Dear Prospective Sophomore Honors Student,

Thank you for your interest in studying American literature and composition with us next year. We have a few questions for you that will help to determine whether you have registered for the appropriate class: Do you strive to be one of the best readers and writers in your class? Do you appreciate many genres of literature? Are you fascinated by authors’ diction and style? Are you interested in how authors enmesh themselves into the fabric of their works? Are you consistently diligent? Do you handle long-term assignments well? Do you feel comfortable discussing your own insights into literature with your peers? Are you willing to take a few creative risks? Are you enthusiastic about learning new material? If you can answer in the affirmative to all of these questions, welcome to honors! If, on the other hand, you’re shaking your head wondering what you’re doing, make an appointment with your guidance counselor to discuss your decision. If you prefer, see Mrs. Charleston or Mrs. Sanchez; we’ll be happy to speak with you.

Your summer assignment will be to choose a fictional text (classic or contemporary) written by an American author, since this is an American literature class. Please feel free to use your own personal copy of the book if you choose to highlight passages or make notes in the margins as you read. The work of literature you choose is a required reading project for this summer. In addition to the reading, you are also to prepare a five-paragraph essay. You will probably want to take notes as you read prior to attempting to compose your work. We have included directions for the preparation of your composition.

Please DO NOT choose the following books:

- Of Mice and Men - Steinbeck
- The Crucible - Miller
- To Kill a Mockingbird - Lee
- The Great Gatsby - Fitzgerald
THE ESSAY: The Biographical Metaphor

To explore the use of metaphorical language in writing, and to illustrate the difference between simile and metaphor, your assignment will be a character study or biographical metaphor. In a metaphor, you will illustrate the single most important characteristic of a character.

Here are a few preliminary steps to get you started:

Step 1: Select any character from the novel and choose a single adjective that fits the dominant trait of that person.

Step 2: Explain what you mean by the adjective.

Step 3: Create an analogy which represents the trait.

Step 4: Combine the analogy and the adjective to form a guiding statement or control sentence.

Step 5: Shift the “as if” of the analogy, the simile, to the “as being” of metaphor.

Here is an example to illustrate the process. (Please note that we have not chosen any characters from the novel; we don’t want to steal anyone’s thunder!)

Step 1: Robert Oppenheimer (“father” of the atomic bomb)—impulsive

Step 2: Oppenheimer seems to act before he thinks of the consequences of his actions.

Step 3: Like a cat chasing its prey up a tree but unable to get back down

Step 4: Like a cat chasing its prey up a tree but unable to get back down, Robert Oppenheimer is an impulsive creature.

Step 5: Robert Oppenheimer is a cat chasing its prey up a tree but unable to get back down. This is your thesis statement.

See how it’s done? Remember, your subject will be a character from your novel. The more unusual your comparison, the more impressed we’ll be, so long as your reasons are logical. Please avoid cliché comparisons, such as comparing a character to a rose, because these ideas are trite; yours will be original.

Now that you have your preliminary steps complete, you’re ready to begin writing.
DIRECTIONS FOR YOUR ESSAY:

Prepare a five paragraph essay based on the assignment above. Your final copy should be a reflection of your best effort. You will submit at least one rough draft (with obvious and extensive revisions) and your final copy on the first day of school this fall. This assignment will be worth 100 points.

Introduction: Use the “inverted triangle” method. This means that you begin with a statement relevant to the subject of your essay. The next sentence needs to incorporate the name of the author, the title of the work, and a relevant idea that begins to narrow toward your thesis sentence. You may want to include another sentence or two that allude to the points to be discussed in the paper. (Please note, however, that you are not to make any references to yourself or to your paper. In other words, do not write, “In the following paragraphs I will discuss…” or anything of that nature. Avoid using first person.) The last sentence in your introduction will be your thesis sentence or control statement (your biographical metaphor). This is the most important sentence in your paper, as each discussion you present is based upon it.

Body Paragraphs: Each body paragraph must begin with a solid topic sentence. Each topic sentence should suggest “proof” of your thesis. For this essay, each topic sentence will be a different aspect of the comparison you will make between your character and whatever object to which you are comparing him or her. (Think: the first way Rose of Sharon is a tube of mint toothpaste is…the second way…the third way, etc. Keep in mind that you should certainly be a bit more subtle than this in your topic sentences, but it may make sense to jot it down this way first in your rough draft.) After your topic sentence, support it with specifics from the novel. You should use direct quotes from the novel, but do not use quotes that are not integrated into a sentence of yours. In other words, quotes should never “stand alone.” For example,

WRONG: “They watched hungrily the unwrapping of the sandwiches, and their hunger-sharpened noses smelled the pickle, cheese, and Spam” (Steinbeck 183).

CORRECT: Just as the dog waits patiently for his master to grant him a morsel of food, the children “watched hungrily the unwrapping of the sandwiches, and their hunger-sharpened noses smelled the pickle, cheese, and Spam” (Steinbeck 183).

Document the quote in MLA (Modern Language Association) style the following way: (Steinbeck 183). Note that you are simply providing the author’s last name and a page number—no mark of punctuation in between.

You must incorporate at least one but no more than three quotes per body paragraph, but you must take the necessary time to explain to the reader the significance of each quote and to prove that it reinforces your thesis. In other words, be certain to discuss the quotes you choose rather than jumping to the next idea. After you have given examples and analyzed them, provide a statement that brings the paragraph to a close. In any case, don’t inundate your paper with quotes. Use them to enhance your paper, not as a substitute for your writing.
Make sure that you **reference your metaphor throughout the body** of your essay. All of your details (quotes included) should connect back to your metaphor. If you simply state your metaphor in the thesis and then do not connect back to it throughout your essay, you have lost focus.

**Conclusion:** In addition to developing your conclusion by restating your thesis, reviewing your main points, please generalize from the metaphor in one of three possible ways:

1. Dissimilarity: Focus on where the metaphor breaks down. Make your final statement dramatic; end with a rhetorical question. Example: The friendly fireman often rescues the cat, and everything is fine again. No one as yet, however, has been able to rescue the world from the frightening results of Oppenheimer’s ambition.

2. Prediction: Make a prediction that evolves from the metaphor. Example: Unless scientists consider the consequences of their insistence on following knowledge wherever it may lead, they may well bring the world to devastation, not progress.

3. Resolution: Make a declarative statement that resolves the situation in the metaphor. Example: However frightening the venture, the teenager must risk the leap onto the dizzying carousel. Those who wish to grow must take chances.

**Work(s) Cited:** Because you should be including quotes with citations in your essay, you must include a Work Cited page that includes a correct citation for your novel (as well as any other outside resources you cite in-text).

**Formatting:**
- Double-spaced
- 12 point font
- Times New Roman
- MLA heading and running header

*Should you have any questions on the reading or your composition this summer, please don’t hesitate to contact us via e-mail: kcharleston@ojrsd.com or esanchez@ojrsd.com.*

In the meantime, have a wonderful, safe summer. We look forward to working with each of you this fall! 😊

Mrs. Charleston, Mrs. Sanchez, and Mrs. Trupe
Editing and Revising Your Summer Assignment

**Step 1:** Print out a copy of your rough draft. Check all of the below items on the rough draft, and write all comments on the draft before editing the document. **You should be able to answer “Yes” to every question before you submit your final draft.**

1) Check your thesis--
   Is it a clear, concise metaphor, having followed the steps in the directions? YES NO

2) Does your thesis come at the end of your introduction? YES NO

3) Read all topic sentences. Are they arguable statements that help PROVE the thesis? YES NO

4) Do the details in your paragraphs all support and help prove your topic sentences? YES NO

5) Does each paragraph contain transitions that help subtly link ideas and connect your argument back to your thesis? YES NO

6) Do you subtly connect back to your metaphor throughout the essay? YES NO

7) Have you checked for and eliminated repetitive language and details? YES NO

8) Are all verbs written in present tense since you are analyzing a fictional text? YES NO

9) Are all quotations stylishly integrated into your own sentences? YES NO

10) Are all quotations cited correctly? (Author's last name and page number) YES NO

11) Have you eliminated all vague language? YES NO

12) Have you checked for spelling errors? YES NO

13) Does your paper effectively analyze your character of choice and the text through the use of the biographical metaphor? YES NO

**Step 2:** After reviewing this checklist and marking up your rough draft, make the changes in your electronic document. Read your paper a few more times, and then print your final draft!

**Step 3:** Hand in on the first day of school:

**Top:** Final draft (with Works Cited)

**Middle:** Rough draft with **visible and extensive revisions**

**Bottom:** This checklist