



May 2010

Dear English I Honors Student and Parents,

Welcome to the Honors English program at Glenbard East. We pride ourselves on building a community of writers and readers, and look forward to your contributions to that end. One important facet of that building is growing your personal reading base this summer. **We want you to read *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck and an additional title from the list attached to this letter.** These books are available in local bookstores. Limited copies are also available at your local library.

No formal written response is required, however, beginning of the year activities will center around these books, so you might find it beneficial to take post-it notes or make margin comments as you read. The two guiding questions should be considered as you progress through each novel, which are included on the reverse of this page.

Our four-year curriculum has been designed with care to provide a challenging program for those East students who come to us with highly developed language skills and sincere commitments to exploring the world of literature and mastering the use of the English language. We feel that you should be familiar with the goals and expectations of our program before you come to Glenbard East.

English I Honors focuses on composition and literature. We cover a great deal of material at a fairly rapid pace. We expect that, coming into the program, you can think and read critically, and we expect you to be an active participant in the classroom. We also think that it is necessary that you find time to handle the workload of daily assignments, including extensive reading and writing assignments, to cooperate and work effectively in groups, and to take the initiative in seeking assistance when needed. By the end of this course, we anticipate that you will not only develop increased skills as a writer, but also an appreciation for quality literature.

Have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Vanessa Perez

Jen O'Connor

Jeff Kargol

Joan Witkus

**English 1 Honors
Summer Reading Choices**

MANDATORY READ

***Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck**

The tragic story of the complex bond between two migrant laborers in Central California. They are George Milton and Lennie Small, itinerant ranch hands who dream of one day owning a small farm. George acts as a father figure to Lennie, who is a very large, simpleminded man, calming him and helping to reign in his immense physical strength. (barnesandnoble.com)

Purpose-setting Question: What motivates George to make the choices he does throughout the novel?

Theme-related Question: Characters in the novel experience journeys that teach them lessons and allow them to grow. In what way is this novel a journey for the main character? Identify three examples and how they led to this growth.

PICK ONE OF THE TWO NOVELS BELOW TO READ:

***The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls**

Jeanette Walls opens her memoir by describing looking out the window of her taxi and spotting her mother on the sidewalk, "rooting through a Dumpster." Walls's parents were a matched pair of eccentrics raising four children. The Walls children learned to support themselves, eating out of trashcans at school or painting their skin so the holes in their pants didn't show. One by one, each child escaped to New York City. Still, it wasn't long before their parents appeared on their doorsteps. (Amazon.com)

Purpose-setting Question: Despite everything, Jeannette Walls refuses to condemn her parents. Discuss specific events that could have easily led to her criticism of them. Could you have been equally nonjudgmental? Explain your response.

Theme-related Question: Characters in the novel experience journeys that teach them lessons and allow them to grow. In what way is this novel a journey for the main character? Identify three examples and how they led to this growth.

***A Separate Peace* by John Knowles**

The volatile world of male adolescence provides the backdrop for John Knowles' engrossing tale of love, hate, war, and peace. Sharing a room at Devon, an exclusive New England prep school, in the summer prior to World War II, Gene and Phineas form a complex bond of friendship that draws out both the best and worst characteristics of each boy and leads ultimately to violence, a confession, and the betrayal of trust. (Amazon.com)

Purpose-setting Question: Are Gene and Finny truly friends? Identify three examples in the text that support your opinion.

Theme-related Question: Characters in the novel experience journeys that teach them lessons and allow them to grow. In what way is this novel a journey for the main character? Identify three examples and how they led to this growth.