

**11th Grade American Literature
Summer Reading Assignment
2019- 2020**

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Over the summer, you will be responsible for **purchasing and reading** *Fences* by August Wilson, an American play that deals with a working class family in the 1950s and the decline of the American Dream. Literary analysis is a major component of 11th grade American Literature. Therefore, it is imperative that you spend quality time interacting with the text (engaged reading/questioning the text, reflecting, etc.).

Please obtain a copy of *Fences* immediately, as you may have difficulty finding it at the last minute. An electronic copy is not sufficient. You must buy your own copy of the play. Read this document thoroughly and email an 11th grade Language Arts teacher if you have any questions or if you cannot find and/or purchase the novel by June 30th, 2018.

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What is the American Dream?

James Truslow Adams, in his book *The Epic of America*, which was written in 1931, stated that the American dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a dream that... too many of us have grown weary and mistrustful of. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position" (Adams 214).

Likewise, the authors of the United States' Declaration of Independence held certain truths to be self-evident: that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. This sentiment could be considered the foundation of the American Dream.

Some say that the American Dream has become the pursuit of material prosperity - that people work more hours to get bigger cars, fancier homes, the fruits of prosperity for their families - but have less time to enjoy their prosperity. Others say that the American Dream is beyond the grasp of the working poor who must work two jobs to insure their family's survival. Yet others look toward a new American Dream with less focus on financial gain and more emphasis on living a simple, fulfilling life.

As you read *Fences*, consider how the characters' beliefs and actions are affected by the American Dream.

Recommended Annotations: The expectation is that you will make notes in your text as you're reading. You will annotate directly on the pages of your book. The purpose of annotation is to slow down your reading and to help you to interact with the text. Studying literature is about more than reading the words: it's considering the effect the text has on you, the reader, the way the author created that effect, and the way the text acts as a link between different societies and time periods. Annotating *will* slow down your pace of reading; if this is bothersome, read the scene and then go back to review and annotate. Otherwise,

- a. Comment on actions or development of a character, including significant changes in behavior, attitudes, or beliefs
- b. Developments in the plot—you may also make predictions and ask questions of the plot and characters
- c. Anything that intrigues, impresses, amuses, shocks, puzzles, disturbs, repulses, aggravates, etc.
- d. Connect ideas to each other or to other texts
- e. Note anything you would like to discuss or that you don't understand
- f. The author's use of technique and the significance, or effect, of that technique. This may include but is not limited to: tone, mood, imagery, irony, symbols, metaphors, diction, syntax, etc.

This video helps explain the art of annotation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrIUkc5hPzs>

Assessment: You will have a major assessment on *Fences* within the first week of school. You are also expected to bring your novel with you on the first day of class.

