

Dear Prospective Honors American Literature Student and Parent(s):

The 2009-2010 Honors Program in American Literature will function as a multi-disciplinary extension of the standard curriculum in literature, building upon efforts to view and understand literature in context. I am excited to recommend your child for this exciting academic opportunity.

Summer assignment:

The summer assignment for this course is to read either *The Sun Also Rises*, by Ernest Hemingway, or *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck, and to keep a “response” journal (see instructions, attached). A minimum of 20 journal entries are required.

School-year assignments:

School-year assignments will include 2-3 supplemental projects each quarter as well as an additional novel each semester. Project assignments will emphasize critical thinking skills and the synthesis of cross-disciplinary influences/consequences while also striving to recognize, within the framework of each assignment, each student’s individuality and interests.

Project assignments may be comprised of individual work, group work, or a combination of the two. Projects may include the following components: close reading and analysis, “think tank,” literary or cross-disciplinary research (related movements or events in history, scientific discovery, fine arts, etc.), formal writing, creative options, and other tasks to be determined. Some assignments may require technology skills.

In addition, most honors projects will include a class presentation.

Novels will be selected for literary merit, historical content, and the potential for promoting cross-disciplinary awareness.

Please feel free to contact me either by email at brophyk@williamsburgchristian.org or by phone at 757-220-1978, ext. 375, if you have any questions. You will find the attached information helpful as you prayerfully consider enrolling in WCA’s honors program.

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Honors American Literature
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Response Journals

The purpose of your journal is to give you a freer way to respond to literature and a place to write what you think about ideas and issues.

For the summer assignment, your response journal will focus on your thoughts about passages in the text that you find most striking or significant (quotations or paragraphs from the text):

1) Setting up and keeping your journal:

- Label and date each entry.
- Readability influences your grade.
- Your seriousness of purpose will be evident and also influences your grade.
- Do not use markers or colored pens for journal entries.

2) Use a 2-column format:

- Use the left-hand column for the quotation. ("The text says...") Include chapter / page number etc. – some way to locate the passage in the text.
- Use the right hand column for your response. ("I say")

3) Quotation / paragraph responses:

Use the following format for developing your responses:

- Begin with the quotation or passage, but a thought provoking quotation is only the beginning. As you consider the quotation, you need to think about
 - what it means. Define unfamiliar words and ask for help in understanding abstract ideas.
 - how it is true or in what ways is it true. Give examples.
- Then, to really develop your response, you need to think about how **your own experience** relates to the ideas.
- These responses will almost always be written in first person. However, do not use phrases like "I think," "in my opinion," or others like them. This is your work. It is obvious that the ideas are your own.
- Do not use another familiar quotation to support your thoughts about this one. That just makes your work too confusing.
- Do not begin your response by writing, "This quotation is about". . . (or any variation of that).
- When you refer to the person who said this quotation, use his or her first and last name to begin with, and after that, use only his or her last name. This is a standard way to write. You would never refer to Albert Einstein as Albert. You just don't know him that well.
- A good way to begin is to put the idea presented in your own words. Some ideas for beginnings follow:
 - When Abraham Lincoln says "—quoted words here—," he means that . . .
 - Margaret Mead is correct when she says that . . .