



# *Seabiscuit*

## **Summer 2024 Assignment**

**Advanced Placement Language and Composition**

**Due: Monday, September 9, 2024**

Mrs. Williams  
dwilliams@cccsd.org

## Summer Reading Assignment

**Due: Monday, September 9, 2024**

**100 points**

Your summer assignment for Advanced Placement Language and Composition is to read the nonfiction novel *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* by Laura Hillenbrand. While this reading is challenging and substantial in length, it is, nevertheless, a necessary experience for serious students of AP English. You will have one writing assignment which is designed to showcase your talents in critical interpretation and written expression. In addition, you will take a written test on the novel in class during the second week of school. Be prepared for continued discussion of other aspects of the novel in class.

### **Assignment: Comparison / Contrast Essay**

Two significant aspects of the study of language are close reading and analysis of writing style. This assignment will reflect your understanding of both of these. In addition, you will have the opportunity to analyze two passages of your choice from the novel and compare and contrast their differing effects on the reader.

- Read the novel in its entirety, taking note of the effects of Hillenbrand's stylistic choices on the different moods throughout the work. Simply put, some sections of the novel are intense and seemingly fast paced while others are more descriptive and thoughtful. You will need to choose two passages reflecting *distinctly different* moods, identify these passages by page number in the way the examples on the next page have been done, and examine the author's method of conveying mood through stylistic choices.
- To facilitate this process, you may choose from any of the selected passages provided (see next page), or you may choose *one or both* on your own. Your response might consider such stylistic elements as diction, imagery, syntax, sentence length and variety, and selection of detail. Be sure to give specific examples from the text to illustrate your ideas.

While length is not the issue, it would be unrealistic to submit a response with fewer than three pages.

This is the first grade of the quarter – **create a good first impression.**

## **Selected Passages:**

### **Description of Tom Smith – begins with the following:**

“He was fifty-six but he looked much older. His jaw had a recalcitrant jut to it that implied a run-in with something – an errant hoof or an ill-placed fence post – but maybe it was the only shape in which it could have been drawn. He had a colorless translucence about him that made him seem as if he were in the earliest stages of progressive invisibility” (Hillenbrand 20).

### **Seabiscuit leaving the Fitzsimmons barn for the last time:**

“On an August day in 1936, Seabiscuit was led from the Fitzsimmons barn for the last time. No one came to see him go. Fitzsimmons hadn’t been told that the sale had gone through, so he didn’t come to say his good-byes. Seabiscuit was walked down the backstretch, a long canopy of trees bowing over his head. At the Howard barn, Smith waited, flanked by a cluster of stable hands. Though the trainer hardly ever said anything, there was an air to him that day that told the grooms how special the horse was to him” (Hillenbrand 45-46).

### **Seabiscuit vs. Stagehand at Santa Anita:**

“Streaking down the homestretch, Woolf was a crimson blur on Seabiscuit’s back, lifting him, holding him together, begging him for more, dropping flat to lie under the wind. Wall wound Stagehand up to top speed, his eyes fixed on Woolf’s back. He couldn’t understand it: His horse was tearing over the track, but he was barely gaining. Gradually, he snipped away at the distance between them. They drew even. Seabiscuit disappeared, his compact body eclipsed from the crowd’s view by Stagehand’s long, dark form. It seemed that Stagehand would surely rush right by and that Seabiscuit would reappear in his wake. Up in the stands, Pollard thought it was over. But Seabiscuit did not appear. For as long as they lived, spectators would regard what they saw next as the most extraordinary feat they ever witnessed in sport. They recognized it all at once: Seabiscuit, under a tremendous load, having already run at world-record speed for most of the race, accelerated. He surged forward with such power that it was as if, said one witness, ‘he were breaking from the gate again.’ Stagehand could not shake him” (Hillenbrand 179).

### **Seabiscuit vs. War Admiral:**

“They ripped out of the backstretch and leaned together into the final turn, their strides still rising and falling together. The crowds by the rails thickened, their faces a pointillism of colors, the dappling sound of distinct voices now blending into a sustained shout. The horses strained onward. Kurtsinger began shouting at his horse, his voice whipped away behind him. He pushed on War Admiral’s neck and drove with all his strength, sweeping over his mount’s right side. War Admiral was slashing the air, reaching deeper and deeper into himself. The stands were boiling over. A reporter, screaming and jumping, fell halfway out of the press box. His colleagues caught his shirttails and hauled him back in. In the crowd below, several dozen spectators fainted from the excitement. The horses strained onward, arcing around the far turn and rushing at the crowd. Woolf was still, his eyes trained on War Admiral’s head. He could see that Seabiscuit was looking right at his opponent. War Admiral glared back at him, his eyes wide open. Woolf saw Seabiscuit’s ears flatten to his head and knew that the moment Fitzsimmons had spoken of was near. One horse was going to crack” (Hillenbrand 272-273).

### **As Seabiscuit aged...**

“As Seabiscuit aged, Howard faded. His heart began to fail him, and his life slowly contracted. Marcela, who adored him to the last, nursed him through his final years. He showered her in flowers and little love notes, written in a wavering hand. He found one last success on the track, this time with the great Noor, winner of the Santa Anita Handicap and conqueror of Triple Crown winner Citation. ‘Guess you’ve got another Seabiscuit on your hands,’ said a reporter after Noor’s greatest win. Howard, thin and unsteady, straightened up and raised his chin. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘there will never be another Seabiscuit.’ When his heart became too frail for him to endure the thrill of seeing his horses run, Howard came to the track anyway, sitting in the parking lot and listening to race calls on the radio in his Buick. In what is believed to be the last photograph ever taken of him, he was at the racetrack, standing in the winner’s circle. After leaving the track, he would go back to Ridgewood to be near the horses. On beautiful days, he would throw a saddle over Seabiscuit, and together they would walk into the hills to lose themselves in the redwoods” (Hillenbrand 338).

Some additional requirements:

- The essay should be computer-generated and double-spaced. Please use 12 point Times, Palatino, or Times Roman font and one-inch margins.
- Avoid plot summary. We've both read the book. Don't tell what happened. While you need to refer to specific plot points, the focus of this essay is analytical. Be sure to explain **how** authorial choices have impacted meaning.
- Please use one staple in the upper left corner of your response.
- Avoid binders and plastic covers.
- Please use the proper MLA style heading on the first page of the essay which includes all of the necessary information. A title is not required. Do not use the name of the assignment as the essay title. Do not attach a cover page.
- Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Writing Style - An evaluation of the sum of the choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other literary devices.

Please take this definition into consideration when writing your paper.