

Westlake High School

Mt. Pleasant Central School District

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Dear Rising Seniors,

Welcome to English 12 Honors! I am thrilled that you have chosen to challenge yourself in English during your senior year. It's an absolute pleasure to be teaching many of you again, and I look forward to meeting those of you who I have not taught or gotten to know over the past four years.

I will ask you to read two books over the summer, and the assignment for each book is explained below. Because of school closures, I will not be able to distribute the books, so you will need to either buy your own copies or rent them through your local library. Please be aware, however, that you will need the books during the first few weeks of class.

Book #1: ***The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls (memoir)**

"The Glass Castle is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant" (from Amazon.com).

Walls' memoir is well-known for both its incredible story and impeccable craft. In the first month of school, we will study narrative techniques and use Walls' text - in addition to others - as a mentor text for our own college essays.

As you read the book, read and think like a writer. Highlight and mark up beautifully written passages, interesting stories, figurative language, and think about how you can apply these techniques to your own writing. Writing about yourself can be awkward, possibly unfamiliar and, therefore, hard, so I'm asking you to learn from the greats.

Book #2: ***Atomic Habits* by James Clear (non-fiction)**

"No matter your goals, Atomic Habits offers a proven framework for improving--every day. James Clear, one of the world's leading experts on habit formation, reveals practical strategies that will teach you exactly how to form good habits, break bad ones, and master the tiny behaviors that lead to remarkable results" (from Amazon.com).

Clear's book that "draws on...biology, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, and more" (9) might seem like an odd pick for an English class, but we will examine the author's ideas through the lens of one of our essential questions: ***How can I hone the skills necessary for success in college and beyond?***

Grab a new notebook with multiple sections before you start reading - this will serve as your notebook for my class. Label one section "Lessons Learned" and start a new page titled "Summer Reading - Atomic Habits". Create a 1 to 2 page "spread" of your thinking that lists a minimum of 10 lessons learned from this book. Think about pulling quotes from the text and briefly responding to how these ideas will serve you well during your senior year and in college. You can organize this work as you see fit, just make sure it's legible.

These assignments are due on the first day of class. I may or may not collect your notebooks on the first day and grade the Lessons Learned "spread" from *Atomic Habits*. You should expect to be asked to write on-demand about and/or discuss both of these books in detail within the first week of class, which is why you need to hang onto them.

Also, please be aware that we spend a significant amount of September workshopping the college essay in class. I know some of you might be coming in with a draft; historically, I have found that many students end up writing several college essays, so be prepared to start a new one.

Please feel free to email me with any questions about the assignment or the class. I will do my best to respond in a timely manner. Again, I look forward to (hopefully) seeing you all in September!

Mr. D'Ippolito