Dear Prospective Advanced Placement Student,

Welcome to the world of Advanced Placement English. This course is a tough one, designed to challenge you to become the best reader, writer, and speaker/presenter that you can be. To help you achieve this goal, you are being given the names of the two books you need to complete for your summer reading/writing assignment:

*The Odyssey* by Homer

*Unbroken* by Laura Hildebrand

Books are available from Miss Seiler in room 143 or from your guidance counselor. There is no version of *The Odyssey* that is necessarily the best. I would prefer that you read a version that is in its epic format, not prose. Also make sure it is the version with Odysseus not Ulysses. You will be required to have read both books and have a comparison paper completed upon your return to school in the fall. Here are some ideas to consider:

*The Odyssey* was composed at least 2,500 years ago and focuses on one man and his efforts to escape for home after displeasing the gods at the end of the Trojan War. *Unbroken* is a true story about the challenges of Louis Zamperini. Both works include the main character taking on a role as a kind of leader to his men. Both works include a wide range of characters from many different levels of society. Both works include obstacles which the major characters must face, and both works show the changes in their characters from dealing with these obstacles.

Using some of the ideas above, you will need to find parallels between these two works, focusing on specific themes, symbolism, structure style, tone, or any other aspects which you perceive to be similar. From these similarities develop a thesis. Remember to provide a variety of quoted/cited support from both works as you are writing your paper. Provide deep, thoughtful and unique parallels. You want to show your ability to analyze texts at a deeper level than plot and characters. Knowing that you will need to think about this, you may want to keep a sheet of paper as a bookmark or use post-it notes to mark pages with potential quotes as you are reading. Don’t let this interfere with your enjoyment of the books though. These are two very compelling and human stories about lives touched by war.

Draw on your best writing skills to compose your paper. You will want to stress similarities and within those comparisons you may touch on differences within the context of comparisons. Think about the structure, style, diction, and syntax that the author uses more than on what the characters choose. You should have a style that is your own by this point in time, and at this level you should have a minimum of technical errors. Use an appropriate level of diction and syntax, but don’t go overboard trying to be impressive with big words. It’s more important that you clearly state your ideas and develop them in an effective way. As far as content goes, you should be helped by anything you have learned about ancient Greece and World War II. (You may want to review the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology to help your understanding of events in *The Odyssey*.) You will probably learn quite a few new concepts from reading these two works as well. Do not insert overly long quotations to create
length, but be sure to include a sufficient number of quotes from both works to support your ideas. You want to provide quality of writing not quantity.

If all of this sounds overwhelming, then you may want to reconsider your selection of AP English for next year. The course is challenging and calls for a strong work ethic, time, and effort. If you cannot provide this, you probably will not do well. On the other hand, if you are willing to give it a try, you will probably find yourself challenged and reading, writing, and speaking on a higher level than you ever expected.

Have an exceptionally good summer vacation! If you have questions during the summer, you should be able to reach me at the email address below. Otherwise I am looking forward to working with you in the fall. Enjoy your summer!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth J. Seiler
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