



English 2 Honors
Red Bank Regional High School
2011-2012

Introduction

The English 2 Honors program at Red Bank Regional High School is a rigorous course of study designed to meet the academic needs of highly motivated secondary school sophomores. It is a comprehensive one-year curriculum whose main objectives are to develop and promote a high level of intellectualism within our students and to promote critical thinking and literary appreciation within our community.

EXPECTATIONS:

All students enrolled in the English 2 Honors program are expected to:

- demonstrate a fascination with the subject matter, manifested as class participation, peer engagement, and lively discourse
- actively read outside of the classroom
- write at a high level, demonstrating a strong command of language, grammar, and vocabulary
- have intrinsic motivation to learn for the sake of learning
- have a solid understanding of world history

AIMS:

The aims of the English 2 Honors program are to:

- further develop within the students their intrinsic appreciation of literature and further their understanding of the techniques involved in literary criticism and analysis
- introduce the students to a wide range of literary works of different periods, genres, styles, and contexts
- broaden the students' perspectives through the study of works from other areas of study, including philosophy, politics, social theory, art, and film.
- further develop the ability to engage in close, detailed analysis of literature
- promote a respect for intellectual achievements in high school and in our community

OBJECTIVES:

At the completion of the program, all Honors students will be expected to:

- demonstrate an advanced ability to engage in independent literary analysis
- write expository and critical essays with clarity, coherence, and fluency
- identify and thoroughly analyze themes and messages in literary works
- synthesize ideas from multiple genres and time periods
- connect literary works to history, culture, movements, and zeitgeist
- engage in independent research using multiple researching techniques

Summer Reading

I.A: The English 2 Honors program begins in June with the first official meeting with the accepted freshmen candidates. The students are given two novels to read over the summer vacation, with three written assignments due at specific times throughout the break. The third assignment is a short essay that must be handed in on the first day of school. The readings and assignments are designed to keep the students sharp and their mental endurance high, so when September arrives, they hit the year running.

I.A.1: Promoting healthy summer work methods

It is extremely important for the students to carry into the summer the same work routines for their intellect that they develop throughout the school year. Our brains need a healthy work routine year round. Much like a professional athlete must work his/her muscles to maintain form, strength and endurance, we must keep our mental muscles active and sharp. It is for this reason that we read two novels in the summer with three written assignments. Beside the summer reading and assignments, I encourage the students to find other fun games, puzzles, or activities that keep the mind sharp and stimulated.

I.A.2: The internet classroom

I created a web log, or Blog, page so the students can interact outside of the classroom. This is beneficial because, not only can they hand in assignments from anywhere, they have the advantage of being able to read and assess the writing of their peers. This will allow them to gauge their work by comparing to the work of others, which may be the best form of self-education. The web log can be accessed at www.rbenglishhonors.blogspot.com

I.B: Summer reading texts

The two novels are Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury, and The Scarlet Letter, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Each work must be read in that order, and there are specific blog posting dates that correspond to the novels. These novels present the students with important themes and ideas that are directly relevant to the works we will be studying. As with many of our literary works, each story examines the individual's relationship to his/her society.

I.C.: Assignments and Assessments

The following is a list of reading and writing assignments for the summer period.

I.C.1. Blog Postings

The students are required to post a brief response to a particular literary element in each novel. Each post should be treated as an introduction to a potential explication. Remember: This is an analysis, not a book report. Review the steps for a literary analysis below for insight into the writing process. The posting dates are:

Fahrenheit 451
The Scarlet Letter

July 22
August 19

I.C.2. The Explication

This is a two page writing assignment on The Scarlet Letter. It is due on the first day of school. Proper MLA format, double space, size 11 font (I will take off points if you use size 12 font).

What is an explication? An explication is an "unfolding" of the story as you see it. Probably the most common approach to writing about literature, an explication is simply an analysis of a literary element as it relates to a particular theme or message. In this analysis, you will examine a literary device that helps weld together the mosaic of the entire work. It is an objective assertion of your view, a kind of literary argument. It is less constraining in form than a five paragraph, three-point thesis essay. You are free to approach the novel from any angle that interests

you; this is literary and advanced writing, the kind of writing you will be expected to write in college. Common literary elements include:

Character	Rhyme
Setting	Imagery
Plot	Figures of Speech
Dialogue	Tone
Point of View	Mood
Rhythm	Symbol

When you approach the writing, first decide which of the above elements you would like to discuss. Think about the relationship between the element and theme and its impact on the work. Have fun with this assignment; take a chance and propose an interesting argument.

I.D.: Grading the essay

All writing assignments will be graded on six categories. They are Idea, Thesis, Content, Organization, Support, and Sophistication. All six will then be averaged to create an overall grade for the essay. Having six categories allows the students to recognize strengths and weaknesses in their writing, and gives them attainable short term goals for success.

I.E.: Tips on writing

Writing the Blog.

A blog is nothing more than a generated idea for a hypothetical essay. A blog can be used to simply generate an idea for discussion, to stimulate the thinking process, or even as an idea for an essay or explication. For a more precise explanation of how to write a blog and an explication, please refer to the following steps on “Tips on Generating Ideas for Writing”:

Step 1: Look at the Mountain Range

When the novel is completed, it is important to step back and view it in its entirety. Although you may have been fascinated by a particular chapter, symbol, image, or character, you do NOT want to “jump the gun” and limit yourself by starting at a specific end point. Step back and look at the entire novel. The author probably has addressed many different issues in the work, and you want to be able to identify as many as possible. This will add depth and insight to your final analysis; besides, you do not want to miss out on anything! Without stepping back and looking at the novel in its entirety, you may miss out on an enjoyable and insightful analysis. Write in the mountain range any *subjects* that pop up in your mind. The subjects you identify will later serve as the foundation for your thesis. Ask yourself: What do I see in the novel?

Step 2: Zoom in

Once you have identified various subjects for analysis, choose one that you find to be the most interesting. This is very important because it will serve as the foundation for your essay, and you definitely want to be interested in writing and researching this topic. If you cannot decide, then go with your gut. Let your instinct guide you; it is probably right. In the above example, there are many interesting subjects for analysis. Which one is the most appealing to you?

Step 3: Generate a question you want to answer

The purpose of writing an essay is to gain more insight and understanding into a novel; but how can you better understand the novel if you lack understanding of the *time* in which it was written? The purpose of this step is to gain insight into the subjects to which the author is responding. Remember: the author is writing in response to his/her environment, and great authors are communicating a message to the reader regarding the society in which he/she lives. For example, suppose I choose the topic “Class conflicts” from the above list, the first thing I want to do is ask myself “What is class conflict?”. This topic may be new to me, so I want to start with the basics. Afterward, I can refine my question to reflect deeper analysis, i.e. “What drives the conflict between classes?” or “How did the early 20th century economics create class conflict?” I want to make sure I answer these questions thoroughly before I continue. The final answer you choose will be a refined *theme* that you will argue is present in the work.

Step 4: Refine the question to reflect its relationship to the novel

Now that I have a better understanding of the topic for my essay, I need to establish its relationship to the novel. I will continue with my question/answer format, and I can start with the most basic question, which is “What is F. Scott Fitzgerald saying about class conflicts in early 20th century America”? Depending on the length and content of my analysis, I will refine or expand my question so I can generate a more in-depth response. For example, if my assignment is only to write a paragraph for homework, then the above question is enough. But if I have to write a 5 page essay, then I certainly need to ask myself a more complicated question so I can generate a more depth answer. A good example of this would be “What is F. Scott Fitzgerald saying about the nature of 20th century capitalism and its effects on social classes and the relationships between the members of each class”? This question will provide me with a complex answer that can be the foundation of a longer essay.

Step 5: Congratulations! You now have your thesis!

The answer to your final question is officially a *thesis*. What you have just done is you identified a possible message given to the reader from the author. Next, the essay that you are going to write will attempt to prove the accuracy and credibility of your idea. Obviously you will need a good amount of support from the novel to increase the validity of your idea. This is the reason for which your teacher will stress the importance of finding quotations from the text. Remember: Your essay is only as good as the support from the text. The quotations you choose are the backbone of your essay, so give yourself plenty of time to sift through the novel so you can find the best support. Now your essay will have a clear direction. This will benefit you greatly during the writing process and will increase the likelihood of receiving a higher grade. Let the writing begin!!

I. F: Summer Writing workshops

There are two writing workshops every summer. They are held in Room 208 and are run by Mr. Farley. All students are strongly encouraged to choose at least 1 of the workshops to attend. They are Monday through Friday, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. **The workshops are July 18 -22 and August 15 – 19.** These workshops provide the students with opportunities to further develop their writing skills and to better prepare them for the summer writing assignments. In addition, the students can meet and interact with their fellow honors students in a fun and stimulating environment.

I.G: Commencement of the School Year

The school year opens with discussion and analysis of our final summer reading novel, Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury. For those who are unfamiliar with this novel, it is a dystopian novel of a future society that is totalitarian in nature, and where critical thinking, creativity, and basic intellectualism are suppressed and nearly forbidden. Although the most notable and memorable image is that of book burning, it is important to note that this novel is essentially *not* about censorship and totalitarian control over the masses. Ironically, the book’s premise is that the people themselves voluntarily agreed to give up their rights; this decision ultimately develops into the society expressed in the novel. So the question is: Why would a free and democratic society relinquish its right to free thought, speech, and creativity? What is the author saying about democracy in the 20th century? What is he saying about democracy in an age of mass media? Are there new forms of control and manipulation that have replaced the totalitarian “stick” that keep people sedated and in line? Before we can answer these questions, it is important to discuss basic political and social theory, as in this novel, and in just about every other novel and time period, a basic knowledge of societal structures and theory will be beneficial for literary analysis.