

## Honors English 9 Summer Reading and Writing Assignment 2013-2014

---

Thank you for your interest in taking English 9 Honors next year! The following is a required summer assignment due electronically to my email, [jodilynnfrancis@hotmail.com](mailto:jodilynnfrancis@hotmail.com) or to the high school office, 26 Jones Street, August 1<sup>st</sup>. This assignment will connect to our first unit: how meaningful quotations create characters and plots in short stories.

Should you have any questions about this assignment, you can contact me via my personal email ([jodilynnfrancis@hotmail.com](mailto:jodilynnfrancis@hotmail.com)), which I will be checking weekly throughout the summer.

1) First choose a book from the following list of classics, books that are deemed to be “good books” for all ages and time periods. It is your responsibility to find and obtain a copy of your book. Since these are classics, it is easy to buy discounted copies online or find available copies through libraries.

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll (can be found for free with the iBooks or Kindles)

*Night*, by Elise Weisel

*Gulliver’s Travels*, by Jonathan Swift (can be found for free with the iBooks or Kindles)

2) As you read your book, note passages that you find particularly important, personally relevant, emblematic of life, surprising, inspiring, or even disturbing. Mark these with sticky-notes, tabs, notes in the margin, or make electronic notes or highlights.

3) After you finish the novel, sift through the sections you’ve highlighted and choose five quotations that seem best suited to showcase or explain the novel as a whole. This could be compared to a film director choosing scenes from a movie to create a preview. Your quotations should be poignant and succinct, totaling between thirty and eighty words.

4) Of the five 30 to 80-word quotations, choose one that “speaks for the entire book.” Think of this as the book’s motto.

5) Now validate and explain your quotations in the following manner...

- In the first paragraph, explain how the quotation fits into the novel. Some *suggestions* include:
  - Explain how the quotation helps define or explain the main character’s needs, wants, shortcomings, or conflicts.
  - Explain how the quote relates to the novel’s plot by intensifying the action, foreshadowing, or creating suspense.
  - Explain how the quote gives significant details to the book’s setting, either the time period or the physical location.
  - Explain how the quotation connects to the overall theme, or core message or idea, of the book.
- In the second paragraph, explain why the quotation was of particular interest to YOU as the reader. Some *suggestions* include...
  - Compare or contrast the struggles or situation of the novel’s characters with people you know or struggles you’ve encountered yourself.
  - Relate the quotation to another movie, book, or historical or contemporary event.
  - Explain how you agree or disagree with the idea or content of the quotation, ensuring you’ve explained yourself.

6) For the final quotation, validate why and explain how it is a fitting meaning, motto, or message for the entire book in more well-explained, yet succinct paragraph.

Other assignment guidelines:

- Please type work, using Times New Roman 12-point font and 1” margins.
- Your entire paper should total between 700 and 1,000 words. This includes quotations and the bibliography. All quotations must be accompanied by a parenthetical citation. This includes the author’s last name as well as the quote’s page number, like this: (Francee 220). Note it is not necessary to write “page” or “pg.” You must also write a bibliography. Please refer to the example accompanying this assignment description.
- Part of being an “Honors” student is demonstrating good study-habits and organization. For whatever reason, if you’ve not submitted your assignment by August 1<sup>st</sup>, you will not be allowed to take English 9 Honors.

Jodi Francis

English 9 Honors

Summer Assignment

15 May 2012

1) **Quote of the book:** “Suddenly, it is as if they [my mother and my two nieces] were the most important things in the whole world to me, as if losing them would stop time and shatter everything.

“And then I realize this: they are and it would” (Bakopoulos 26).

Ironically, to me, the “quote of the book” occurs at the beginning rather than the end of the novel. Throughout the entire book the main character Zeke not only searches for the reason of others’ unhappiness, but also his own. In these lines, he voices his life’s meaning: loving and being near his family. Zeke struggles throughout the book to meet a woman he can marry so that he can have full-custody of his two nieces, a clause outlined in the will of his mother, the main care-giver of the girls who is dying of cancer. In the end, Zeke does not receive full-custody of the girls, but displaces his entire life to be near them, because they –family- are his reason for living.

2) “Instead, a good Facebook status reminds your network, and yourself, that you are sitting alone somewhere, full of yearning, that you have a desire that needs meeting or a wave of nostalgia that needs revealing or an unspoken sorrow that needs an indirect catharsis” (Bakopoulos 179).

Zeke is an adult Facebook nut. He loves to post on Facebook and later boasts of his many friends; however, his love of Facebook and his explanation here of what makes for an ideal status-update reveal a lot about his character: His friendships aren’t developed beyond small interests and Internet convenience. It’s actually very fitting that despite its tackiness that his estranged wife, who basically faked her death to leave him, “friends” him on Facebook to make amends but also receive the proper paperwork necessary to remarry.

Many people use Facebook like Zeke: they constantly post pithy yet obfuscated updates and have a million “friends.” However, this does not mean they live satisfying lives outside their virtual lives. They could be just as lonely and frustrated as Zeke.

3) “I feel feverish and thin, like a Dostoyevsky character who has committed a heinous transgression, and who awakes the next morning, finally feeling the full weight of his predicament” (191).

This quotation connects to the plot of the book. About mid-way through the story, things begin to unravel for Zeke. He’s not doing well with women, his mother is dying, he is about to lose custody of his nieces who are like his own kids, and he is about to lose his job. Nevertheless, the reader can’t help but blame Zeke himself for his awful situation, because he makes one bad call after another.

I think Zeke feels the same way you do the morning following a horrible fight with a friend. As dread and regret suffuse themselves through your veins, every movement seems hard, the day ahead a battle.

4) “The artistic sensibility in the nation became wholly self-referential- the story of *my* life is what matters, not the well-crafted and distilled art of memoir, nor the carefully compiled story (and analysis) of the lives (and problems) of others- but the story of what I am feeling, right now, right this minute” (Bakopoulos 251).

This quotation helps show Zeke’s epiphany, which leads him to detaching himself from his former life, which was neither fulfilling nor happy. One might argue that he had to leave that life anyway since it was inevitably ending anyway, but it seemed to me that Zeke was fully capable of maintaining whatever delusional fantasy was necessary in order to pursue his dream of what he would call “Norman Rockwell Domestic Bliss.”

It’s easy to become obsessed in what others are doing, like the “popular” or “unpopular” kids at school, but one’s own life ought to be the more important. After all, it is the life over which you have the ability to exert the most control.

5) “Of course, it is hard to stop fantasies once they begin, isn’t it? There is nothing wrong with the richness of this fantasy life. I am convinced of that: it is always so much more rewarding than reality” (270).

Zeke’s fantasies permeate the entire novel. The fantasies are realistic in that they mostly involve his implementation of garnering a wife, children, and a happy home, but considering the other characters and Zeke’s situation, his fantasies might as well be dreams of extraterrestrial living or money trees.

To a certain extent, I can agree with Zeke that fantasies are nice to have, but once a person begins to confuse them with reality or the day-dreamer loses sight of his own goal, these fantasies are no longer benign thoughts. Also, how can someone say that fantasies are better than real-life when they, like Zeke, are so out of touch with reality?

## Work Cited

Bakopoulos, Dean. *My American Unhappiness*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2011. Print.

*(The above is a bibliography. Write yours like mine following the below format and the above example.)*

*Author's last name, first name. Title of Book. City of Publication (If there are multiple, list the first city listed):*

*Publisher, Copyright Date (List the most recent date if there are multiple.). Medium (mostly print for books).*