High School
English Composition/American Literature Syllabus

Instructor: Debbie Gibson
Phone: 678-603-1052 (This is the school number. Please leave a message.)
Email: degibson@thedinoffschool.com
Meetings: by appointment

Materials Needed:

- Black/Blue Ink Pens (These are the only colors that should be used to complete assignments submitted for grading.)
- Red Ink Pens (for editing)
- Pencils
- Loose Leaf Notebook Paper (No paper with ragged or cut-off edges)
- 3-ring Binder (preferably 2-inch)
- Composition Notebook for journals (not spiral bound)
- 3x5 note cards (You will use many of these during the year)
- Highlighters
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Dictionary/Thesaurus (Please buy a good one. You will use it often for both literature and writing)
- Flash Drive

Required books: Student Text – The Language of Literature (provided)

Novels:  
Their Eyes Were Watching God – Zora Neale Hurston (ISBN 9780060838676)  
Rifles for Watie – Harold Keith (provided)

Non-Fiction:  
Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America – Barbara Ehrenreich  
(ISBN 9780312626686)  
The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains – Nicholas Carr  
(ISBN 9780393339758)

Dramas:  
A Raisin in the Sun – Lorraine Hansberry (ISBN 9780679755333)  
Death of a Salesman – Arthur Miller (ISBN 9780822202905)  
The Crucible – Arthur Miller (in textbook)

Summer Reading:  
Animal Farm – George Orwell  
The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald

Please keep in mind these will be read during the course of the entire school year. We will also read a play by Shakespeare, to be determined later. Students will also select additional novels from a recommended list of required reading for advanced placement classes.
**Course Description:**

This course is designed to emphasize the grammar and composition skills that students have already obtained from previous English courses. This course also stresses the importance of effective writing, especially with organization and presentation of ideas. Students in this course are expected to engage in critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of literary pieces that gain complexity throughout the semester. Throughout the year, instruction will continue in composition, spelling and vocabulary.

**Literature**

Selections from the adopted text will be studied along with numerous poems, essays, nonfiction articles, short fiction, novels, and media texts. Class discussion of assigned readings will help the students generate ideas for their essays. Also, as part of the curriculum, students will create a poetry portfolio/notebook consisting of original as well as copied poems from American authors.

In order to provide students with reading that is “both wide and deep”, students will be provided with a list of selections compiled using a variety of sources with a strong emphasis on works suggested by the College Board. They range in age from early Greek drama to contemporary works. They also range in genre, ethnicity, and original language.

**Writing/Grammar** — Students will study and practice the modes of writing: narration, description, exposition, persuasion, and research based, including an assignment using proper MLA documentation. They will also continue to search for authentic voice, expand stylistic techniques, and refine grammatical and mechanical skills. Shorter written responses to prompts may also be assigned as well as quizzes on mechanics, usage and grammar.

**Vocabulary** — Content and SAT vocabulary will be studied, acquired, and applied throughout the year. Students will apply this vocabulary throughout their study of American literature.

**Class Management:**

Students are expected to have the appropriate materials, arrive promptly, and behave in a respectful manner towards teacher and fellow students. Continuous disruptive behavior will result in contact with the parents. Depending on the severity of an offense, detention, office referral, and possible suspension may be necessary.

Be punctual. Tardiness affects the whole group. Every third tardy will count as an absence. If you are not in your place when I take the roll, it is your responsibility to check with me at the end of class to make sure you were not marked absent. If you are late, you will not be allowed to make up missed quizzes or in-class assignments.

**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 – 89</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 – 79</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>65 – 69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>65 below</td>
<td>F</td>
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**Point Distribution:**

- **Major Grades** (tests, projects, compositions, notebook checks, etc.) 50%
- **Daily Grades** (bell ringers, homework, participation, class work) 30%
- **Nine week exams** 20%
A note about grading pieces of writing:

All writing assignments will be graded based on specific criteria, generally presented in the form of rubrics. These will be explained as we proceed through the year.

Grading Criteria:

Unit tests or major tests – after unit is completed – **Always on Wednesday**
Writing or composition assignments – at the teacher’s discretion
Pop quizzes – at the teacher’s discretion
Spelling/Vocabulary tests – **every** Wednesday
Homework – Monday – Thursday; at the teacher’s discretion
Project – 2nd and 4th nine weeks
Notebook checks – announced and unannounced

Non-task grading in 3 areas:
- Responsibility – homework, class work, following instructions
- Supplies – having all supplies at all times
- Behavior – both classroom and toward fellow students

***Non-task grading – all students begin with 100 and points will be deducted based on the severity of the offense (5 – 20 points).***

Privileges: Students receive privileges simply by maintaining 100 in all 3 non-task areas. These passes will take the place of your three lowest daily grades at the end of the nine-week period. (Major test or project grades will **not** be dropped.)

Academic Honesty

No plagiarism or any other forms of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this class. Any plagiarism will result in a grade of F, at least for the assignment. At the instructor’s discretion you may receive an F for the entire class. All school policies related to academic honesty apply.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas and the presentation of them as though they were entirely one’s own. Acts of plagiarism might include, but are not limited to:
- using words or ideas from a published source without proper documentation
- using the work of another student (e.g. copying homework, composition, or project)
- using excessive editing suggestions of another student, teacher, parent, or paid editor.

Absences and Make-Up Work

- All work must be made up in a timely manner with an **excused absence**. Failure to do so will result in a grade of “0” for the assignment(s).
- Any **unexcused** makeup work will be penalized by one letter grade.
- **It is the student’s responsibility** to copy the assignment for his/her class, complete the assignment(s), and turn them in. Credit will be given for make-up work according to published school policy.
- Students must also arrange a time to make up any excused missed tests and quizzes within 3 days after returning to school except in cases of extended absence. Make-ups must be scheduled with
the instructor in advance. Make-up tests and/or quizzes will only be given when appointments are initiated and made by the student. Furthermore, it is not the instructor’s responsibility to remind individuals what they need to make up. Students may meet with the instructor before school to make up missed tests and/or quizzes as long as they have made an appointment. ALL MAKE-UP WORK MUST BE COMPLETED TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE END OF THE SEMESTER.

Late Work:

Homework and daily assignments are due upon request as assigned; they will NOT be accepted late.

Guidelines for turning in assignments and tests:

When you have an assignment or test to turn in to me, you must first staple the pages in the upper left-hand corner if there is more than one page. Write your name, and date, in the proper spaces provided. If your assignment is on notebook paper, make sure the paper is loose leaf and not torn from a notebook. Do not rip it out of your binder either. Open the rings and remove it. I DO NOT want frilled edges.

Unit tests:

Once a unit has been covered, whether it is grammar or literature, a unit test will be given.

Spelling/Vocabulary Tests:

A new list of ten to twenty vocabulary words will be given to the students each Monday. Beginning the following Wednesday, there will be a spelling/vocabulary test using words. These will be two-part tests. The first part is multiple choice. Students will choose the correct spelling of the word given. For the second part, students must be able to use the words properly in context by writing a short story that uses all ten vocabulary words.

Summer Reading:

Students will be tested the first two weeks of school on the books they read over the summer. After the tests, the class will discuss the books in their entirety.

Guidelines for your 3-ring binder:

You must have one 3-ring binder for this class. This binder must stay clean and organized at all times! Do NOT draw or write on the binder covers. Place your name on the front inside cover and write the subject along the spine of the binder. The binder must be divided into the following six sections in this order: 1. Bell Ringers, 2. Grammar, 3. Literature, 4. Spelling/Vocabulary, 5. Composition, 6. Reading Log, and 7. Miscellaneous.

Under each section, material that I give you must be placed in order by date. Class work and homework for grammar and literature must be placed in order by date followed by the test that covers the material. You will receive a new list of spelling/vocabulary words each week. The quiz for the particular week’s words must follow immediately behind the list of words.

The composition section of your notebook is used for writing essays only. Nothing should be in that area except your rubric for essay writing and loose leaf paper.
The bell ringer section should have only loose leaf paper for daily bell ringer assignments. These must stay in order by date. If bell ringers are not in this section, they are considered missing, and I will not grade them.

Anything I give you that does not fit into one of the five previously mentioned sections must be placed in order by date under miscellaneous.

NEVER THROW ANYTHING AWAY!!! KEEP EVERYTHING! You will need it for notebook checks.

**Journals:**

You must have one composition (not spiral bound) notebook that will be left in the classroom for journal writing. Nothing is to be placed in the journal except journal entries.

**Communication**

*Students:* Feel free to contact me anytime. My email is degibson@thedinoffschool.com. You can chat with me (briefly) before or after class or arrange for a time to meet either before or after school.

*Parents:* Feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions you might have regarding your student's progress in my class. Please contact me through email if at all possible.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 12-23</th>
<th>2 Weeks</th>
<th><strong>Class Introduction</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General Classroom routines and expectation</td>
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<td>Writing process/Opinion Reaction Essays/Vocabulary</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Great Gatsby, Animal Farm</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>August 26-September 6</th>
<th>2 Weeks</th>
<th><strong>UNIT 1: Origins and Encounters</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative Writing, Language, and Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<th>September 9-13 October 11</th>
<th>4 Weeks</th>
<th><strong>UNIT 2: From Colony To Country</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persuasive Writing, Language and Vocabulary</td>
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<td><em>The Crucible</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>October 14-18</th>
<th>Fall Break No School</th>
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<tr>
<th>October 21- November 20</th>
<th>5 Weeks</th>
<th><strong>UNIT 3: The Spirit of Individualism</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short Story/Persuasive/Expository Writing, Language and Vocabulary</td>
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<td><em>The Scarlett Letter</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>November 22</th>
<th>Midterm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 25-29</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date Range</td>
<td>Unit Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2- January 10  (4 Weeks)</td>
<td>UNIT 4: Conflict and Expansion</td>
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<td>December 19-Jan 6</td>
<td>Holiday Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 13- February 14</td>
<td>UNIT 5: The Changing Face of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 17-21</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 24- March 21</td>
<td>UNIT 6: The Modern Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 24- May 2</td>
<td>UNIT 7: The War Abroad and Conflict at Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 21-25</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>May 5- 22</td>
<td>Unit 8: Shakespeare (to be decided by students)</td>
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<td>May 23</td>
<td>Teacher Work Day</td>
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<td>May 26</td>
<td>Memorial Day</td>
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<td>May 27</td>
<td>REVIEW</td>
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<td>May 28</td>
<td>REVIEW</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Finals Dinoff and McGhee</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Finals Ruff and Gibson</td>
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Please sign below to indicate that you have read this document in its entirety; then detach and return to me before August 14.

Signature of Student  
Date

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)  
Date

Parent/Guardian email address