

## AMERICAN LITERATURE: The Pursuit of Happiness

Welcome to American Literature! Next school year, we will carefully examine the role that literary texts play in constructing American identity and shaping a cultural narrative. We will analyze texts across multiple genres, including fiction, poetry, non-fiction, and drama and trace various portrayals of class, gender, racial, and ethnic identities in these texts. In doing so, we'll consider how writers and characters define "happiness," how they pursue it, and how these experiences shape their identities as Americans.

**Your summer assignment is to read and annotate\* (take notes on) *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri.**

### Assignment Information:

We will have a **quiz on the second day of class**. On the quiz, you will **analyze short passages from the novel**. After we discuss the novel in more detail in class, **you will also write an essay**. In order to effectively prepare for these assessments, you should read actively, paying close attention to characterization, setting, plot, and any themes or ideas that come up throughout the novel. In order to effectively prepare for these assessments, **you should annotate your text as you read (by writing directly on the text or with post-it notes on the text)**. As you annotate, you are encouraged to mark any of the following elements and briefly jot down why you think it matters to the story:

- Key words/details/moments that develop a character (What do we learn about them through their physical appearance, words, actions, or inner thoughts?)
- An important shift or moment of growth for a character
- Key words/ details/moments that develop a relationship
- Key words/details/moments that develop a conflict/tension in the story
- Key plot points
- Descriptions about a particular setting or symbol and why it might be important to the story
- Connections you see to our larger topics for the year: American identity and the American Dream
- Thoughtful questions! Note areas that confuse you or need further consideration, so you remember to return to them after you've finished reading the book.

**Samples of your in-text annotations will be collected on the first day of class. The goal of this assignment is to practice active engagement with key moments of the text. For this reason, only handwritten annotations on the text (or on post-its on the text) will be accepted.**

Aside from your in-text annotations in the novel, you are also encouraged to create your own notes sheet. This will not be collected, but it will help you to prepare for the summer reading quiz. The format is totally up to you, but it would be helpful to keep track of the following:

- A character list (including a brief description of each character)
- The setting(s) for each chapter (time, place, season, or time of day)
- Major plot points for each chapter
- Unfamiliar words and their definitions

Additionally, please take time over the summer to review any grammar weak spots that were identified by your English teacher last year (e.g., commas, run-on sentences, fragments, etc.). I recommend the following websites:

Owl Purdue: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl\\_exercises/grammar\\_exercises/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl_exercises/grammar_exercises/index.html)

Grammar Bytes: <https://www.chompchomp.com/menu.htm>

Grammar Girl: <https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-quizzes>

#### **TO RECAP:**

**You will be assessed in three ways on your Summer Reading:**

- 1. Samples of your in-text annotations will be checked on the first day of class**
- 2. An in-class writing quiz on *The Namesake* on the second day of class**
- 3. An essay during the second week of classes**

If you have any questions about this assignment, please email Ms. Cutalo ([acutalo@stuartschool.org](mailto:acutalo@stuartschool.org))