Dear Visitation Ninth Graders,

I am so excited to begin our work together in English class. This summer, I will be anticipating and planning for our first days. In turn, I'm asking you to do some preparatory work as well. I'd like you to read at least two texts this summer. (In an ideal world, I'd ask you to read at least five or six. Reading remains the single best way to improve your thinking, vocabulary, and writing skills; but as I do possess a realist side in addition to my idealistic one, I'll settle for a minimum of two books.)

1. First, I'd like you to choose a novel or a work of narrative nonfiction. You'll then write an essay about this text according to the forthcoming guidelines.
Some texts that have captured the imaginations of Visitation ninth graders in recent years have included the following:
● *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* by Bich Minh Nguyen
● *Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo
● *Pride* by Ibi Zoboi
● *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver
● *Unscripted* by Nicole Kronzer
● *Hudson Bay Bound: Two Women, One Dog, Two Thousand Miles to the Arctic* by Natalie Warren

You are welcome to choose from this list OR to choose a book that seems interesting to you and that you have not previously read.

After you finish reading, choose a character from your book and write an essay on the following topic:

An epiphany can be described as a sudden moment of insight or understanding that causes a character to change or act in a certain way. In novels, a main or supporting character experiences at least one epiphany during the course of the plot. Your essay will discuss this moment of insight.

Be sure to include an introduction and a conclusion. In the main body of your essay, you should answer the following questions:
● What was the character's epiphany or realization? Be specific.
● What event, occurrence, or moment in the story triggered the character's epiphany? Be specific.
● In what ways did the character change as a result of this epiphany? In other words, what was he/she like before the epiphany, and what is he/she like afterward? Be specific.

Checklist:

● Your essay should be approximately 1.5 and not more than 2 pages in length. That'll be about 500 words.
● Please be sure that your full name and date are in the upper left-hand corner of the paper.
● This paper should be typed and doubled spaced in Times New Roman (or similar) 12-point font.
● Be sure to write a strong topic sentence as part of your introduction. You should include the title of the work, the author, and your main idea in the topic sentence. For example, In *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, the author's epiphany about her own self-worth propels her to independence from her family.
● Use concrete evidence from the text to support your ideas. Include at least two quotes from the book.
● You don't need to summarize the plot. Instead, answer the questions about the character's epiphany.
● Read your writing aloud to catch awkward sentences and phrases. Try your best to find and fix all of your errors.
Due Date: Please complete your essay before the first day of school in August. We will submit the essays online together as part of our first lesson.
Grades: This assignment will help me understand your skills as a reader and writer. I will be able to pinpoint trends across the ninth grade class and plan instruction accordingly. Consider this assignment your first impression!

2. *Call Me Athena: Girl from Detroit* by Colby Cedar Smith -Directions for Note Taking

Call Me Athena is a novel in verse with three narrators. Locate a copy of the book. Take notes on the following narrators to develop an informal character sketch as you read the book. Also note page numbers as you take notes- one page of notes per narrator.

You will turn in your notes on the first day of class. Other than notes on aspects of these characters, you do not need to write anything else. We will use these notes to do formal writing in the first few weeks of school.

A character sketch focuses on the most revealing or distinctive traits. These are the types of traits you could note about each narrator:

- **Physical appearance**: height, build, features
- **Personality**: kind, selfish, witty, shy, bold, etc.
- **Speech and behavior**: catchphrases/mottos, way of interacting

- **Background**: family, culture, education, job
- **Beliefs and motivations**: what drives or shapes them
- **Notable actions**: something that defines them (past experience, decisions, etc.)

Mary Detroit 1934

Giorgos (Gio) Greece 1915

Jeanne France 1916

That's it! (And, I acknowledge, that's a lot.) Thank you in advance for your careful attention to and hard work on these assignments. They are important precursors for what I hope will be a fruitful and transformative year.

Ms. Gorman