

American Studies Summer Assignments 2017-18

Welcome to American Studies! We are looking forward to working with you in the next school year in an exciting and innovative look at more than three hundred years of American history and literature. Summer assignments will enable all of us to begin the year with a common focus, and enrich our early class time, so that we do not need to spend the first few days becoming acquainted with the material before launching into analysis, writing and discussion. So, as part of your preparation for American Studies, you are expected to do the following:

- **Purchase a composition book for use as a writing journal** – Typed notes or loose-leaf binders will not be accepted. Please have hand written notes – we are old school!
- Read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (available at libraries and bookstores. You can also sign a copy out from Mrs. Lent or Ms. Kennedy for the summer if you wish.)
- Read *Hiroshima* by John Hersey (available at libraries and bookstores. You can also sign a copy out from Mrs. Lent or Ms. Kennedy for the summer if you wish.)
- Visit a museum of your choice

Here are the details of what you are supposed to do as you read and visit. Completed journals will be checked and collected on the FIRST day of class. The three grades for your journal will be used in place of the traditional summer reading tests at the start of the school year. You may be expected to write a short essay on each of books on the first or second day of class. You will be able to use your journal to complete the essays.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

We will evaluate understanding of this novel at the start of the year, but the discussion of the book will not take place until we reach the unit that focuses on the later years of the Nineteenth Century. It is, therefore, crucial that your notes be thorough, as you will need to refer to them several months after completing the assignment. Your notes should include a detailed summary of the plot. You should organize your notes based on the chapters of the book. Chapter numbers should be on the entries.

In addition to summarizing content, you should be questioning and responding to the following:

- ☆ What kind of impact do you think this novel had when published? Is the book a form of social protest?
- ☆ What do you know about the time period in which the book was written?
- ☆ Does the novel seem to be a commentary on American life at the time?
- ☆ What point might the author have wanted to address by writing this book?
- ☆ What questions are you left with as you read each chapter? Are your questions answered?

Your reading journal for this book will be graded on the thoroughness of your notes and evidence that you are questioning and thinking.

Hiroshima

Keep thorough notes on each section of the book as we will be discussing this account when we get to WW II. As you write in your journal, address the following:

- ☆ Character names in each section. What is each character's situation? How do each of the subjects react to what has happened to them?
- ☆ As an American, why might the author have visited this topic? Why might the author have had "despair and relief" when he initially heard the bomb had been dropped?
- ☆ How does Chapter Five complicate or reinforce the picture of Japanese/American relations?
- ☆ In writing this book, what point was the author trying to get across to his readers?

Your reading journal for this book will also be assessed when we return from the summer. Be sure to be thorough with your questioning and thinking. Plan to have a minimum of 10 pages of notes for this novel.

Museum Visit – This part of your journal will be a test grade.

This part of the summer assignment is an exercise of a different nature. Museums are a wonderful resource for learning about objects from the past. Choose a museum to visit. There are many fine museums in the area to choose from - The Museum of NH History in Concord, The Wright Museum in Wolfeboro, Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, Sarah Orne Jewett House in Berwick, ME, The Hood Museum in Hanover, The Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester, The Frost Farm in Derry - or if you are feeling adventurous, museums in Salem, MA and Boston have much to offer. Spend at least an hour in a gallery of your choice. Walk around at first and just look. As you stop at the various displays, ask yourself, "What do I see?" Select two objects from the museum gallery (Yes, they can be from different sections of the museum.) and record the answers to that question in your journal. How good an observer are you? This is an exercise where you are encouraged to list as much as you notice, without worrying about what is significant or insignificant. Looking and noticing are the key elements in this exercise. Once you have made as complete a list as possible, move on to the final step. Ask yourself what you might consider to be important about this object. What has it to do with the culture of America in its specific time period? It is also very important that you identify the object with the exhibit label and the museum in which you found the artifacts that you describe. These reflections should be at least one page in length.

Important! Include a brochure or ticket stub from the museum that you visit. Attach this artifact to your notebook somehow.

Please feel free to contact Mrs. Lent or Ms. Kennedy through school email if you have any questions about the summer assignments.

Remember –

"The fool wonders, the wise man asks." (Benjamin Disraeli)

Have a thoughtful, reflective and restful summer!