WHITE PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WHITE PLAINS HIGH SCHOOL
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Mr. Emerly Martinez, Principal
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Dear AP English Students:

We are so excited to welcome you to AP English Literature and Composition. We know you have worked hard to get here, and we are happy that you will be with us! As you probably already know, AP Literature is reading-intensive and will place many demands on you. Those demands will begin with your work this summer. Please read the following very carefully, so that you come to school prepared and ready for the challenge.

So that we may begin with some momentum in September, we are requiring that you read the novels ***All the Light We Cannot* See by Anthony Doerr** and ***The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien**, works that in very different ways examine the effect of war on individuals. We recommend that, if possible, you acquire your own copies of these books so that you may mark them up (highlight, underline, and write thoughts in the margins). You may even purchase a used copy from Amazon or from Thrift Books. To deepen your appreciation for the texts, allow yourself time to reread passages and chapters, as needed. This practice will prepare you for both the rigor of the texts we will read next year and the style of close reading you must do on the AP Literature Examination. Please click the links below to the History Channel pages that provide some context for each novel. Doerr's novel is set in Europe during World War 2, and O'Brien's novel is set both in Vietnam and in America during the Vietnam War. **An outline of the writing assignment, which is due on the first day of school in September, follows this letter.**

AP Literature and Composition is designed for students **who love to read and write**, and who apply themselves to every text they are asked to read. Students who are **passionate about a wide range of**

literature are the ideal students for this class. Please be serious about setting up a practical reading plan for the summer months. The AP exam is very challenging, and to be successful, you will need to be able to draw on a wealth of literature—not movies, not *Spark Notes*—and an understanding of literary techniques. **Close, careful, sustained reading is the only way you'll be able to adequately prepare yourself for the AP test.** Moreover, reading challenging texts closely will prepare you for the rigor you will meet in your college classes.

We will be reading across genres and time, and many of the works planned for the course are challenging either because of their content or style. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century prose, for example, employs long, complicated sentences; classical drama uses dramatic forms different from the ones commonly used today. After summer reading is completed, you may want to refer to the website mentioned below to find a list of other texts that have often appeared on the AP exam. You simply cannot read too many books!

Among the literary works planned for the year are *King Lear, Pride and Prejudice, Jane Eyre, Death of a Salesman, and Dubliners*. Poetry is a focus of the course, and students taking AP English should be interested in learning more about poetic devices, forms, and strategies for inquiry.

We expect that you all will be reading more books this summer, so consider choosing a few from the list! For a list of texts that have appeared on the AP exam in the past, check out this link:

AP English Titles from the Open Question

So, enjoy your summer (hey, reading is fun!), and we'll see you in September.

Sincerely,
AP Literature Teachers:

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Assignment

Before reading, learn what you can about the historical context of each assigned book. Click the links below and read carefully. **DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP!**

Link to historical context for ***The Things They Carried*** https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history	**Link to historical context for** ***All the Light We Cannot See*** https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history
QR Code to historical context on Vietnam War	QR Code to historical context on WWII

WRITING PROMPT: **In each novel, characters face moral dilemmas that define their experiences with war. Write an essay in which you examine the characters' complex experiences with war and explain how those experiences shape the meaning of each work as a whole.**

("The meaning of the work as a whole" is an AP Literature phrase which essentially means a central theme of the text.)

Be sure to discuss literary elements and devices such as characterization, conflict, imagery, motif, and symbol as you develop your argument. Be sure that your discussion of elements and devices is woven into your discussion. (That means, this is not an essay about literary elements and devices; it's an essay about meaning. Your discussion of elements and devices is important insofar as it explains how you arrived at your interpretation of the texts' themes.)

Your essay should be at least **five well-developed paragraphs in length (800-900 words),** and it **must include multiple quotes from the text.** Remember to use the ICE strategy when you use a quote: introduce the quote, cite it, and explain the idea it illustrates.
Your essay should be written using the *MLA format for in-text citations and should have a works cited page at the end.*
MLA in-text citations help: MLA In-Text Citation Directions
MLA works cited page help: MLA Works Cited Page Directions

REMEMBER:

- Any discussion of literary devices and elements should be integrated into a larger discussion of the novels' central theme (s).
- Your interpretation of the novels' theme(s) should be expressed as part of your thesis statement, which must appear as the last sentence of your introduction.
- When you finish writing your essay, use the list below as a checklist.

★ Important: Using AI is cheating. If you use AI to write any part of the paper, it will receive a 0/100. Similarly, using any ideas or language from an internet source without giving credit to the source and putting the language in quotation marks is cheating. If you do so, your essay will receive a 0/100.

Note on the use of AI from the English Coordinator, Mr. Cronk:

"For your summer reading assignment, it is important to submit only original work to maintain academic integrity and foster genuine learning. This allows you to truly showcase your unique ideas and creativity and gives your new teacher an opportunity to get to know you and your voice. Embracing your own voice not only strengthens your skills but also makes your learning experience more rewarding and enjoyable."

Writing Tips: Please use this as a checklist as you proofread your essay

1) _____Always connect or introduce quotes; do not just drop them into your writing.

2) _____Review the run-on sentence rule. Avoid comma splices and review the proper use of semi-colons.

3) _____Be sure to have a strong and specific thesis that is not obvious, that is interpretive in nature, and that passes the "so what?" test.

4) _____Avoid contractions in formal academic writing.

5) _____Do not use "you" or "I" in your essay. The tone should be analytical and objective; the point of view should be the third person throughout.

6) _____Avoid the passive voice.

7) _____Edit to remove unnecessary words. **If your idea can be expressed succinctly in five words, do not use ten words.** This will improve your writing style, a focus of our work this year. (For more on this, check out a nifty little book called *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Williams and Colomb or the classic writing manual *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.)

8) _____Proofread for subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement. Use "The OWL at PURDUE" to revisit the rules if you are uncertain about them.

9) _____Be mindful of your diction; choose words appropriate to the academic task at hand. Avoid colloquialisms. At the same time, remember that your goal is to communicate clearly.

10) _____Do not summarize the plot. Be sure that you are focused on analysis.

11) _____Do not use the language of review: "In his *wonderful* novel…," "The *masterfully* written text..," etc. Stick to analysis. Focus on the elements of fiction: character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. Focus on craft: what meaning have you discerned, and which literary techniques led you to that meaning?

12) _____Always, always, always proofread more than once. (Try reading the entire essay out loud. You might hear an error that you don't see.)

Good writing is rewriting.

Summer Reading Overview:

- Students will read required texts, *All the Light We Cannot See* & *The Things They Carried*.
- Students will write an essay in response to the prompt above.
- Students will read additional books for pleasure this summer.
- The essay is due on the first day of school in September. Late essays lose points and won't be accepted after the first five class days of school. Please bring a HARD COPY to school.
- The paper will also be submitted to turnitin.com or Schoology (this will be explained on the first day of class). Have your document ready for submission. Your essay will be scanned for plagiarism. If you are found to have cheated on this assignment, your position in AP English Literature may be revoked and the teachers who run NHS will be notified. Please write in your own words from your own mind. That is what your teachers will respect and value, and that is how you will grow!

- Questions can be addressed to Ms. LoScalzo at gialoscalzo@wpcsd.k12.ny.us or Ms. Cykiert at olympiacykiert@wpcsd.k12.ny.us