May 3, 2011

Dear Student:

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to Advanced Placement Literature and Composition. Your selection for this course was based on your academic record as well as the outstanding effort you have demonstrated in your honors English courses. This course is taught as a freshman college course thereby preparing you for advanced courses in literature and composition at the college level. Many of you will choose to take the Advanced Placement Exam next May, and your coursework should enable you to receive college credit in English.

The Advanced Placement Literature and Composition curriculum focuses on the study of British literature, including drama, nonfiction, poetry, and the novel. In addition to the reading that is required for the course, you will be asked to write several compositions, and, like most of the writing you have completed in your English classes, all steps of the writing process will be emphasized. Since the Advanced Placement program calls for a broad reading and writing background, the English Department requires that you read TWO works of literature over the summer and respond to your reading by writing various **critical commentaries** that will set the tone for what will be expected not only in the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition course, but also on the AP exam. **The writing that you will do in response to your reading requires time, thought, effort, and profound critical analysis.**

Although the reading and writing may be time-consuming and rather rigorous, if you start early and pace yourself, you should have ample time to complete this required assignment by the first day of class in August. The attached sheets contain a list of books and the guidelines you are to follow in completing your critical analyses. There is ONE required work of literature and ONE choice that must come from the list provided. Your choice novel should not be a book that you have previously read.

Your critical analyses should be completed and turned in at the beginning of class on the first day of school. These typed analyses will be accepted for half credit (maximum) until Friday (the end of the first week of school). After the first week of school, no credit will be given to late analyses. It is very important that you follow these guidelines since the first grade of the course (approximately 100 pts.) will be based on your summer reading typed responses. You will also take a test on these works of literature during the first week of school.

If you have any questions or concerns, please stop by and see us in the English Department office before the end of the school year. You may also email us during the summer through our http://new.schoolnotes.com page. We look forward to having you in class next year, and we hope you enjoy the choices we have made for summer reading.

Janice Clark

Mrs. Janice Clark
Mr. Peter Giaquinta
Advanced Placement Literature and Composition instructors

Required reading:

entertainment

North Current April, 2011

marisa dipaolo
staff writer

SARA GRUEN'S ENGROSSING novel, *Water for Elephants*, is one that is near impossible to put down, as it draws the reader into the world of ringmasters, circus performers and, of course, circus elephants.

Set during the Great Depression, it is the story of Jacob Jankowski, a veterinary student whose parents had been recently killed in a car crash. Jacob, feeling lost and alone as ever, dashes into the forest, hopping onto the first train he sees. He is surprised to find, however, that this is no ordinary freight train. It is carrying the entire contents of the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. Soon enough, Jacob has been appointed the show's new veterinarian, but he struggles to find his place among the many workers and performers. He eventually befriends the shows menagerie director, August, and his beautiful wife, Marlena. The plot begins to take some crazy turns, however, as it is realized that Marlena and August's marriage is not as perfect as it appears.

Sara Gruen's incredibly detailed writing makes this book an entertaining read, and unlike the majority of books, it would be hard to pin down specific lulls in the story. Plus, the reader can get a new and unusual perspective on the story, as it is being told by the 93 year old, present-time Jacob Jankowski, who flashes back to his years in the circus business. The best thing about this book, by far, is the fact that Gruen reveals no hints at the ending of the story until the last few pages, leaving everything to the imagination until that point in time.

Hopefully the new feature film starring Robert Pattinson and Reese Witherspoon can do this riveting book justice. Nevertheless, it would definitely be worthwhile to head to the bookstore to pick up a copy of *Water for Elephants* before going to see the movie.

Choices for second work

Choose one work of literature **THAT YOU HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY READ**:

Non-fiction works:

Junger, Sebastian	*The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea*
Krakauer, Jon	*Into Thin Air; Into the Wild*
Larson. Erik	*The Devil in the White City*
Matheissen, Peter	*The Snow Leopard*
McCourt, Frank	*Angela's Ashes*
Santiago, Esmeralda	*When I Was Puerto Rican; Almost A Woman*
Wolfe, Tom	*The Right Stuff*
Wolff, Tobias	*This Boy's Life: A Memoir*

Contemporary American works of fiction:

Banks, Russell	*The Rule of the Bone*
Edwards, Kim	*The Memory Keeper's Daughter*
Follett, Kent	*Pillars of the Earth*
Gruen, Sara	*Water for Elephants*
Guterson, David	*Snow Falling on Cedars*
Hamilton, Jane	*The Book of Ruth*
Haruf, Kent	*Plainsong*
Irving, John	*The World According to Garp; Hotel New Hampshire; A Prayer for Owen Meany; The Cider House Rules*

Kennedy, William	*Ironweed*
Kidd, Sue Monk	*The Secret Life of Bees*
Kingsolver, Barbara	*The Poisonwood Bible*
Kozinski, Jerzy	*The Painted Bird; Being There*
Lamb, Wally	*She's Come Undone; I Know This Much Is True; The Hour I First Believed*
Mailer, Norman	*The Naked and the Dead; The Executioner's Song*
McCarthy, Cormac	*The Road; No Country For Old Men*
O'Brien, Tim	*The Things They Carried; In the Lake of the Woods*
Orwell, George (British)	*1984*
Sebold, Alice	*The Lovely Bones*
Steinbeck, John	*East of Eden; The Grapes of Wrath*
Stephenson, Neal	*Snow Crash*
Toole, John	*Confederacy of Dunces*
Tyler, Ann	*The Accidental Tourist*
Vonnegut, Kurt	*The Sirens of Titan; Cat's Cradle*
Wharton, William	*Birdy*

Contemporary Ethnic and World Literature Works of Fiction:

Afghanistan:

Hosseini, Khaled	*Kite Runner; A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Africa:

Adichie, Ngozi (Nigerian)	*Purple Hibiscus*
Coetzee, J. M. (South African)	*Waiting for the Barbarians*

African-American:

Gaines, Ernest	*Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman; A Lesson Before Dying*
Hurston, Zora Neale	*Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Morrison, Toni	*Sula; Beloved; Song of Solomon; Paradise; The Bluest Eye*
Walker, Alice	*The Color Purple*

Chinese-American:

Tan, Amy	*The Joy Luck Club; The Kitchen God's Wife; The Hundred Secret Senses; The Bonesetter's Daughter*

Latin American:

Allende, Isabel	*Daughter of Fortune; The House of the Spirits*
Gabriel Garcia Marquez	*One Hundred Years of Solitude*
Esquivel, Laura	*Like Water for Chocolate*
Anaya, Rudolfo	*Bless Me Ultima*

Native American:

Erditch, Louise	*Love Medicine; The Beet Queen; The Bingo Palace*
Welch, James	*Fools Crow*

Jewish:

Roth, Henry	*Call It Sleep*
Yezierska, Anzia	*The Bread Givers*

German:

Grasse, Gunter	*The Tin Drum*
Hesse, Herman	*Siddhartha; Demian; Steppenwolf*

Indian:

Markandaya, Kamala	*Nectar in a Sieve*
Mistry, Rohinton	*A Fine Balance*
Mukherjee, Bharati	*Jasmine*
Roy, Arundhati	*The God of Small Things*
Rushdie, Salman	*Midnight's Children*

New Zealand:

Jones, Lloyd	*Mr. Pip*

Guidelines for Critical Analyses

Requirements:

- You should type your entries and staple them together. Date all entries and include the title of the work of literature you are responding to at the top of the page before you begin typing on the first line.
- Type THREE ENTRIES for each work of literature (minimum of one and a half pages typed double-spaced; MAXIMUM of two full pages double-spaced).
- Use the attached list of topics to help you come up with ideas for focus statements for *The Namesake* and your second book.

Format:

Begin each entry with an underlined focus statement that clearly presents the specific aspect of the work of literature that you are going to examine in a precise manner throughout your journal entry. Stick to developing that focus statement without wandering off onto another facet of your work of literature. In order to develop your discussion with specific support, **INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE WELL-CHOSEN SUPPORTING QUOTATION** that illustrates an important facet of your focus statement. Examine your quoted line or lines specifically by explaining the circumstances surrounding the passage, as well as examining its significance. Document your quotation by including the page number in parentheses after the quote. Use the sample analysis from *Snow Falling on Cedars* that is provided for you in this packet as a model; we are trying to show you what we are looking for and it is to your advantage to follow the guidelines and the format provided for you.

Imagine that you are writing to someone who has not read your work of literature; therefore, be precise in explaining exactly what is happening in the story when you discuss specific examples, as well as your quoted line or lines.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- Thorough and careful reading of each work of literature as evidenced by your precise discussion of the incidents, characters, settings, and themes of each story.
- Clear and perceptive thinking in response to the literature beyond just plot summary.
- Use of specific examples to illustrate your perceptive ideas.
- Following guidelines carefully, including appropriate length of your entries, use of an underlined focus statement, use of appropriate quoted passages that are documented with the page number, and turning your journal in on time.

Ideas Related to a Part-to-Whole Critical Analysis of a Literary Text

Use may use these topics as a start to formulating a good focus statement for your analyses of *Water for Elephants* and your choice book:

1. parody or satire
2. different narrative levels
3. use of real or symbolic characters
4. the reliability of the narrator
5. use of the absurd or grotesque
6. use of supernatural elements
7. use of irony and paradox
8. use of parallel situations and counterparts
9. use of mythic elements

Holistic Themes

1. the relationship between old age and youth
2. the treatment of evil
3. the exploration of the darker side of life
4. the world of male dominance and patriarchal authority
5. the complex physiological portraits of women in man-woman relationships
6. the balance between self-assertion and social sensitivity
7. a response to living in the modern world
8. the use of the initiation theme (the hero or heroine gains self-knowledge as he or she moves toward maturity and an awareness of societal flaws)
9. the use of reconciliation as the end of conflict
10. the struggle of the protagonist to judge good and evil accurately
11. the struggle of the main character to achieve enlightenment through suffering
12. an exploration of guilt
13. the use of traditional Christian imagery and symbolism (use of Christ-figure, an Eve-figure, use of redemptive symbols such as water and fire, etc.)
14. the theme of discovering benevolence in a fallen world
15. an exploration of the destructive nature of pride
16. the private self vs. the public self
17. the role of sin in human life
18. the role of violence
19. the position of man in the universe
20. perverted love vs. normal sorts of love
21. the nature of human freedom; man as a political animal; the State vs. the Individual
22. the righting of wrongs affected by changing social, moral, ethical, and religious mores
23. a discussion of the novel's concluding scene

You are not limited to these ideas. Choose specific scenes to focus your discussion on rather than writing about what generally happens in the work as a whole. Then connect those specific observations to the author's purpose in the novel as a whole.

Sample Student Critical Analysis

Snow Falling on Cedars

June 16, 2004

David Guterson's poetic descriptions of the weather and landscapes on San Piedro Island reveal more than a scenic portrait for his readers; they reflect the inner characters of the island's inhabitants. Many times people personify elements of nature and can learn more about themselves and others through these observations. Other times the weather can indicate the progress of circumstances surrounding individuals' lives through its intensity. *Snow Falling on Cedars* reveals both these truths as a court case unfolds, and with it, so do the lives of those involved.

As a newspaper reporter covering the case of Kabuo Miyomoto, Ishmael Chambers remembers back to the days of lying within the hollow of a cedar tree with Hatsue Imada, now the wife of the accused. Back then, Hatsue's parents forbid her to have relationships with white boys, but she continues to see Ishmael in secret, thinking that "they had allowed the forest and the beach to sweep them up, that all of it had been delusion all along" (Guterson 161). This forest, surrounding then both in darkness, symbolizes the secrets and emotions they hide from the world. Their secrets consist of the inevitable lies to their parents and classmates of their relationship, and also of Hatsue's knowledge that she does not love Ishmael in the same manner he loves her. Her lies affect her deeply, for she will not only leave Ishmael unhappy, but also her parents disappointed, since she goes against her Japanese upbringing. Also, the forest resembles an impenetrable barrier for Ishmael from Hatsue, since he cannot fully understand why she cannot love him back. The forest acts as a delusion because their love can only survive in the secrecy of it, but not in the world around them.

Another interesting geographical point of San Piedro is that it is an island, meaning water surrounds every side of it and remains isolated from neighboring lands. Each inhabitant on San Piedro knows better than to create enemies because different people rarely come and go to enable a different blending of friends. Those one grows up with most likely will stay with him throughout the years of his life, and because of this, people take care. Unfortunately, "it meant an inbreeding of the spirit…a world whose inhabitants walked in trepidation, in fear of opening up" (Guterson 330). Like the island they live on, these people isolate themselves from one another, but at the same time they realize they need to rely on

others, especially when a Japanese-American man stands trial for murdering a man in cold blood. Amongst the water surrounding the island, a fog lingers "as immobile and dense as buttermilk" (Guterson 296). The fog symbolizes another barrier perhaps suggesting the atmosphere of the trial. Since the accused man happens to look Japanese, many people are prejudiced from ideas left over from the war and want to hang this man whether he committed the crime or not. Just as the fog blinds a gill-netter at sea, the prejudice in the people's hearts blinds their souls from declining the right stance to take on the trial.

Finally, during the entire trial, a snowstorm "swirled like some icy fog, like the breath of ghosts" (Guterson 128). It has been ten years since WWII, but the memories and scars have not left many of the inhabitants of San Piedro Island. Since the war, and now with the death of Carl Heine, the islanders have grown cold in spirit, which the snowstorm suggests. The anger of many of the Japanese-Americans for being forced to enter internment camps of the account that they looked Japanese has not completely melted away, and neither has the white Americans' prejudice. War veterans remember the deeply slit eyes of the Japanese, with their willingness to fight and refusal to show emotion through their façade. The jurors are reminded of this as Kabuo sits just as emotionless, showing his obvious strength in the courtroom. Outside, Ishmael photographs "three shots of the car that had plowed into the pickup truck" (Guterson 236). As the storm grows worse causing destruction such as this, the trial nears an end with a feeling of withheld anger that may destroy the hearts of those involved in the case. Eventually, all storms blow over, including those concerning the human heart, but whether the trial has a destructive result rests in the hands of the court.

Receipt of Summer Reading Packet:

Fill in the blank spaces and return it to your English teacher who will pass it on to your English 4AP teacher. This is your declaration that you have received the packet and have read through it carefully so that you understand the requirements for summer reading and the journal that is due on the first day of school in August. Also, please provide us with a list of the novels you have read in previous years for summer reading so that we can assess the reading background you bring to the class, especially in regards to what you may draw upon for the open question of the AP examination.

I (print your name neatly)_____understand that a requirement of English 4AP is to complete the summer reading of two books and the writing of 6 critical analyses. I will follow the instructions as explained on the attached sheets and I will submit entries that reflect my own thinking and my own work (no plagiarism). Here is a list of the books I have read for summer reading in previous years:

Freshman year (Teacher:_____):

1.
2.
3.

Sophomore year (Teacher:_____):

1.
2.
3.

Junior year (Teacher:_____):

1.
2.
3.

Signed:_____

Date:_____