

Honors English 2: Journalism
Naperville North Communication Arts Department
Summer reading assignment and expectations

“Don’t tell me what I already know -- tell me what I don’t know.”

-- anonymous grumpy editor

Welcome to Honors English 2: Journalism! You have chosen an exciting alternative to a traditional English 2 course. Although you will learn the same skills as your classmates in English 2, this course will present them through the lens of journalism. Whether you hope to write for a school publication or pursue a career in a journalism or another field, the discipline of journalism focuses on real-world skills you can apply to your academic and professional life. You’ll learn to write for an authentic audience, how to conduct real-world research, how to focus on facts and accuracy, and how to communicate in a way that will inform and interest others.

You will learn to be clear about what you don’t know, what you do know, and whether you actually have command of the ideas you’re communicating.

In a world where anyone can publish “stories” and “report news” online, it is more important than ever to learn how to detect and produce journalism with integrity and accuracy. Journalism is a fast-paced, exciting and quickly-evolving field, but its core principles have not changed much. It is still a career path for those who believe that the truth must be made available to people and that **everyone has a story worth telling**. We want to begin that storytelling journey right away!

Best-selling author Stephen King, in his memoir *On Writing*, said that “if you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.” Honors English 2: Journalism will be filled with rich and challenging reading and writing experiences.

As preparation for the fall semester, you will be expected to read one book and arrive to class on the first day of the semester with a completed assignment. The opening days of the semester in the fall will address the work you did to prepare yourself.

If you should have any questions while working on your assignment, you can contact me at mmartin@naperville203.org. Please understand that a response might take a few days due to my summer schedule. I look forward to meeting you and helping you to become a stronger writer and student.

1. READING ASSIGNMENT

To prepare yourself for Honors English 2: Journalism, you will need to acquire a copy of *The Fiddler in the Subway* by Gene Weingarten. Unless circumstances prevent it, you should purchase your own copy of the book because you will be expected to annotate while reading it. At this writing, the book retails for \$10.20 on Amazon. Search for the following ISBN: 1439181594. Another edition will work fine. Gently used is fine.

Read ALL the stories in the book. Everyone is a gem. Weingarten writes with great skill and empathy. He has won not one, but two, Pulitzer Prizes. The Pulitzer (Pull-it-sir) is generally considered the highest award in the profession.

2. Quick Annotation (Headline Annotations) Assignment!

Pick the one or two most important or moving points on *approximately* every OTHER page. Write a two- to three-word “headline” at the bottom or top of every other page (but be consistent). Put a mark next to the text from the spot on the page that prompted your headline. Thus, you should be able to read the headline – quickly – then be able to find supporting evidence – quickly. For example, I marked nothing on page 182. On page 183, I’ve marked a sentence I like. Weingarten is describing the effects of a terrorist attack. At the top of the page, I wrote “Candles and Closure.” I put a small + sign next to the last sentence of the penultimate paragraph because I loved the phrase “a small furnace of grief.” I put a second + next to the final sentence of the page because 1) It highlighted the idea of the theme of the entire page and 2) the detail about candles was a great example of the reporting Weingarten does and 3) it’s a wonderfully written sentence.

3. Sentences ASSIGNMENT

Once you have carefully read and annotated *The Fiddler in The Subway*, I want you to make a list of your five favorite sentences in the book. This will be tough. There are a lot of them. Nonetheless, make a list based on the criteria below. Under each sentence (quote it completely and include the page number), write a short defense of your selection.

1. Clarity of thought
2. Structure and syntax
3. Empathy for subject/truthful/surprising

*****IMPORTANT!*****

Bring your annotated text and typed response to the first day of class! You will need them for both class discussion and related assignments during the first week of school. Failure to read may result in a loss of points not only for this assignment, but for any activities or quizzes related to the readings that take place at the start of the school year.

In addition, I strongly suggest you subscribe to a daily news email services this summer such as *The New York Times* “Morning Briefing.” Read it regularly. Look up words and concepts you don’t understand. You aren’t required to read the hyperlinked articles or subscribe to the NYT. This is not a required assignment, but it will aid you greatly in preparing for class. I strongly urge you to check in with this year’s sophomores and ask them if reading “The Morning Briefing” this summer will help you, or if you can completely get away with not doing it. *Follow their advice.* Have a wonderful and fruitful summer!

Mitch Martin

Communication Arts teacher and faculty adviser to *The North Star*

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3) **Sentences ASSIGNMENT**

Once you have carefully read and annotated *The Fiddler in The Subway*, I want you to make a list of the five best sentences in the book. This will be tough. There are a lot of them. Nonetheless, make a list based on the criteria below. Under each sentence (quote it completely and include the page number), write a short defense of your selection.

- 1) Clarity of thought
- 2) Structure and syntax
- 3) Empathy for subject/truthful/surprising

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