

June 16, 2008

Dear Scholar,

Congratulations for registering in AP Language Arts 11. This course includes college level composition and reading with a national exam in the spring that may earn you college credit.

**This summer, as preparation for our coursework, you will read *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser and write a reflection journal of 20-25 entries.** In essence, the reflection journal is a record of your thoughts and questions as you read, along with the section of the text that prompted them.

Eric Schlosser investigates the hidden realms of American business and culture and their far-reaching effects on our lives. Heralded as “society’s quiet crusader,” he challenges people to think about such critical and often overlooked issues as food safety, workers’ rights, marketing to children, and the epidemic of obesity. His meticulous research convinces the reader of his subtitle: *The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*.

Your journal entries are due Friday, September 5, 2008. They will be the basis of class discussions and assignments for the first week of class. The journal itself is 50 points.

Please write in a composition book rather than a spiral notebook. Copy the selected text you are responding to at the top of the page, along with the page number. Write your reflection below the text. Please write on single sides of the paper. You may continue an entry on a second page, if you like.

Some sample entries are below. If you have any questions, e-mail one of us.

Sincerely,

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#### Sample Entries from Reflection Journals

- Make connections between the text and contemporary issues, other texts, or personal experience
- Ask questions and explore answers
- Make and defend predictions
- Discuss and interpret the meaning of description, imagery, or symbolism
- Consider the causes or effects of a decision or event
- Analyze the author’s purpose or tone in a passage
- Identify and discuss social questions, political, or moral issues
- Draw a picture or write a poem inspired by the passage
- Paste a copy of a cartoon or other text that parallels the passage and explain the connection.

*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” (p.1)

When I first read this opening sentence of the novel, I interpreted the word *want* as desire. I thought Austen was saying that a wealthy man would be able to marry and would want a wife. Soon I realized Austen is poking fun at social attitudes toward dating and marriage. With four daughters to “marry off,” Mrs. Bennett has her hands full! From her point of view, any man of means is ripe for the picking! I wonder if the entire story will be about finding a good wife or husband. The author is surprisingly witty about marriage.

*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin

“But to her unaccustomed vision the stretch of water behind her assumed the aspect of a barrier, which her unaided strength would never be able to overcome.” (p. 89)

The distance between Edna and the shore symbolizes the distance she will put between herself and society, if she embarks on her quest for self. In this moment, such a distance seems insurmountable and dangerous to her and shows how difficult her personal journey is going to be. I wonder if Edna will ever overcome her fear and accomplish learning to swim. At this point, I see learning to swim as a symbol of her independence and freedom from her stifling life as a wife and mother in the society of her day.

*Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

“Remember the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord.” (p. 87)

I still read a lot, but it is true that most people are reading less. Most only get information from television, and some stations are slanted. The less people read, the more the government could take advantage of us. The more people blindly trust the government, the less a democracy we live in. In the U.S. people have died for the right to learn to read and write. Melba of the Little Rock Nine almost got killed in *Warriors Don't Cry*. If books were banned, would anyone care? Would more people read if reading were forbidden? Ray Bradbury is satirizing American culture not just for its lack of interest in reading but for the loss of reflection and independent thought.

*Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich

“The cook at the Radio Grill has two other jobs. You might expect a bit of grumbling, some signs from her and others of unrest- graffiti on the hortatory posters in the break room, muffled guffaws during our associate meetings- but I can detect none of that. ...Maybe that is what you get when you weed out all the rebels with drug tests and personality “surveys”- a uniformly servile and indentured workforce, content to dream of the distant day when they'll be vested in the Company's profit-sharing plan. (p. 178)

In this section the author is being very sarcastic about employment at Wal-Mart. It is forbidden to join a union and workers are afraid to talk about joining. Ehrenreich uses words like *grumbling* and *graffiti* to suggest that true labor reform usually begins this way, but workers at Wal-Mart won't consider such tactics. She calls the workers *indentured* because their wages are so low they are trapped in the workplace like indentured servants in colonial America.