

Westlake High School

Mt. Pleasant Central School District

West Lake Drive
Thornwood, NY 10594
(914) 769-8311

Dear Rising Seniors,

Welcome to English 12 Honors! I am thrilled that you have chosen to challenge yourself in English during your senior year. It's an absolute pleasure to be teaching some of you again, and I look forward to meeting those of you who I have not taught or gotten to know over the past four years.

I will ask you to read two books over the summer, and the assignment for each book is explained below. I will be distributing copies of *The Glass Castle*, but you will have to borrow from a library or buy your own copy of *Atomic Habits*. **Please be aware that you will need the books during the first few weeks of class.**

Book #1: ***The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls (memoir)**

"The Glass Castle is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant" (from Amazon.com).

Walls' memoir is well-known for both its incredible story and impeccable craft. In September, we will study narrative techniques and use Walls' text - in addition to others - as a mentor text for our own college essays.

As you read the book, read and think like a writer. On post-its, or in your book if you buy a copy, highlight and mark up beautifully written passages, interesting stories, figurative language, etc. Think about how you can apply these narrative techniques to your college essay. Writing about yourself can be awkward, possibly unfamiliar and, therefore, hard, so I'm asking you to learn from the greats.

Book #2: ***Atomic Habits* by James Clear (non-fiction)**

"No matter your goals, Atomic Habits offers a proven framework for improving--every day. James Clear, one of the world's leading experts on habit formation, reveals practical strategies that will teach you exactly how to form good habits, break bad ones, and master the tiny behaviors that lead to remarkable results" (from Amazon.com).

Clear's book that "draws on...biology, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, and more" (9) might seem like an odd pick for an English class, but we will examine the author's ideas through the lens of one of our essential questions for September: ***How can I hone the skills necessary for success in college and beyond?***

Grab a new notebook with multiple sections before you start reading; this will be your notebook for my class. Start a new page titled "Summer Reading - Atomic Habits" and create a 2-page (minimum) "spread" of notes that document your thinking as you read. This "spread" should contain **a minimum of 10 lessons learned from this book**. Think about pulling quotes from the text and briefly responding to how these ideas will serve you well during your senior year and in college. You can organize this work as you see fit; just make sure it's legible.

These assignments are due on the first day of class. I am available to answer any questions via email the week of August 28 before school begins. Failure to complete the summer assignment will have a major impact on your Quarter 1 grade. I may or may not collect your notebooks on the first day and grade the lessons learned "spread" from *Atomic Habits*. You should expect to be asked to write on-demand about and/or discuss both of these books in detail within the first week of class, which is why you need to hang onto them.

Also, please be aware that we will spend *some* of September workshopping the college essay. Some of you may come in with a completed draft, a few ideas, or nothing at all. That's totally fine. Don't feel the need to bring in a draft if you haven't completed one yet.

Feel free to email me with any questions about the assignment or the class over the summer. Again, I look forward to seeing you all in September!

Mr. D'Ippolito