

## Honors English 3: 2011 Summer Reading Assignment

(All essays must be turned in to your English 3 teacher on the first day of school)

**PHS English Department Summer Reading Philosophy:** In conjunction with Plainfield High School's stated mission to help students develop into lifelong learners, the PHS English Department requires students to complete an independent reading project over the course of each summer. Summer reading assignments are designed to be rigorous, yet flexible enough to accommodate each student's individual needs and interests. Each summer reading assignment includes a writing piece which will engage students' critical thinking skills. All summer reading work correlates directly with course curricula, introducing students to important themes and concepts that will be further explored in their upcoming English classes.

**Students must read any two of the following novels:**

- The Jungle by Upton Sinclair
- The Color Purple by Alice Walker
- The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian by Sherman Alexie
- The Color of Water by James McBride

**Essay Prompt:** In Honors English 3, students will examine the concept of the "American Dream", its history, and its effect upon American Literature. The origin on the phrase "American Dream" can be linked to The Declaration of Independence, which proclaims that all Americans have the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Throughout our nation's history, the idea of the "American Dream" has been defined many different ways. Many Americans have come to this country with dreams of religious freedom. Others have come to America to seek freedom from oppressive governments. Some people have defined the "American Dream" as the ability for all Americans to get a good education, seek financial opportunities, and create

a better life for themselves. African Americans, women, and other minority groups have dreamt of and fought for the same rights promised to all Americans by the Constitution. For many parents, the “American Dream” means having the ability to provide their children with opportunities that they themselves did not have. For others, it could simply mean that all Americans have the right to “pursue happiness” in any way they see fit.

Read any two of the texts novels listed above. Then, write a 4-5 page essay comparing the theme of the “American Dream” and it’s affect on the protagonists in each of the texts you have read. Essays must be written in MLA format and contain at least one direct quotation from each text. While crafting your essay, you may want to consider each of the following points:

- Where and when is each story taking place? What was America like at this time and in this setting? How might each story’s setting affect the way the protagonists would view the “American Dream”?
- What is the socioeconomic status of the characters in each text? Are they living a life of wealth and privilege, a life of poverty, or something in between? How might this effect their perception of the “American Dream”?
- How do you think the main characters in each text would define the term “The American Dream”? What are each character’s goals for the future? Do these characters achieve the “American Dream”? Why or why not?
- Describe the circumstances that make it difficult for each protagonist to pursue his/her dreams. How are the obstacles that each character faces similar? How are they different?
- How does each protagonist feel about being an American? How do these feelings change over the course of the text?

If you have any questions regarding this assignment, please contact Mr. Farrish by e-mail at either of the following addresses: [Farrishj@plainfieldschools.org](mailto:Farrishj@plainfieldschools.org) or [MrFarrish99@hotmail.com](mailto:MrFarrish99@hotmail.com)

