

**AP English Language and Composition**  
**Fichera**

**Summer of 2010 Reading and Writing Assignments**



Congratulations! You have successfully completed another year of high school. I am sure that you have an exciting and productive summer planned. However, before you know it, September will arrive. To help you prepare for the challenge of AP English Language and Composition, I have prepared some summer reading and writing assignments that I hope you will find both enjoyable and stimulating.

First, you will read two classic American novels. F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, is a fascinating and not so flattering portrait of the Jazz Age. The tale of the complex and unforgettable Jay Gatsby is told by the honest and reliable narrator Nick Carraway, and it warns the reader of the "high price" one pays for chasing a "single (and flawed) dream." The size of *The Grapes of Wrath* is certainly intimidating, but John Steinbeck's moving story of the remarkably resilient Joad family is one that you will never forget. Be sure to examine the intercalary chapters very closely. These chapters lend themselves perfectly to argument/rhetorical analysis - a major focus of our class.

Next you will choose between two contemporary non-fiction works: *In Defense of Food* by Michael Pollan or *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* by Malcolm Gladwell. **You are responsible for purchasing the text you wish to read**, and both are available at most major booksellers. These books offer unique lenses that I am certain will dramatically affect the way you view the world in which you live. They are equally entertaining and thought-provoking.

I would also like to encourage you to read at least one additional book of your own choosing. Also, I would like to recommend that you read magazines that contain writing of the quality likely to be encountered in a college-level course. The articles should address important historical and contemporary issues. I have attached a list of recommended magazines, but please keep in mind that this list is not all-inclusive.

As you read the required texts, take notes. This is called a **dialectical journal** and the instructions for it are included in this packet. These notes may include your own personal thoughts, feelings, reactions, observations, etc. in "response" to the reading. Be sure to engage in close reading of especially compelling passages. Your notes in response to such passages should analyze content as well as the writer's technique. Do not feel the need to respond in writing to every page of each novel. While your notes should be thorough enough to serve as a review in September, they should not be copious to the extent that they destroy the pleasure of reading. If you purchase your own texts, mark significant passages and include questions and comments in the margins. When you respond with annotated notes, you are engaging in a dialogue with the text and the author.

Enjoy the reading and your summer, and I will see you in September!

### The readings due upon our return in September:

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- *In Defense of Food* by Michael Pollan

-or-

*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* by Malcolm Gladwell

### The assignments:

- **Due the first day of class:** Write a two-page (typed) paper reflecting upon a memorable summer event. Be sure that your paper is not simply an "overview" of your summer. Select a single interesting or unique event/experience such as meeting a new friend, the first day of a summer job, a hike in the woods, a skydiving jump, etc.
- **Due the first day of class:** Write a two-page (typed) letter addressed to me in which you reflect upon your summer reading experience. Consider what you have enjoyed, what you have found challenging, and any interesting reactions inspired by the readings.
- **Dialectical Journals:** Do a journal for *The Great Gatsby*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and either *In Defense of Food* or *The Tipping Point*.

## Sample Dialectical Journal

### Passages

Advice from Nick Carraway's father: "Just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages you've had."

I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up so many curious natures to me

and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores...I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men.

When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only *Gatsby*, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction - *Gatsby* who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn.

*Gatsby* turned out all right in the end; it is what preyed on *Gatsby*, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

What sort of advantages has the narrator had?

It seems that Nick is a trustworthy narrator. At least in suggesting that he reserves judgment, he wants the reader to trust him. Apparently others trust him enough to share secrets with him. I can't wait to read about these secrets!

The events he will describe in this book have profoundly affected him.

The elevated diction ("riotous excursions," "privileged glimpses," etc.) reveals that Nick does have "advantages." The language is that of a highly educated, and perhaps upper class individual.

"Preyed" is an interesting word choice. I wonder what it is that "preys" on *Gatsby*. It suggests he is a victim.

The "foul dust" imagery suggests the events have an impact on Nick that deeply disturbs him.

**Magazines and Newspapers**  
**(There are many other good sources of quality writing!)**

*The New Yorker*  
*The Atlantic Monthly*  
*Harper's Magazine*  
*National Geographic*  
*Discovery*  
*Scientific American*  
*Smithsonian*  
*Natural History*  
*Wired*  
*The New York Times*  
*The Washington Post*  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*  
*Sports Illustrated*  
*The Onion*

\*\*If you have any questions about the assignments, please email me at:

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I will try to get back to you as soon as possible!

Mrs. Fichera

