hone through your studies. We've tailored these courses to provide you a range of experiences that will promote new ways of thinking and help you discover different ways of doing.

You are about to embark upon an extraordinary journey through a world of intellectual and creative giants. You will encounter, by chance and by design, books and ideas and works of art that will have a profound effect on you. Let's begin that journey now.

Attached is your summer reading assignment. We included a great deal of information for you to use to guide yourself through the work. Please be sure to read all of the materials completely, for even the rubrics will help you understand what we're asking you to submit.

Next year is going to be fantastic!

Have a great summer,

Ms. Emily Sigman
Head of House
Humanities English 9

Ms. Lisa Kellert
Criticism in the Humanities

Mr. Terry Turner
Humanities US History 9

The Summer Reading Assignments

What follows is your Humanities House assignment, *The Great American Novel*.

Due Date/Deadline: The first day of school

Format: Typed, Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced lines,
with your name in the upper right corner (This is standard format.)

Please read through the directions carefully and consider the scoring rubric before beginning the written components. We teachers would like to evaluate your responses to the first assignment objectively and for a variety of factors, so this is the only time that we will say that we are not available for assistance.

Step 1

Text Selection

Pick a book from the following list:

- a. Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly, Harriet Beecher Stowe
- b. Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, Dee Brown
- c. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain
- d. All Quiet on the Western Front, Erich Maria Remarque
- e. Slaughterhouse Five, Kurt Vonnegut
- f. Coming of Age in Mississippi, Anne Moody
- g. Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Jonathan Safran Foer

Step 2

The Blurb, 10 points

We want you to find five (5) short quotations about the book you selected from the list above. You'll want to look for quotations with substance, but the quotations should not be terribly long. "Blurb" is the key word here (10-100 words). See the back or inside jacket of a book for examples, but go beyond the blurbs that state, "One of the greatest books of its time!" and try to find ones that comment on the importance of the book.

Two of your five blurbs must be contemporaneous, meaning what critics wrote about the book when it was published. The remaining three can be from any time or place.

Be sure to copy each blurb exactly and include the author and, if possible, the place or publication in which the quotation was first made.

Feel free to use the blurbs to guide your book selection.

Step 3

The Pre-Reading Reflection, 20 points

This piece of personal writing is an opportunity for you to speculate what you think you will encounter and experience while reading this book. What expectations do you have?

This piece should be a developed, constructed paragraph (BCR) that includes a topic sentence, identifies what you think, and explains why you think so.

Step 4

Read. Enjoy the novel. Savor its nuances.

Step 5

The Post-Reading Essay, 50 points

For this essay, you will use both the novel and one of the blurbs you selected in Step 2. Select the blurb that impacts you the most and argue its validity, using specific evidence from the text to support your position. You might argue that the blurb is absolutely on target and lends insight into the meaning or importance of the novel, or you might think it misleading or misinformed. Choose a quotation that you can dissect, analyze, and apply to the text.

Step 6

Gallery Piece, 20 points

Your final task is to find a piece of art that you think embodies or communicates a theme that is similar to the dominant theme of the novel. This piece does not have to be related to the text temporally, meaning created in or about the same time period, nor does it need to reflect a literal aspect of the novel; it only needs to convey a similar theme. You will submit a printed copy of this work, including the title and artist and a blurb that you have written about this piece. Your blurb should be an insightful comment on the theme of the art as a singular piece; it should not attempt to link the artwork to the novel.

Novel Blurb, 10 points

	Extraordinary	Excellent	Quite Good	Almost There	Beginning
	10-9	8	7	6	5
	At least two of the five quotations are contemporaneous; all are suggestive of the significance of the novel or lend insight into the meaning of the work.	At least two of the five quotations are contemporaneous; most are rich with information about the text or the time in which it was written.	At least two of the five quotations are contemporaneous, but there is a question about the quality of the quotations.	Five quotations are present, but there is not enough information to discern background or relevance.	Most, if not all of the quotations are superficial or more than three are missing.

Pre-Reading Reflection, 20 points

	Excellent		Quite Good		Beginning
Structure	8	7	6	5	4
	Information is clearly introduced and follows in a logical, natural order.		There might be some questions about the order of information, or the introduction is unclear or misleading.		Elements of response are placed haphazardly.
Content	8	7	6	5	4
	Piece explores several expectations with attention to why these expectations are held.		Writing addresses expectations, but why these expectations are held is not clear.		Comments are very general and offer no insight.
Style	3		2		1
	There is attention to voice and there is an elegant variation in diction and syntax (word choice and sentence structure).		A good attempt, but some language may be awkward or unclear.		The writing is disjointed and largely unclear.
Mechanics	1				0
	Polished, professional product is submitted. There are few errors, if any.				Please proofread your work before submitting it.

Gallery Piece Blurb, 20 points

	Extraordinary	Excellent	Quite Good	Almost There	Beginning
	20-18	16	14	12	10
	Blurb is exciting to read and includes insightful analysis of the piece and its theme embedded in the quotation.	Blurb still piques interest, but it might be too cryptic or overstated.	Blurb addresses superficial elements of the art without addressing the theme.	Very generalized comments about the piece are made.	Meaning or purpose of the blurb is unclear.

The Post-Reading Essay, 50 points

	Extraordinary	Excellent	Quite Good	Almost There	Beginning
Structure	<p>20-18</p> <p>Organization of the essay gives the reader a sense of the necessary flow of the argument—it accommodates itself to its intended purpose and maintains its focus. Paragraphs are fully developed and follow naturally from what preceded them. The conclusion strengthens essay purpose without restatement.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>The writer explores the relationship between the text and the blurb in a logical format; most paragraphs follow well and are appropriately divided. Introduction and conclusion paragraphs are focused and necessary.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>There is an attempt at an organizational pattern to the presentation of ideas, but it is disjointed due to misplaced information at the sentence- or paragraph-level. Introduction and conclusion paragraphs are present.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>The organization is difficult to discern. The introduction is unclear or nonexistent. Paragraphs are not well arranged. Transitions are weak or missing.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Ideas are presented in a haphazard manner.</p>
Content	<p>20-18</p> <p>The essay establishes a provocative argument that analyzes the quotation in relation to the text. The essay actively engages the blurb by extending or arguing its points. Historical or current concerns and complexities of the text are addressed. Evidence is purposeful, interesting, and drawn from throughout the text.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>The argument is engaging, and the essay sustains interest by attempting to analyze and engage the blurb. Historical or social implications of the text might be addressed. Evidence is interesting and is drawn from throughout the text.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>An argument is present but problematic in some way: too broad or narrow, or not immediately clear. There might be an over reliance on background or historical information. An appropriate amount of evidence is used but might be obvious or does not contribute meaningfully to the purpose. The reasoning, while sound, is predictable, and the analysis is thin.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>There is no discernable thesis. The quotation is minimally addressed and the essay focuses on summarizing the text or providing background about the text that is unrelated to the selected blurb. Quotations are inadequate or ineffectively used, or there is a minimal attempt at analysis.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>The paper provides only broad background or a summary of the book. Evidence is minimal, arbitrary, irrelevant, or missing. There is no attempt at analysis or engagement with the blurb.</p>
Style	<p>7</p> <p>This essay is exciting to read: the prose is clear, apt, and occasionally memorable. Syntax is sophisticated and varies in structure and length. The writer smoothly incorporates details and quotations to develop the main ideas.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>The writer establishes a tone that is appropriate for the topic and audience. The writer uses language that is natural yet engaging. The writer uses sentences that vary in structure and length. The writer smoothly incorporates details and quotations to develop the main ideas.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>The style might be considered “wooden” or “flat.” Details and quotations stand alone or are not smoothly integrated with writer’s prose.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>The writer’s voice might not appropriately match the topic and audience. Run-ons and fragments confuse the reader. Main ideas can be understood, but with some difficulty on the reader’s part.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Word choice and sentence structure hinder the clarity or even basic communication of intended ideas.</p>
Mechanics	<p>3</p> <p>Polished, professional product is submitted.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>There are a few minor grammatical errors or errors in punctuation and spelling.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Errors in grammar and mechanics begin to affect clarity.</p>	<p>0</p> <p>Proofread before submitting.</p>	