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### **English III Essential Questions.**

How do you balance the needs of the individual and the needs of society?

What does it mean to be American? How do you define the American identity?

**English III Course Description.** This course focuses on the variety of American themes and ideas presented in the novels, plays, essays, poetry, and short stories of major American writers. Emphasis is placed on the understanding of literature and on the use of language, both oral and written, as a means of communication. This course further develops composition and rhetorical skills, research skills, critical thinking, vocabulary, and study skills.

Hello parents of English III students,

In addition to the whole class novel experience, our students will be reading independent throughout our study of American Literature. This is inspired by the reader's workshop approach, advocated by many prominent English teachers such as Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher, and implemented by some of our very own English II teachers last year at PCH. The success they witnessed in student reading rate, engagement, and learning was extraordinary. (This is where I need to give credit to Mrs. Nora Biggs and Mrs. Andrea Anderson, the true authors of this letter.) The workshop approach is also being implemented in the classrooms of several other English III teachers this year. (And once again I must acknowledge Mrs. Mattie Rudolph with whom Ms. Campanella and I collaborate.)

My hope is that we can work together to recapture the pleasure and passion of reading and apply it to a scholarly examination of American literature. In addition to our work with class texts and supplementary articles, students in our class will participate in an independent choice reading unit. The students will be expected to continuously read one or more books of their own choosing during our independent reading unit. The only requirement will be that the books are written by an American author or on a topic specific to American history or culture.

This four-week unit will coincide with our in-class reading of *The Scarlet Letter* as a mentor and whole-class text. We will have some time in class for silent reading; however, students will need to read outside of class as well. The number of pages each student is expected to read each week is an individualized number based on the student's comfortable pace for that specific text.

Here are a few of the reasons we are blending the reader's workshop model with the traditional classroom model in English III:

- America was founded on the ideals of freedom of speech, religion, and the press. That means students will come across experiences outside of the classroom that will challenge their perspectives, values, and experiences. One of the benefits of a public education is the opportunity for students to read, write, research, debate, and confront those challenges in the safety of their learning community. Developing the skills to listen, understand, critique, and communicate effectively and civilly are essential to their being informed, engaged, and constructive citizens in our democracy.
- Reading relieves stress. High school is stressful. Many would argue that junior year is the most stressful of all four. Reading takes you out of the present and into another place and time; it is the perfect escape.

- Reading builds stamina to prepare students for college. Reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college.
- There is a lot of talk in the media that ‘students today won’t read,’ but I believe students substitute all of those other distractions (the internet, TV, etc.) if they feel no passion for the book assigned to them.
- It is important that students still read and be exposed to ‘classic’ literature written by talented authors whose works have stood the test of time. We will begin reading *The Scarlet Letter* together during class to engage students in guided practice with a common text before practicing reading skills and applying course concepts independently in their reading at home.

For the majority of the semester, students will explore sections of the traditional texts of American Literature. Some of these we will read in their entirety; in some, we will explore specific passages and encourage students to read further based on their interest level. But it is essential that students find American authors and books that truly inspire them to become life-long readers, as well as to give full exposure to the diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences that make up American literature.

The best books challenge our beliefs by helping us see through different eyes—to live a different life. Reading also allows us to confront our worst fears and live through them. I won’t know the details of every book students read and refer to independently this semester, and I won’t remember the details of every book I recommend to students. What I seek for all of my students, however, is a compulsion to read—for pleasure—for knowledge—for a passion for story or information that will keep them into the pages of a book past our assigned time for reading.

Some of the books they choose might challenge your values. Is that okay with you? Can your child choose to read *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins, which delves into a teenager’s drug addiction? You may pick up a book left behind on a nightstand and open to a passage with details that shock or surprise you and wonder why reading it is a homework assignment, and I will answer, “Your son or daughter chose it.” I might have recommended it because I read it and loved it, or the book may be unfamiliar to me because your child borrowed it from another student.

The bottom line: I hope you will talk to your child about what he/she is reading this semester. I also suggest you get a copy of a book and read it if you’re concerned about the content. Also, if you want to know more about a book your child is reading, please try the School Library Journal web site, the American Library Association web site, or even Amazon.com. Or call me—I’ll tell you what I know.

Because I respect your role as parents and the traditions you hold sacred, if you want me to more closely monitor your child’s independent reading choice(s) this semester, by all means, call me and we’ll work out a plan to which we can both contribute.

Below, I am asking for all parents to sign this letter acknowledging that you understand books won’t be banned in my classroom and your child will be allowed to choose what he/she reads.

Thank you for your support,

Mrs. Laura A. Michael  
English Department  
Parkway Central High School

## Course Syllabus

*“The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.”*

– Albert Einstein

**Reading.** Students begin the course first semester by reading Native American literature and writings from Puritan settlers; at the end of second semester, the course will conclude in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as we explore the American Dream. In keeping with the “mixing pot” metaphor that characterized America’s settlement, the authors we read will vary in background, voice, and style in order to give full flavor to the American identity.

1<sup>st</sup> semester core texts: *The Scarlet Letter; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

2<sup>nd</sup> semester core texts: *The Great Gatsby; Death of a Salesman*

2<sup>nd</sup> semester book club texts: *A Walk in the Woods, The Awakening, Between the World and Me, Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Fences, The Last American Man, Peace Like a River, The Road, Wild, Catcher in the Rye*

**Writing.** Although this is not a formal “composition” course, writing will be an integral part of the course used to explore literary topics and develop students’ voices. Students will evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as writers. Through writing they will express opinions, develop the capacity to think critically, and become careful, thorough researchers. Second semester includes a Research Paper unit. Vocabulary and grammar instruction is also part of the daily curriculum. Since we strive to ensure students get timely feedback on their writing and they will receive frequent feedback throughout the writing process, final drafts will include only a rubric and minimal comments. Students should read and apply that feedback as needed.

### Grading.

|   |       |                                  |
|---|-------|----------------------------------|
| General Work (chapter leaders; reading & skill checks; projects; misc.) | = 20% | *Extra Credit is seldom offered. |
| Writing (grammar checks; drafting; essays; creative writing)            | = 40% |                                  |
| Assessment (quizzes; tests; vocabulary tests)                           | = 30% |                                  |
| Final Exam  | = 10% |                                  |

|                       |          |          |          |               |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| <b>Grading Scale.</b> | B+ 87-89 | C+ 77-79 | D+ 67-69 | F 59 or below |
| A 93-100              | B 83-86  | C 73-76  | D 63-66  |               |
| A- 90-92              | B- 80-82 | C- 70-72 | D- 60-62 |               |

**MLA.** All written assignments should be typed using Times New Roman, 12 point font. Modern Language Association (MLA) style and documentation rules are to be followed.

**Materials.** A three-ring binder with looseleaf paper to keep track of all notes and readings; a pen; a pencil.

**Technology.** Technology is an incredible tool that should be utilized and integrated in the classroom. However, cell phones and personal electronics often distract learners from interpersonal interactions required to be proficient communicators of both the spoken and written word. These devices should NOT be visible or used once students walk in the classroom. Students are welcome to take notes or draft on a personal chromebook or computer, but they are to be used only when the activities in class call for it. If a cell phone or other device is a distraction for the student, Mrs. Michael reserves the right to take it away until the end of the school day should a student not listen to given warnings. See page 13 in the Student Handbook for additional consequences.

**Email.** Parkway students are required to use their Parkway email account to contact teachers. Please keep emails formal and respectful, and remember email is rarely an acceptable substitute for speaking to or conferencing with Mrs. Michael in person. Keep in mind that I do not check my email from home after 4pm. In addition, students will create an account and are required to submit written work to Turnitin.com. This website is designed as a tool to ensure students properly give credit to others' ideas and words.

**Attendance.** Each student's presence is vital in order to fully develop skills and explore concepts during class discussion. I expect students to be in their seats and ready to begin class when the bell rings. After the first tardy or if a student is skipping class, a detention will be assigned (per Student Handbook pages 6-7). There are times when extenuating circumstances make it impossible to attend class. During such instances it is the student's responsibility to gather class notes from another student, to visit the google classroom, consult the attached calendar, or meet with Mrs. Michael to clarify what was missed and make up the work.

**Late Assignments.** Homework is due at the beginning of class. Late process work and skill checks will be taken until the end of a unit, but will not be accepted if a student skips a step in the writing process. Assignments and assessments cannot be completed for credit once the unit is complete. Late papers will be accepted up to two weeks late with an automatic grade-letter deduction (10%). After two weeks, the paper is a zero. *Extensions on essays WILL be granted IF process work has been completed.*

**English Department Standard of Academic Honesty and Turnitin.com.** Please review our shared teaching on Academic Integrity. This is the next page in this packet.

**General Classroom Behavior.**

It is my preference and request that food and drinks other than water are not brought into the classroom. I also prefer that students use the restroom during pass time. However, as juniors, we trust students to know what they need and speak to us directly should they need an exception. As long as the student handles the situation in line with our building's core values as outlined in the Colt Code, we will not have any issues. *Citizenship grades will be determined based on how well the student's behavior reflects the core values of Respect, Integrity, and Caring.* Please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Campanella and Ms. Michael with questions or seeking help.

**We want students in our classroom to be challenged academically but also to feel confident as they face those challenges. We look forward to a thoughtful and enjoyable year ahead!**

**Turn to the last page (front and back) to read and sign...**

*Please keep the Course Syllabus for future reference.  
Return this page, signed front and back, for the teacher’s records.*

I have read and understand the contents of this letter, as well as the course expectations and procedures. Parents/guardians: please also include contact information that would be best to reach you throughout the semester.

\_\_\_\_\_

Student’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian’s Signature

**Contact Information.**

Student Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have computer access at home? Please circle: YES / NO

Student Extracurricular Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health concerns or situations the teachers should be made aware in order to better teach your student (please do not disclose anything you do not feel comfortable with our knowing):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Return the signed syllabus and Academic Honesty policy by \_\_\_\_\_ for 5 points extra credit.*

*Students will be quizzed over the syllabus and Academic Honesty policy on \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Binder due date (complete with loose leaf): \_\_\_\_\_*