

Incoming 11th Grade AP/IB Required Summer Reading 2009

Bellaire High School

Incoming 11th Grade AP/IB English (total required reading: 2 books)

- All students must read *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich
- In addition, all students will choose ONE of the following:
Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte
The Return of the Native by Thomas Hardy

ASSIGNMENT

During the first week of school, students will write an in-class essay about *Nickel and Dimed*. Students also should expect a test or graded discussion over *Wuthering Heights* or *The Return of the Native* during the first week of school.

As students read *Nickel and Dimed* and their selected novel, they should underline and take notes on key passages in the texts. In addition, they are to maintain a Theme Journal (one for each book) that includes the following elements:

- TITLE
- AUTHOR
- GENRE (PLAY, NOVEL / NOVELLA, SHORT STORY)
- THEMES / MOTIFS / SYMBOLS
- NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES
- CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, FLASHBACKS, STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS, FRAME STORY, POINT OF VIEW(S)
- CHARACTER LIST—INCLUDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH. ALSO SUCH ITEMS AS AN INSIDER / OUTSIDER, OBSERVER / PARTICIPANT, FOIL, FLAT, ROUND
- PHYSICAL SETTING / ENVIRONMENT
- TIME PERIOD OF EVENTS
- TIME PERIOD WORK WAS WRITTEN
- TYPE(S) OF DICTION – HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW/VERNACULAR

Students are welcome to contact Mrs. Seward (lseward@houstonisd.org), Ms. Saucier (esaucier@houstonisd.org), or Ms. Quaite (cquaite@houstonisd.org) with any questions about the assignment.

All BHS required summer reading books are readily available at most major bookstores and on-line booksellers.

ABOUT the BOOKS:

***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte**

Wuthering Heights, first published in 1847, the year before the author's death at the age of thirty, endures today as perhaps the most powerful and intensely original novel in the English language. The epic story of Catherine and Heathcliff plays out against the dramatic backdrop of the wild English moors, and presents an astonishing metaphysical vision of fate and obsession, passion and revenge. "Only Emily Brontë," V. S. Pritchett said, "exposes her imagination to the dark spirit." And Virginia Woolf wrote, "Hers...is the rarest of all powers. She could free life from its dependence on facts...by speaking of the moor make the wind blow and the thunder roar." (from www.amazon.com)

***The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy**

One of Thomas Hardy's most powerful works, *The Return of the Native* centers famously on Egdon Heath, the wild, haunted Wessex moor that D. H. Lawrence called "the real stuff of tragedy." The heath's changing face mirrors the fortunes of the farmers, inn-keepers, sons, mothers, and lovers who populate the novel. The "native" is Clym Yeobright, who comes home from a cosmopolitan life in Paris. He; his cousin Thomasin; her fiancé, Damon Wildeve; and the willful Eustacia Vye are the protagonists in a tale of doomed love, passion, alienation, and melancholy as Hardy brilliantly explores that theme so familiar throughout his fiction: the diabolical role of chance in determining the course of a life. (from www.amazon.com)

***Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich**

Essayist and cultural critic Barbara Ehrenreich has always specialized in turning received wisdom on its head with intelligence, clarity, and verve. With some 12 million women being pushed into the labor market by welfare reform, she decided to do some good old-fashioned journalism and find out just how they were going to survive on the wages of the unskilled--at \$6 to \$7 an hour, only half of what is considered a living wage. So she did what millions of Americans do, she looked for a job and a place to live, worked that job, and tried to make ends meet.

As a waitress in Florida, where her name is suddenly transposed to "girl," trailer trash becomes a demographic category to aspire to with rent at \$675 per month. In Maine, where she ends up working as both a cleaning woman and a nursing home assistant, she must first fill out endless pre-employment tests with trick questions such as "Some people work better when they're a little bit high." In Minnesota, she works at Wal-Mart under the repressive surveillance of men and women whose job it is to monitor her behavior for signs of sloth, theft, drug abuse, or worse. She even gets to experience the humiliation of the urine test.

So, do the poor have survival strategies unknown to the middle class? And did Ehrenreich feel the "bracing psychological effects of getting out of the house, as promised by the wonks who brought us welfare reform?" Nah. Even in her best-case scenario, with all the advantages of education, health, a car, and money for first month's rent, she has to work two jobs, seven days a week, and still almost winds up in a shelter. As Ehrenreich points out with her potent combination of humor and outrage, the laws of supply and demand have been reversed. Rental prices skyrocket, but wages never rise. Rather, jobs are so cheap as measured by the pay that workers are encouraged to take as many as they can. Behind those trademark Wal-Mart vests, it turns out, are the borderline homeless. With her characteristic wry wit and her unabashedly liberal bent, Ehrenreich brings the invisible poor out of hiding and, in the process, the world they inhabit--where civil liberties are often ignored and hard work fails to live up to its reputation as the ticket out of poverty. (from www.amazon.com)