

# English 9/9H FAQs for Current 8<sup>th</sup> Graders

## 1. **What is the difference between English 9 and English 9 Honors? How do I know which one I should take? (Tonya)**

I would say there are five main differences between English 9 and English 9 Honors: the amount of reading, the amount of writing, the level of expectations for writing assignments, the depth of discussions, and the number of vocabulary words. Both courses are college prep, so you're going to work on developing your reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in either course – but English 9H is designed to push you to a deeper level and requires that you do more of that work on your own, with less scaffolding and at a faster pace.

In addition to the core freshman texts, English 9H students are required to read 1500 pages of outside reading per semester, and they typically report on these outside books with analytical writing assignments. English 9 students have some required outside reading, but they often report on these books in more personal, subjective, and artistic ways. Honors students are expected to already have strong essay writing and reading comprehension skills, so we jump right in to higher level reading quizzes, critical thinking questions, essay topics, and in-depth discussions, in which students are expected to participate as part of their grade. Both classes require homework, but whereas you might typically have 20-30 minutes of homework a night for English 9, it's more typical to have 45-60 minutes per night for English 9H – with some of that time spent working on more long-term projects that require strong pacing and organizational skills.

It's important to ask yourself these questions if you're thinking about taking English 9 Honors:

- *Did you get A's in your 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade English classes?*
- *Do you love reading and enjoy analyzing books for deeper meanings?*
- *Are you a strong writer, earning A's on most of your 8<sup>th</sup> grade essays?*
- *Are you a critical thinker who likes to challenge yourself to think about things in a new way?*
- *Do you like to share your ideas in class discussions?*
- *Do you possess good organizational skills and a strong work ethic?*
- *Do you typically complete all your work and turn in assignments on time?*
- *Can you balance a heavy course load with your outside activities?*
- *Finally, is English a subject you enjoy?*

2. **What does it take to be successful in English 9 Honors? (Kathleen)**

In order to be successful in English Honors 9, you really need to have a strong work ethic. If your study habits are lacking or you find that you have a hard time getting organized with your schoolwork, then Honors is going to be a major challenge. Just a few missing assignments or low test scores will affect your grade. The class moves very quickly; you really need a lot of self-discipline to not fall behind or miss long-term deadlines. If you feel that your study habits and discipline are just so-so, consider taking Regular English 9 and then re-evaluating for sophomore year.

For English Honors, think of this question: Do you want to learn to improve your reading and writing skills? Or do you simply want an A in English?

Honors requires a lot of reading and writing (over twice the amount of regular English). You have to be motivated to read, and you have to be willing to read books that you wouldn't normally pick up on your own. The discussions are a lot more fun when everyone knows what is going on, and class participation is an important part of Honors English. Likewise, You need to be a strong writer, with a good sense of vocabulary, sentence structure, mechanics, and supporting ideas with concrete details and examples. You need to be willing to work on improving your writing by paying close attention to writing models provided in class, spending time on the writing and revision process, and taking advantage of rewrite opportunities.

If you don't really love to read and work intently on your writing skills, we strongly recommend not taking Honors - at least for freshman year.

3. **What if I'm not sure I have the skills or work ethic needed to be successful in English 9 Honors? (Zach)**

First of all, it's important to know that it's still possible to take English 10 Honors next year, even if you don't take English 9 Honors. If you're having your doubts, you might want to start with English 9 so that you don't become too overwhelmed – you can work on developing your reading and writing skills your freshman year; then, if you decide you want a bigger challenge, you can move up to honors next year. We want you to challenge yourself – but we also want you to be successful and not overly stressed out. Mental health is important – and high school can be a big adjustment. If you find that the work is overwhelming in 9 Honors, changing your schedule to drop 9 Honors will most likely require shuffling your class schedule which can add even more stress and may not be possible depending on class sizes.

If you're still on the fence, you can take the optional Diagnostic Writing Assessment on March 19 at 3:45 in the Library. The English teachers work together to score these assessments and provide feedback as to whether we think you have the level of writing ability needed to succeed in English 9 Honors. This can be an important factor in helping you decide which course to take.

Only you, however, can answer the questions of whether you have the desire, commitment, and motivation – as well as the time in your schedule - needed to succeed. If you struggle with meeting deadlines and juggling several projects at a time, English 9H is not for you. If reading is a slow, laborious process for you, English 9H is not for you. If you aren't fairly confident as to how to write an effective essay, using good word choice and sentence structure, English 9H is not for you. But if you love reading, enjoy writing, treasure collaborating with other literature lovers, and want to challenge yourself at a higher level, we'd love to have you join us in English 9 Honors!