

Mrs. Beamesderfer's English II Honors
2017 Summer Assignments
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Dear English II Honors students,

I hope you have a restful summer that includes reading a good novel or two. The honors courses have been designed to challenge highly motivated students. Our focus this year will center on the in-depth study of literature to include various genres such as short stories, poetry, novels, and plays. In addition, there will be a strong emphasis on grammar. My goal this school year is to prepare you for the rigors and demands of Honors courses; therefore, we will analyze literature, conduct timed-writing practices, complete multi-media presentations, and practice critical responses through Socratic Seminars. In order to convey maturity in your writing and master a college-level writing voice, you will be expected to display an acute knowledge of grammar and MLA formatting. As a 10th grade Honors student, you will need to do the following this summer:

1. Purchase a copy of the required reading, *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath.
2. Complete the assignments related to the novel prior to returning in August.
3. Post each of your assignments in Google Classroom.
4. Return on the first day of school with your annotated novel.

I do not have multiple copies of these texts, so I would like to encourage you to purchase your summer novel, so that you may annotate directly in the book. Goodwill Books in Venice sells classics for 2-3 dollars, and Amazon often sells used copies for as low as a penny plus shipping.

There will be **no excuse** for not having these assignments complete **and submitted into Google Classroom** no later than the first day of school. Students will receive a zero on any missing summer assignment(s) and, in the case of a class transfer, will take the zeroes with them. My email address is included in the heading of this letter and should be used to communicate with me throughout the summer if you have any questions or concerns. Communication can also take place through Google Classroom.

Technology:

Technology will be used both in school and at home, so it is vital that you have access to the internet, whether through your personal home computer, your cell phone, or accessing the school's library before and/or after school. We will utilize Google Classroom for your assignments throughout the school year, which will begin upon your receipt of this letter. We will also access Storybird.com and noredink.com for grammar application, and Edpuzzle.com to activate prior knowledge. You will receive class codes for joining these programs as we begin study with each. Your class code for Pre-AP Summer Reading is **w6v3x1o**. Go to classroom.google.com and enter the class code to get started. Email me if you are having trouble logging into this site.

Required summer reading: *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath

Required Summer Assignment: Respond to five prompts using Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced typing. All responses must use MLA format.

Summer Assignment: Prompt 1—Autobiography

http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/plath/twoviews.htm

After reading “Two Views on Sylvia Plath’s Life and Career,” write a response of no less than 150 words in which you discuss the impact of Plath’s personal experiences on her writing of *The Bell Jar*. Should her personal life be considered when reading the novel? Does knowledge of Plath’s life change your understanding of the novel? Why might it be troublesome to compare Esther to Plath?

Cite textual evidence where appropriate.

Prompt 2—Mental Illness

<https://www.beckinstitute.org/get-informed/what-is-cognitive-therapy/>

<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression/Overview>

After completing the readings on mental illness and depression (Beck Institute for Cognitive Therapy and National Alliance on Mental Illness), write a psychological analysis of Esther. Focus especially on her behavior in New York and when she first arrives home. What I am looking for here is for you to imagine that you are a psychologist and Esther is your patient. The novel will serve as your evidence of Esther’s character and behavior. Using specific details from both the mental health readings and the novel, evaluate Esther’s mental health. Look for warning signs of mental illness that you may have missed in your first reading as a high school student that now appear significant with your enhanced medical training.

Cite textual evidence.

Prompt 3—Feminism

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/11/>

Many people believe that *The Bell Jar* is a feminist novel and that much of Esther’s breakdown has to do with the societal role of women at this time. After completing the brief reading on feminist criticism (and maybe a little extra individual research on the subject), write a response of no less than 150 words in which you defend or refute the idea that this is a feminist novel. Carefully consider the explanation of feminist criticism and use details and support from both the OWL reading and the novel in making your argument. There is no right answer, just well-supported answers backed up by evidence.

Cite textual evidence appropriately.

Prompt 4—Poetry

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8498499-Mirror-by-Sylvia-Plath>

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8498497-Lady-Lazarus-by-Sylvia-Plath>

<https://allpoetry.com/Balloons>

Sylvia Plath is most well-known for her poetry. Read “Lady Lazarus,” “Mirror,” and “Balloons,” but feel free to peruse the poetry site and read more of her poems. If one really stands out to you, feel free to include it in your response. Reflect on these three poems with at least 150 words. Your response may be about the poetry alone or you can connect the poetry to *The Bell Jar*. Poetry can be really hard to decipher, but try. Give your own interpretation, not an interpretation you found on the internet (it is actually easy for teachers to tell the difference).

Cite textual evidence appropriately.

Prompt 5—Symbolism

Using your own knowledge (please do not use any internet resources—Googled answers don’t impress me!), draw on the literary knowledge you now possess from your reading to discuss one of the symbols in the novel. Look for an object (or person) in the novel that appears more than once and seems like it

means something important. Choosing the actual bell jar is an easy way out—challenge yourself! In a response of no less than 150 words, explain the use and significance of this symbol within the novel.

Cite specific textual evidence.

Thank you,

Mrs. Beamesderfer