June 11, 2026

Dear English 9 Honors scholars,

As an Honors student, you will begin preparing for freshman year this summer by completing the attached packet of assignments. The goal is to help **build background knowledge** of skills and topics that are integral to freshman year. Specific skills include **annotating** and **reading comprehension**, and **utilizing materials related to individual identity and our roles in the world** around us. Although I do not anticipate posting any additional summer assignments, I created a **Google Classroom for you to join**. The **code is r2lzo5nj**.

The summer work is required for English 9 Honors and **is due on the first day of class**. Not only will this assignment be one of your first **major assessment grades** for the new school year, but it will also prepare you for the activities occurring in class in the first few weeks, and hone key skills that you will use all year in English class.

If you spend **one hour on this three times during the summer**, you should be able to complete it. I trust that you will **do your own original work**; AI or other unethical completion methods should ***NOT*** be used. I know you are learning on your own, and I don't expect perfection – just your best effort, please.

Attached, you will find the following:

- A survey about you, related to English class
- Important terms for English class
- Guide to annotating, and models
- One poem, with accompanying tasks
- One short story, with accompanying tasks
- One nonfiction piece with accompanying tasks

I look forward to getting to know you and to helping you embrace your first year in high school. If you have questions, feel free to reach out to me at valigorskyg@gilbertschool.org.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Valigorsky

Survey

What are you expecting to be different about English 9 Honors than English 9 College Prep?

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What are you looking forward to with regard to English 9 Honors?

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What are your concerns, if any, with regard to English 9 Honors?

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Which English skills do you think you excel at the most? What do you enjoy the most about English?

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What English skills do you think you struggle with the most?

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Important Terms

Please become familiar with these terms, as we will use many of them throughout the school year.

Context:

- parts of something written or verbalized that help provide the meaning of a word or passage. (*context clues*, such as those you'd use to figure out the meaning of a word)
- The environment in which something occurs (*context for a quotation from a text*)

Protagonist: the main character; usually a good person

Antagonist: the main character's chief opponent; often a bad person

Character trait:

- *External* traits describe the way a character looks.

- *Internal* traits describe a character's basic personality; traits define them.
    - They aren't feelings or temporary, but rather part of their essential being.

Conflict:

- *External* conflict is a problem between people or something else. (person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. nature)
- *Internal* conflict is a problem that a person struggles with within themself (person vs. self)
- *Main conflict*: The problem that the main character is trying to resolve throughout the story.

Theme:

- A universal lesson learned that any reader can apply to their lives.
- Should be universal, *not* specific to the text/book.
- Should include a topic and the "why."
    - Kindness is a topic. "Be kind to others *because* they will be kind to you" is a theme because it tells *why* you should be kind.

Setting:

- Where, when, environment/what's going on in the community/environment
    - A Connecticut beach on a sunny day in 2023 is different than a Connecticut beach in 1845 or during a tropical storm.

Tone: the author's attitude toward the subject about which they are writing (argumentative, cautionary, humorous)

Mood: how the reader feels when reading the text (melancholic, optimistic, enthusiastic)

Diction: word choice (Why would an author use "seething" rather than "angry?")

Denotation: the dictionary definition of a word

Connotation: the historical, emotional, and societal associations of a word
(The word "school" has a *positive* connotation when associated with achievements, friends, and a love of learning. "School" has a *negative* connotation when associated with a lack of friends, dislike of learning, or difficulty with learning.)

Figurative Language: expressing something written or spoken in a way that uses a non-literal meaning; it is meant to enhance the meaning, and make it more clear and interesting

Simile: a comparison of two things using the words "like" or "as" (He is as strong as a powerful machine.)

Metaphor: a comparison of two things without using "like" or "as"/saying one thing *is* another thing (My uncle is a machine.)

Personification: giving human characteristics to nonhuman things (The wind whistled all night.)

Hyperbole: an exaggeration (My feet are killing me. This weighs a ton.)

Imagery: vivid descriptions that appeal to the senses. (The tall green grass swayed as the warm breeze gently glided through the mist-filled meadow.)

Allusion: a reference to history, literature, mythology, famous figures, etc. (We stopped at the Golden Arches on our way to band practice. – allusion to McDonalds)

Annotating a Text

Annotating is a way of actively engaging with a text as you read it with purpose and intent. Think of it as having a conversation with the text. While it might initially seem time-consuming, it is a skill that will become natural to you and invaluable in English 9 H and beyond.

The following is a list of items that you should consider annotating:

- Main ideas or themes
- Figurative language/literary devices, such as similes, metaphors, repetition, hyperbole, etc.
- Questions you have about what you're reading
- Definitions of words
- Key dates, people, important events
- Reactions to the text
- Significant lines (things that stand out as being important or "wow"-worthy)
- Connections from the text to other texts, films, TV shows, your life, history, etc.)
- Tone or mood

Please note that this is not a list of every item one might consider when annotating, but it is a start. At the same time, one might not need to annotate *every* item on the list *each* time they read a text.

When highlighting, underlining, or circling, always follows this rule: MAKE A NOTE (even a word or phrase) to remind you of *why* you highlighted, underlined, or circled that particular area, so that when you come back to it you can quickly recall why you indicated that part of the text.

POEM

Annotate the poem "Identity" by Julio Noboa (Scroll down for poem.)

- First, review the annotated excerpt from the poem "The Hill We Climb" by Amanda Gorman in order to notice items that can be annotated. This is a model – you do not need to annotate the model. It is linked here.

- Please include at least three instances of figurative language while annotating "Identity." Explain what the figurative language actually means.

- After annotating "Identity," please respond to the questions below. Be sure to review the details of the Important Terms for metaphor, theme, and tone.

This poem is an extended metaphor. What is the metaphor? (What are the weed and the flower being compared to throughout the poem?)

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Why did the author of this poem title it "Identity?"

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What is the theme of "Identity?" Include details to support your response to this question.

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Which words and phrases are the most powerful? Please explain why. Include at least three words/phrases.

Word or Phrase	**What makes it/they powerful?**
1.	
2.	
3.	

Does the author portray being a flower or a weed as a decision, or something that happens naturally? Cite evidence from this text, as well as from your own experience/knowledge to explain your response.

Do *you* identify more closely with the flower or with the weed? Please explain your response, explaining some aspects of your personality. (Nothing too personal is required.)

Identity
by Julio Noboa Polanco

Let them be as flowers,
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,
to live, to feel exposed to the madness
of the vast, eternal sky.
To be swayed by the breezes of the ancient sea,
carrying my soul, my seed, beyond the mountains of time
or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if
then shunned by everyone
than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,
where they're praised, handled, and plucked
by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench

than of sweet, fragrant lilac.
If I could stand alone, strong and free,
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.

Polanco, Julio Noboa. Identity. Copyright 1973
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Scott Foresman Literature Text 8, page 164

SHORT STORY

- Read and annotate the short story, "The Stolen Party" by Liliana Heker. You should have at least four annotations per page.
- Answer the questions and fill in the chart below.

Link to the short story "The Stolen Party" If you can not print the article, or use Kami, please email me at valigorskyg@gilbertschool.org

Who is the protagonist of the story? What is a character trait that describes her?
Please provide two details from the story to support your choice of character trait.

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_____

What is a theme of this story and why do you make that claim? Provide two specific details from the text to support your answer (no direct quotes necessary here).

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Complete the chart below about TWO conflicts in the story.

What type of conflict is it?	Who or what is involved?	Describe the conflict. What caused the conflict? How did it impact characters in the story?	How is the conflict resolved (if it ever is)? If it isn't resolved, explain why it wasn't.

NONFICTION

Read the article “A Doll Brings Pride, Identity for Brazil Indigenous Woman” and respond to the following.

Link to article If you can not print the article, or use Kami, please email me at valigorskyg@gilbertschool.org

Write a short paragraph that explains the central idea of the text. Use at least two details from the article to support your response.

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Why is it important to embrace various identities? Use at least two details from the article to support your response. You can also include your own thoughts.

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Luakam Anambe is proud to embrace her identity as a Brazilian Indigenous woman. Which of your own identities are you most proud of, and why? (Examples of identities that you might consider: hobbies, cultural background, being a sibling or an only child, ethnicity, etc. This does not require personal information. Simply think of groups that you are proud to be a part of. Two

of mine are being identified as a mom and a teacher because I enjoy working with young people.)

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