Dear student,

Welcome to English III Honors. The reading assignment and essays explained below will be due on Monday, September 14. In addition to the written work, a multiple choice test based on the reading will figure heavily into your first quarter grade. You will also be evaluated on your participation during class discussions centered on these works. Though you are not required to read over the summer, I recommend getting a head start so that you will not feel overwhelmed once school begins. The reading assignment follows:

*The Crucible* by Arthur Miller  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain  
*The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

I suggest you buy paperback copies of the books so that you can annotate, highlight, and personalize them (please see tips for close reading and annotation on the back of this letter). All titles should be available new and used at bookstores and online. Please don’t hesitate to purchase used books in satisfactory condition.

For each piece of literature, complete the following assignment:

Write a short essay (no more than 250 words) in which you identify a theme of the text and explain how the author reveals it. Provide evidence (quotations from the text) and analysis (a thorough explanation of how the evidence supports your thesis). Remember that a theme is a statement about life that a writer strives to convey to the reader, and it must be written as a complete sentence. For instance, *conformity* is a thematic idea, but *Conformity is a necessary evil to prevent chaos and maintain civilized society* and *Conformity leads to societal regression* are themes. Each essay must be typed using 12 point font and 2.0 spacing. Once school starts, I will provide you with instructions for uploading your essays to turnitin.com.

If you feel intimidated by the requirements of this class, please consider withdrawing your application before the end of the school year since you will not be allowed to transfer out of this class when school begins in August. Please come see me in C-5 if you have any questions.

Enjoy the reading and your summer.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Aiello
Close Reading and Annotation

To grasp the full meaning of a piece of literature, it is important to read closely – to interact with the text as you read and reread it. Close reading helps you get beneath the surface of the text to those bottom layers, where all the good stuff resides. As you read closely, it is helpful to annotate – to underline or highlight significant sentences, to circle and define unknown words, to make note of how the text reveals the author’s purpose, tone, mood, themes, symbolism, and other literary devices. Annotating also helps prepare you for writing assignments and discussions based on the text.

Here are some tips for close reading and annotation:

Close Reading
- Read the text to understand the basic plot, meaning, etc.
- As you read, look for patterns and repetitions, recurring elements of the text including images, phrases, situations. Why has the author used these repetitions? What is their significance?
- Identify passages that strike you as highly significant and explain why. How does the passage contribute to the characterization, themes, symbolism, etc.? How does the passage contribute to the overall meaning?
- Consider how the text relates to other texts you have read.
- Read the text in context. Take into account the time period in which it was written and/or set, the literary period (Romantic, Realist, Modern, etc.), the social and/or political atmosphere. How does the author reveal these contextual elements in the literature? Does the author reveal a particular position on an issue? How does the author accomplish this?

Annotation
- Circle phrases you find pithy, represent repetitive themes or images (motifs), and/or contain figurative language. Make a note in the margin explaining why they are important.
- Circle unfamiliar words, and define them in the margin.
- Bracket important sections of text, and make a note in the margin explaining their significance.
- Underline sentences that stand out or make some sort of point.
- Connect important ideas, phrases, or words with arrows.
- When you mark the text in any way, provide an explanatory note so that it makes sense when you come back to it.
- For the sake of finding particular passages during a class discussion, it is helpful to number the paragraphs of a short story.

Adapted from "Close Reading and Annotation" by Rolf M. Gunnar