

May 2009

Dear Student:

Congratulations on being chosen to partake in Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition for the 2009-2010 school year. Your local assessment, previous English department grades, teacher recommendations, etc. were superior, and we would like to congratulate you on providing an abundance of quality work. We are anxiously looking forward to meeting you, and we are looking forward to sharing in a successful year.

The course is designed to provide you with the most helpful strategies to succeed on the AP exam next May as well as success in your undergraduate work in the following academic years. We will cover a plethora of materials; therefore, you should be ready to dig your heels into several genres of literature throughout **the entire** school year.

In order for us to successfully begin the course in August, we have established two summer readings for Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition. This year, students will have the opportunity to buy their summer reading texts at a book fair being sponsored by AKJ May 21st during all lunch hours. Students should bring cash or a check made out to **AKJ**. They cannot take checks made out to Willowbrook. The tax-free pieces selected for this summer are

Play: *King Lear* by William Shakespeare (**ISBN# 0-451-52693-7—Signet Classics**) - **\$2.96**
Novel: *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison (**ISBN# 0-679-73276-4**) - **\$11.21**

After May 21, the books are available online for the same price at www.akjbookclub.net. From the home page, click on Willowbrook HS on the left navigation bar. From there, select your English class and add your books to the shopping cart. Of course, you may get your books anywhere you would like; please match the exact edition of the book (see the ISBN #) so students are all (literally) on the same page in fall.

To fulfill the summer reading requirement, please keep a close-reading reflection for each work read. This reflection must be typed (MLA formatted: 12-point, Times New Roman, 1.0" margins, double spaced, etc.—If you need help, reference your *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker), and you should reference the assigned text as you read. You will need a spiral notebook as well. Specific instructions for each piece are attached to this letter. However, please keep in mind that the reflections are **due the second day of class**. They will be collected, graded, and returned to you, so you can use them in our discussions and to study for exams. Therefore, the more thorough your notes, the more personally useful they will be. On your application, you agreed to engage in summer reading; the English Department recommends that you do so at a pace that allows you to enjoy the texts. Reading in June or July will not make your participation in class more difficult than reading in August; however, we do not recommend trying to read both texts in the last week of the summer before school begins. Failure to do your summer reading is not an acceptable excuse for dropping the course.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to see us in **rooms 120 or 126** before summer break, and we will be glad to answer them for you. Once again, we are especially looking forward to meeting you, and we are anticipating an extremely successful year. Also, if you do not have a copy of The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature (7th edition) and A Writer's Reference (6th edition), you will need to purchase them at registration.

If you or a friend misplace your summer reading assignment, you can access all this information on the District 88 website. Go to www.dupage88.net, click on WILLOWBROOK, ACADEMICS, and finally DEPARTMENTS - ENGLISH. At the bottom of the box with the English teachers' names is a link to SUMMER READING PROGRAM.

Sincerely,

Mr. Brett A. Blair
English Department

Mr. Brian Shanahan
English Department

Journal Entry Instructions: Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition

If you choose to take notes as you read, please start them in your notebook that we will use during the school year. I will periodically collect your notebooks, give you credit, and then return the materials to you. The more organized you stay, the more accessibility you will have during the course to the key styles and themes of the authors and their works.

I. *King Lear*

The theme of *King Lear* is the ingratitude of two daughters, Goneril and Regan, whom their father, King Lear, had nobly endowed with all the riches of his kingdom, and the devotion of the one daughter, Cordelia, whom the King had suspected of ingratitude, and whom he had subsequently cast adrift. On the surface, this would seem a one-level story. However, Shakespeare understood the three-dimensional nature of the human character, and he wrote about the myriad implications involved in all human circumstances. Therefore, nothing is ever as simple as it first appears.

The king, blinded by his fatal flaw (his self-absorbing will/pride), prevents him from seeing the truth of the world. When he looks outward, all he actually sees is his own selfish plans as king. Unfortunately, for too long, all relatives, subjects, and followers have indulged his whims, flattered him, and responded to his every wish, which gave him false projections of his own power. As for the daughters, Goneril is cold, determined, and ruthless, and the weaker, Regan, indulges in passionate savagery. Even the so-called “good” daughter, Cordelia, has some of her father’s pride and obstinacy. Like her father, she has great need for love and power in loving. Shakespeare defines the human spirit in all of its inconsistency in this tragedy.

1. Mark Act, Scene, Line(s), i.e., (*Lear* 1.1.22-25) as you write your MLA formatted response to this text. As you read, comment in your reflections on how King Lear and the other characters work with or against nature. Shakespeare often uses nature in his writing; however, due to Lear’s poor choices at the beginning of the play, nature now needs to be righted. How does Shakespeare present this motif (an example would be the tempest/storm)? (This reflection should be two paragraphs long.)
2. How does the Gloucester subplot work along with the Lear plot? How do they meld together? Explain using specific references from the play, and this too should be two paragraphs long.

If you want to make any other notations in your notes for your own use, please feel free. We will use the reflections and notes for in-class discussions, review, and, in some cases, test-taking. Therefore, make your reflections as detailed as you would like.

II. *Invisible Man*

This text is an AP favorite. Do not feel overwhelmed by the length of the text. It is a lengthy novel; however, Ellison's style reads very quickly, and this is the longest novel we will read this school year. Even though the text is easy to read, there are some adult moments in the text. What you need to remember is that this is a college-level course; therefore, we are reading college-level materials. You need to be adult enough to handle these themes, and if you struggle with the themes of this text or any other texts we will read this year—good!! I want you to consistently think about the tribulations the characters must go through as well as the messages underscored by the authors. You may receive college credit for this course, so please make sure you are ready to take on the reading at that level too.

Invisible Man is the story of an African-American young man who is trying to find his place in society during the early part of the twentieth century (1930's). The story is the reflection of this one man's life. He is trying to survive the pre-conceived notions society places on African-Americans in the South, and when all he knows in the South disowns him, he goes to the North, in particular, Harlem, New York. As you read, the Prologue is written in the present for *Invisible Man*. He has taken refuge underground, because he cannot figure out his place in society. The first chapter goes back to his youth, and the following chapters show his life in Harlem. The Epilogue brings us back to *Invisible Man*'s present, and how he is to survive from here. This sounds more confusing than it really is; you'll love the book, and you will soon understand this frame story format (many of the texts we will read this year are frame stories).

1. The narrator (*Invisible Man*) remains nameless throughout the entire novel. We see several other characters whose names are symbolic, yet the main character remains nameless, and there are often images of blindness mentioned in the text as well. The first part of this reflection relates to why *Invisible Man* is nameless. **How is the narrator a blind man, and how is society blind to him?** This reflection should be two paragraphs long. Cite significant references from the text to support your claim. An example would be (Ellison 232). Once you have mentioned his name in the citation, then you should write only the page number in parenthesis.
2. The **second reflection** for this text relates to color imagery and symbolism in the novel. **Find at least two symbols or images in the novel where Ellison contrasts or switches the conventional image of black and white. Explain the function of these symbols to the overall importance of the text.** You need at least one paragraph for each of the color symbols. Cite references in all of your reflections.

*****Do not forget to mark instances throughout the text, not just the first half of the text.**

GOOD LUCK!!

ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!!