

May 15, 2018

Dear Parents,

I look forward to working with your child next year in Honors English III. When planning curriculum, I keep the TN State Standards in mind. Although these standards are constantly being updated, a great emphasis is consistently placed on reading nonfiction and writing analytically. Another consideration involves my trying to choose reading assignments that provoke thought and that students will not absolutely loathe. This year we will be reading a nonfiction novel entitled, *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls.

Having grown up in Portland, TN, I realize we are fairly sheltered. Also, our young people do not encounter many individuals from varied cultures and backgrounds as a general rule. Most honors students are from stable homes with traditional values. As our students spread their wings and attend college, they will be surrounded by individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds with a wide variety of viewpoints. One of the concepts I emphasize throughout the semester is that each person is a product of what he/she has experienced. It is not my job to tell your children what they should or should not value; values are instilled by families and at home. I do, however, believe it is my responsibility to help students think and write analytically.

As students read this summer, they should be filling out the chart which accompanies this letter. They will be documenting experiences the author had which strongly affected them. Completing the chart as students read will make upcoming writing assignments much simpler. If the space provided is not sufficient, students may continue documenting on their own paper. The completed chart should be ready to turn in to me on the first day of school.

This novel is a memoir written by an individual who grew up in a less-than-ideal situation. Some of the people in each book use coarse language and have values quite different than others'. I make it clear to students that I do not condone the language or necessarily the values of these individuals, but I understand that these people are products of their circumstances. The author's childhood did affect the way she views the world, just as ours do. Although the author of this book could not change her circumstances when she was young, she was able to rise above her challenges and become successful. This book inspires, provokes thought, and generates discussion; however, the content is at times uncomfortable to read. Readers are given a glimpse into lives that are different from their own. My hope is that students will read, think for themselves, and analyze what contributed to this writer becoming a victor rather than a victim.

Sincerely,

Carrie Adkins

(Should you need to contact me, please send an e-mail to carrie.adkins@sumnerschools.org)