

Dear Sophomore English Parent or Guardian:

The purpose of this letter is to welcome your student to 10<sup>th</sup> Grade English class and to give you an overview of the material to be emphasized and class policies. The focus of the fall semester is American Literature produced during the time of the early settlements to the end of the Civil War. This involves the discussion of the evolution of genres in American Literature from Puritanism through Realism. We will explore the short stories, essays, and poetry of great American authors who have made important contributions to the cadre of American literature. The semester will culminate in discussions and lessons surrounding one of the greatest American novels, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Students will apply what they read to many recurrent themes found in literature: the individual in society, the individual in nature, nature and technology, appearance vs. reality, growth and initiation, etc. Students will analyze many of the methods authors utilize in developing themes and creating meanings beyond literal expression. Therefore, I will emphasize close reading, analysis and class discussions. Moreover, I will assign numerous academic writing opportunities allowing students to apply what they have learned as well as to express themselves.

I feel that individual instruction is extremely important. Therefore, a student who receives a C grade or lower on a major written assignment must make an appointment for a writing conference before I return his/her paper. Furthermore in an effort to simplify communication between teacher, students and parents/guardians, I have developed a website featuring class assignments, discussion questions, due dates, links to helpful websites, and texts of some of the readings. Please explore the website at [www.mrgunnar.net](http://www.mrgunnar.net), and place it among your bookmarks for regular visits. Hopefully you will find it a convenient tool in your involvement with your student's schoolwork.

**Course Objectives – Note: A detailed syllabus is available online at < [www.mrgunnar.net](http://www.mrgunnar.net) >.**

Students will:

- analyze, compare and evaluate various works of literature – read between the lines;
- understand that effective authors of fiction, nonfiction and poetry carefully consider their stylistic choices as they pertain to purpose and audience;
- discern and analyze the rhetorical strategies authors employ and consider applying some of these strategies to enhance their own writing when appropriate;
- demonstrate serious engagement with the readings through close reading and analytical writing;
- participate in active class analytical discussions / seminars;
- express analysis and practice writing skills through academic writing assignments and in-class essays;
- express themselves through creative writing and free writing;
- apply steps of the writing process as they write;
- apply spelling, proofreading, basic grammatical and editing skills to augment their writing;
- continue to develop sophisticated sentence structures and syntax – subordination and coordination;
- demonstrate a knowledge of the basic design and types of multi-paragraph essays;
- improve their vocabulary skills primarily in the context of the literature;
- develop and apply the study and research skills necessary for academic success;
- develop and apply oral and presentation skills;
- develop and apply listening skills;
- arrange writing conferences for individual instruction;
- demonstrate their comprehension of the material through regularly scheduled quizzes and tests.
- understand strategies necessary for Pre-AP, strategies applicable to the AP English Language and Composition as well as the AP Literature and Composition courses.

**Materials:** loose-leaf binder, notebook paper, dividers, colored pencils, blue or black pens, pocket dictionary

## Policies

- **Homework is due at the beginning of the period.** According to school policy, students who were **absent on the day the work was assigned** must hand it in within two class days of their return for full credit. If I assigned the work **prior to the absence**, it is due within 24 hours of the student's return. A student whose absence **was not excused or due to suspension** must hand in the work on the day of his/her return for any credit. Each major assignment will have two due dates: the first represents full credit; the second represents a maximum grade of C. After the second date has passed, the work receives a maximum grade of F. Because **homework and process** assignments (i.e. rough drafts, etc.) pertain to the lesson of the day, **students earn no credit if they do not submit those assignments on the due date.** The grade book closes at the end of each six-week period; therefore, late work from the previous six weeks will no longer be accepted resulting in no credit for the assignment. Athletics, extracurricular activities (field trips), and planned absences require submission of assignments **prior** to the scheduled absence for full credit. Therefore, students must make a conference appointment prior to a planned absence. **Students will not pass this course if their work is consistently late, or if they submit the bulk of their work toward the end of the semester. Computer issues are not valid excuses for late work.**
- Successful students will attend class regularly. **Because regular attendance is vital to students' success, daily points will be given for instruction. Students who are absent will receive no points for that day whether or not the absence is excused. To achieve the instruction points for the class missed, students must schedule an appointment within 48 hours of their return for alternative instruction. Students receive a reduced number of instruction points if tardy. Furthermore, excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in final grade.**
- Successful students will demonstrate skills indicative of quality workers by being on time, bringing required materials, completing homework assignments, participating in class discussions, and respecting the opinions of others.
- Successful students will demonstrate accountability by listening closely in class.
- **All final drafts of major written assignments are to be typed or word-processed and must adhere to the essay format (MLA) unless otherwise specified.**
- Students are **not allowed** to bring food, drinks (except water) into the classroom. According to school policy, cell phones **must be turned off** during class time. Any cell phone use during class time may result in disciplinary action.
- **I reserve 20% of a student's grade for attitude, behavior, achievement, and participation.**
- I use the standard grading scale: 90-100 A, 80-89 B, 70-79 C, 60-69 D, 59 and below F.
- Students are allowed three passes per semester for personal reasons. Students may not leave the class for more than 10 minutes. If your student has a physical problem that requires more than three passes, please discuss this with a counselor or me.
- All students will remain in their seats until the bell rings.
- The CHS and JCPS conduct code will be strictly enforced including the **Zero Tolerance Policy** concerning cruelty, harassment, excessive teasing, discrimination, violence, and intimidation. Foul language, derogatory remarks, and disrespect toward classmates, teachers and school staff will not be tolerated.
- **Cheating and plagiarism on schoolwork will result in a zero on the assignment and could result in suspension.**
- Lack of respect toward the property of others (including writing on or defacing desks), and disruptive behavior (including talking out of turn) could result in removal from the classroom and a referral.

**I am available by appointment. I encourage you to visit the class and/or schedule a conference.**

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**SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN** \_\_\_\_\_

## Plagiarism Contract

**Plagiarism** can be defined as submitting another person's ideas, words, images or data without giving that person credit or proper acknowledgement. Plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty, is tantamount to stealing and will not be tolerated. In order to clarify what constitutes plagiarism, you should be aware that you have committed plagiarism when you:

- use phrases quotes, or ideas not your own;
- paraphrase the work of another even though you may have changed the wording or syntax;
- use facts or data not considered common knowledge;
- submit a paper written for another class (academic dishonesty);
- submit a paper from an essay service or agency even though you may have paid for it (these papers are usually of low quality, so you probably did not get your money's worth);
- submit a paper by another person even though he or she may have given you permission to use it.

You should also note that plagiarism not only encompasses written work, but also computer data, research, musical scores, video programs and visual arts.

Plagiarism is a serious issue, especially in an academic environment. Teachers must be able to rely on the integrity of a student's work in order to maintain a climate for successful learning. Plagiarism reflects on character; therefore, you should diligently avoid inadvertent plagiarism. When you are unsure if acknowledgement is needed, ask your teacher. The penalties for blatant plagiarism include loss of all credit for the assignment with no opportunity to rewrite. This may significantly lower your final grade. Furthermore, plagiarism, a form of cheating, can result in suspension according to the Jefferson County Public Schools conduct code. We will discuss methods for avoiding plagiarism as the school year progresses.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am aware of the serious nature of plagiarism and will not intentionally use or submit someone else's work without acknowledgement. Furthermore, I will not misrepresent someone else's work as my own.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this contract and understand the consequences of plagiarism.

**Parent/Guardian** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** *You may be required to process major papers through Turnitin before submitting them.*