

**Summer Reading and Writing Assignment for Students**  
**Entering Honors English 11 at West High**

Junior Honors English will focus on American literature. We will study as many major works as we can. To give us a head start, your assignment over the summer is:

**1. Read John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) before the end of summer.** If possible, purchase a copy of the novel so you can write in it and mark important passages. Otherwise, check it out from a library. Online versions or e-book versions are acceptable, but not recommended.

We will look at the novel as a work of literature, as a historical document (most of the events depicted actually occurred and Steinbeck observed them as a reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner*), and as an instrument to help us explore our own experience and values.

**2. Please complete the book by the first day of class. Write a paper that is one to two pages, typed, dealing with one of the topics below. Please use MLA format, including proper source citation. Your paper is due on the first day of class.**

- \* Why does Steinbeck use such unsophisticated protagonists and language?
- \* What importance does Steinbeck give to family through his novel?
- \* Analyze the effectiveness of anger in the novel. Does Steinbeck suggest there is a better way to address personal or societal problems?
- \* Analyze the relationship between the roles of men and women in the novel. (Consider how characters do and do not conform to traditional gender roles.)
- \* Analyze how **AND** why Steinbeck uses specific Biblical allusions/parallels (If you don't know Bible stories or characters, choose a different prompt. Don't worry: we'll discuss these allusions together.)
- \* How does Steinbeck define sin and virtue through the novel? Using specific evidence from the text, compare and contrast this to how society and you define sin and virtue.
- \* Analyze Steinbeck's portrayal of historical aspects of the 1930s (Hoovervilles, Dust Bowl, Red Scare, Great Depression, etc.) **AND** the message(s) that he sends about these events. (Be sure to properly cite any outside sources that you use to respond to this prompt.)
- \* Analyze the effect of the alternating narrative (Joad) chapters and intercalary (short, generic) chapters. Why does Steinbeck structure his novel in this way?

*Arrange to read this powerful and moving novel in a comfortable place. Pace yourself so you can become fully involved in it, rather than be concerned with the number of pages. Find out why The Grapes of Wrath is often considered the Great American Novel.*

See you in August!

Julie Adams / Will Cogswell / Denise Pfeiffer / Marcie Thompson / Mindy Thompson

### Course Overview

Please review the following list of works with your parents. Some texts may contain mature situations and/or language. If you have any questions or comments please contact the teacher. (Note: This is the long list. We may not read all these texts, and different classes may study different selections.)

#### Novels and plays we *may* read together as a class:

<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> , Steinbeck	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , Hawthorne
<i>The Crucible</i> , Miller	<i>King Lear</i> , Shakespeare
<i>The Adventures of Huck Finn</i> , Twain	<i>Ethan Frome</i> , Wharton
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> , Fitzgerald	<i>Walden</i> , Henry David Thoreau

**Personal choice novels** (You *may* be asked to choose one of these texts for independent reading.)

<i>Fools Crow</i> , Welch	<i>Laughing Boy</i> , La Farge
<i>The Virginian</i> , Wister	<i>Tracks</i> , Erdrich
<i>Love Medicine</i> , Erdrich	<i>Montana 1948</i> , Watson
<i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> , Anaya	<i>All the Pretty Horses</i> , McCarthy
<i>My Antonia</i> , Cather	<i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> , Cooper
<i>A Thief of Time</i> , Hillerman	<i>Ceremony</i> , Silko
<i>Angle of Repose</i> , Stegner	<i>The Color Purple</i> , Walker
<i>Catcher in the Rye</i> , Salinger	<i>The Help</i> , Kathryn Stockett

#### Short stories, essays and nonfiction selections, and poetry from our textbooks:

*Prentice Hall Literature*

*Braided Lives, Anthology of Multicultural American Writing*

*Coming of Age, Short Stories About Youth and Adolescence*