Summer Reading Assignment

**For AP English Language and Composition**

**2011-2012**

**Expectations:** Students, you will be responsible for turning in evidence/commentary journals on the first day of class. This assignment will be due on the first day of the semester in which you are scheduled for the class. Students are expected to spread this assignment out as they read the book rather than doing it all the day before school starts. Evidence/commentary journals are a great way to absorb the content and implications of a book, if they are done as the student reads. There will be a test on each book during the second week of school, after we have discussed the books.

**Assignment:**  Read the AP summer reading selections, *The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids* by Alexandra Robbins and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. As you read, you will write an evidence/commentary journal, to be recorded in a **composition book**, not a spiral notebook.

* First, fold several pages of your notebook vertically, and label the left column “evidence”, the right “commentary.”
* Once you record the evidence, leave space for commentary. I recommend only recording one or two pieces of evidence per page; otherwise, you won’t have room for your commentary. If you have several per page, and you do have room for commentary, then your commentary may be insufficient.
* For each book, select three motifs\*. For each motif you select, you will look for three pieces of evidence\*\* in the novel and quote that evidence in the left column.
* In the right column, you will record your commentary; that is, you will analyze the quoted evidence by interpreting its meaning **and** discussing what it means to the work as a whole. Discuss the meanings of metaphors and symbols, the underlying implications of passages, and the connotations of word choices. When a reader reads your evidence and commentary on a particular motif, he should gain deeper understanding of that motif and of the message the author communicates through it. Focus on higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, rather than simple interpretations.
* When you finish, you will have recorded a total of **18 commentaries** (3 commentaries x 3 motifs x 2 books). Do not make the mistake of doing only one piece of commentary per three pieces of evidence.

**Examples of acceptable commentary from *The Great Gatsby*:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Evidence | Commentary |
| Gatsby’s books: *“Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought that they would be nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact they’re absolutely real.”* p. 50. | Gatsby wants to represent himself as a learned educated man. He probably believes that the books help create this image, and that image is tied to his supposed Oxford background. |
| The color green: *“Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing but a single green light, minute and far away…”* p. 26 | The green light definitely does not represent something as simple as a stop and go traffic light; however, it is an object of Gatsby’s attention, and it is distant and far away. Maybe the significance is not the color but the distance. While the light is far away it is dream like, and when Gatsby finally gets close to Daisy, he has to deal with the reality that she did, at some time, love Tom, and that she is now a mother. |

**Select three motifs or themes for each novel.**

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| --- | --- |
| The Overachievers motifs and themes: | Their Eyes Were Watching God motifs: |
| * Corruption
 | * Marriage
 |
| * International effects
 | * Trees and blossoms
 |
| * Drugs and drinking
 | * Fidelity (marital loyalty) and trust
 |
| * Suicide and depression
 | * Hair
 |
| * Race
 | * The power of persuasion and manipulation through speech
 |
| * The shallowness of labels
 | * The flood and rebirth
 |
| * High stakes testing
 | * The role of a woman
 |
| * Cliques
 | * Defining love
 |
| * Physical effects of stress
 | * Clothing
 |
| * Laws and rules
 | * Power and impotence
 |
| * Excessive extracurriculars
 | * Rumor or story telling
 |
| * Judgment
 | * Ships and the horizon
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**\*Motifs:** These are recurring features (images, symbols, metaphors, events, ideas) that continually receive reference in the novel. In *To Kill a Mockingbird,* judgment of appearances and Boo Radley might be motifs. For each novel select from the list of motifs above.

\*\* **Evidence:** While analyzing the book, try to find the places where the author references the motifs you selected. Quote the sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that reference your motifs. Hint: try to select evidence that is not completely obvious. Do not repeat any evidence. Look for passages with metaphors or complex language, passages that imply rather than overtly state ideas. The goal is for you to increase your audience’s understanding of the book.

If you have any questions, please e-mail me at hutchia.rose@pitt.k12.nc.us.

For extra help in understanding either book, you may participate in book discussions on the class website at hutchclass.weebly.com.

\*Please note, you are receiving this assignment because you have registered for AP Language and Composition. This is not a guarantee that you will be scheduled for the course, but every effort will be made by your counselor to ensure that you are scheduled for the classes you requested.