

## Senior Literature Honours Summer Reading Essay

ONE'S-SELF I sing—a simple, separate Person;  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-masse*.

Of Physiology from top to toe I sing;  
Not physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is worthy for the muse—I say the Form complete  
is worthier far;  
The Female equally with the male I sing.

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Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful—for freest action form'd, under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.

-Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1867)

### Objective

Throughout world literature, from the earliest ancient epic poems to the most complex postmodern works, an individual's journey to self-realisation has been one of the most common and beloved themes. As seniors entering into the final year of your high-school experience, you are also called, using the experiences of hundreds of others who have preceded you throughout the millennia of human existence, to reflect on the various experiences that have made you into the young adults that you currently are and to ponder the future actions and attitudes that you must embrace to transform yourselves into the persons that you wish to become. This type of self-reflection lies at the heart of all human activity, regardless of culture or creed and it will form the central core around which this Senior Literature Honours course has been designed.

### Requirements

- Students will read the following works:
  - Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
  - Thomas C. Foster, *How to Read Literature like a Professor*
  - Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
  - Kathryn Stockett, *The Help*
- In a well-organised and thoroughly-substantiated essay, students will answer the following questions using *all* of the assigned sources:
  - Each of these works relates the story of a protagonist who has to overcome various obstacles while gaining greater self-awareness in the process. Compare these various paths of self-actualisation depicted in the above works. In what ways are the protagonists' stories similar and in what ways do they differ?
  - In what ways does each author define individual self-actualisation and is this self-actualisation dependent upon the protagonists' race, gender, ethnicity and/or religion, or is there some universal archetype of self-actualisation that is common to all people?

- What different literary devices does each author employ to advance the work's overall themes? How does the use of these devices enhance the impact of the author's message?

Deadline:

- Essays are due on Wednesday, August 29<sup>th</sup> at the beginning of Senior Literature Honours class.

Reminders:

- The three questions above serve as specific prompts for **one** cohesive essay. Students should integrate these three prompts into one argument that will be substantiated by an adequate amount of textual evidence.
- As with all formal writing in this course, be sure to cite all outside information according to the guidelines contained in the *MLA Handbook*. Final drafts that do not contain correct source citations will not be accepted.
- Students are greatly encouraged to use their instructor as a guide in the development of their essays. The intellectual life is not a soliloquy, but a conversation among thoughtful individuals. There is nothing wrong with asking for advice on an outline or counsel on sections of a draft. Timely questions on specific issues are the best antidote to confusion. Do not wait until problems accumulate before asking for help.