Dear AP English Literature and Composition Students,

Welcome to AP English Literature and Composition! This summer you will read two of the foundational texts for the course: Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Each text is referred to regularly on the AP English Literature and Composition exam; in fact, *Crime and Punishment* has been referenced 17 times and *Invisible Man* has been referenced 29 times. Both texts are intellectually stimulating and challenging, and, at their time of publication (*Crime and Punishment* in 1866; *Invisible Man* in 1952), groundbreaking for content and style. Studied in college classes in various disciplines, ranging from philosophy to literature to psychology to political science (and beyond), both texts exert a profound influence on readers.

Successful completion of summer reading involves personal responsibility, intellectual curiosity, and determination to NOT procrastinate. Just start reading. The stories themselves will carry you along.

**STEP ONE:** Get yourself a copy of each book:

- *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

Ideally, you should have your own copy of each because you will want to mark them up, explore them, make them yours; and you will (it is my hope!) want to take them with you to college for further exploration and course work.

*Crime and Punishment* exists in several English translations, but the best version for high school students, I think, (Yes, this is debatable for a variety of reasons; feel free to delve into the controversy-many reviews and discussions on this topic exist) is the most recent translation (the paperback came out in early 2019) by Michael Katz, a professor at Middlebury College. I really like this version because the narrative is engaging and accessible, even for people who are not “up” on mid-nineteenth century Russian politics and history. Reading this version will allow you to enjoy the story for the story itself; we will go deeper into the social, political, and cultural foundations and philosophical implications of the novel itself in class.

And, *Invisible Man*, is fantastic. Just be sure you get Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and not Orson Welles’s *The Invisible Man* (Yes, unfortunately, that has happened).

**STEP TWO:** Make time to read:

- I suggest dividing each book up into quarters and read ¼ of each text over the course of a week. That way you will not be rushing.
- Read, actively and effectively (see Adler’s “How to Mark Up a Text”), noting the title’s significance, the effects created by the opening pages and scenes, the development of major and minor characters and their relationships with each other, the emergence of motifs and symbols, and the passages that contain beautiful or elevating or mesmerizing language as well as interesting concepts and ideas or plot changes or twists
- Also, consider the following essential questions:
● What is the role of the writer in society?
● How does literature function as a vehicle for social, political or cultural criticism and inspire change?
● What attributes make a text a “classic”?

I’m so happy you’ve chosen to join the AP English Literature and Composition class, and I look forward to our class in September. Enjoy your summer!

Sincerely,

Ms. Crofts
Summer Reading Assignment: *Crime and Punishment*

**Part I: Active Reading**

1. Choose ONE topic from the list below to track as you read.
2. Note pages/quotes. You can do this via sticky notes, marginalia, or on a Google Doc; figure out a note-taking process that works for you; one that you can use when you get to college.

**Topics:**
- Religion, including Biblical allusions
- Philosophy, including nihilism and rationalism
- Social Class Structure/Hierarchy
- Culture and Tradition (art, music, literature, architecture, food, hospitality, etc.)
- Politics (political and/or revolutionary movements, and international relations/influences)
- Gender roles/relations (role of women and men; positions of women and men)

**Part II: “Making Sense of the Whole” or Synthesis and Analysis**

The third (and final) essay on the AP English Literature and Composition is known as the “free choice” essay. It asks students to write a literary analysis in which they “examine a specific concept, issue, or element in a work of literary merit selected by the student” (“The Exam”). The following prompts are particularly applicable and fun to consider in relation to *Crime and Punishment*. Create a detailed (2-3 page minimum) outline, including quotes and analysis, for ONE of the following prompts. Your outline must state a thesis that answers the entire prompt.

1. Some of the most significant events in a novel are mental or psychological; for example: awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness or conscience. In a well-organized essay, describe how Dostoyevsky manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action.

2. A confidant is a character, often a friend or relative of the protagonist, whose role is to be present when the protagonist needs a sympathetic listener. Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the confidant can be as much “the reader’s friend as the protagonist’s.” However, the author sometimes uses this character for other purposes as well. Choose a confidant and write an essay in which you discuss the various ways this character functions in the work.

3. The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy endings: “The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting response from readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through moral development. By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events--a marriage or a last-minute rescue from death--but some kind of spiritual assessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death.” In a well written essay, identify the “spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation” evident in the ending and explain its significance to the work as a whole.
Summer Reading Assignment: *Invisible Man*

**Part I: Active Reading**

1. Choose ONE motif from the list below to track as you read.
2. Note pages/quotes. You can do this via sticky notes, marginalia, or on a Google Doc; figure out a note-taking process that works for you; one that you can use when you get to college.

Motifs:
- Dreams—such as the grandfather dream, the scene in the hospital, etc.
- Violence—such as the Battle Royal, the paint factory incident, the riot, etc.
- Paper—such as $100 bill, letters, notes, insurance forms, books, etc.
- Vision/Blindness, both figurative and literal, such as the blindfold in the battle royal, the fake eyeball, etc.
- Objects—such as lightbulbs, old leg shackle, optic white, briefcase
- Oratory—such as speeches, sermons, interviews, etc.
- Music—such as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, Louis Armstrong’s “What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?”
- Family—literal and “adopted”, depictions of family relationships, such as the Truebloods, the evicted couple
- Power—such as Monopolated Light and Power, electric rug, doctor’s power, etc.

**Part II: “Making Sense of the Whole” or Synthesis and Analysis**

*Invisible Man* and its motifs reflect Ellison’s interests, experiences, passions, and philosophies while critiquing race and gender relations in America in the post WWII era. It also comments upon the American Dream through its protagonist’s quest to achieve it by underscoring the challenges the African-American protagonist confronts in his journey from naivete to knowledge. The motifs help bind the narrative into a coherent whole and assist in building the themes.

For your chosen motif write a well-organized and detailed expository paragraph explaining the significance of the motif in relation to the overall meaning of *Invisible Man*. In other words, analyze the motif and explain how the different examples of your motif underscore one or more of the novel’s overall themes or concerns.