

Dear Honors English II Student:

Welcome! I look forward to meeting all of you and getting to know you better throughout our year together in Honors English II.

This summer, we will read one novel: Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, which is a compelling coming-of-age novel set in New York during the early 1900s. Smith's novel illustrates the plight of Irish immigrants in the city's poorest neighborhoods.

The following assignments are due in class **at the beginning of the school year**. My biggest priority for you, however, is that you simply enjoy the book and let the story carry you. Please focus on that and let the assignments be a support to your reading rather than a source of distraction or worry. Feel free to email me (auburnsheaffer@grcatholiccentral.org) with questions or quandaries in the reading and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. I check my e-mail about once a week in the summer.

Make a new folder in your Google Drive to contain your notes, vocabulary, and written work so all of it will be easily accessible in class. Do enjoy your summer. See you in August.

Dr. Sheaffer

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn

Before you read:

Recall what, if anything, you might know about the early 1900s and what you might know about the immigrant experience of different ethnic groups. This is the setting of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. You may want to specifically research the experiences of Irish and Italian immigrants coming to America. Perhaps you can even trace back your family lineage to one of these immigrant stories. Also research the author Betty Smith. Keeping this information in mind as you read will help you understand the characters' thoughts and interactions. Understanding the setting and historical context in which Betty Smith was writing will help you understand some of her themes.

While you read:

1. Knowing plot, characters, and settings later for deeper analysis and for testing will obviously help. However, our focus for this novel will be on symbolism and motif. Take brief notes on potential symbolism and at least two motifs as you read, writing down at least key words and phrases as you go. Don't worry about being "right." There are many good ideas and possibilities to be discussed; just keep track of your own impressions and ideas on repeated or seemingly important elements. Record page numbers so you can easily find this information later for discussions and essay citations. The note-taking style you use is up to you. Notes might slow you down a bit, which is probably good for this kind of reading. Just try to be reasonable and find a method/style of notes that works for you. A few extra minutes is worth it, but extra hours and hours are not. Bring your notes with you to class.

Possible motifs to trace and record (at least two): education (in and out of school), music, perseverance through hardship, gender roles, class and poverty...and many others. If you're noticing one not on this list, you can trace that one instead.

2. Francie has a rich and varied vocabulary. To appreciate and understand it, some work with it will help. Complete the following vocabulary pages and bring them to class.

After you read:

Write a one-paragraph literary analysis paragraph (typed, MLA) that analyzes how one of ATGIB's motifs helps reveal a theme. Your paragraph should include a topic sentence that identifies the title, author, motif, and theme statement. Then, it should include three quotations and/or examples embedded into the contextual information or analysis that relates to each quotation. The paragraph should end with a summative sentence that relates the analysis back to the theme statement. (This will be a long paragraph.) Be sure this paragraph is saved digitally.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn: Vocabulary #1

Directions: For each vocabulary word, write one sentence that pertains to the novel (a character, situation, etc.) that correctly uses the vocabulary word in a way that shows meaning. On the quiz, you'll need to be able to use words correctly in sentences.

1. tenement (n): an apartment building, usually in a low-income area
2. ragamuffin (n): a child whose appearance is messy and uncivilized
3. interminable (adj): long and dull with little sign of ending
4. premonition (n): a feeling about something that will happen in the future
5. vestibule (n): reception area or foyer
6. fetching (adj): attractive or pretty
7. bucolic (adj): of or in the countryside
8. sprig (n): small shoot of a plant
9. filigree (n): delicate detail on jewelry
10. (on the) dole (n): unemployed and receiving benefits from the government
11. prodigious (adj): impressively large, awesome
12. languorous (adj): sluggish
13. gallantly (adv): do something in a brave or heroic way

14. dubious (adj): skeptical
15. horde (n): a large unruly crowd
16. relegate (v): to demote or assign to a lower category
17. gratis (n): free, without cost
18. conjecture (n): speculation
19. surreptitious (adj): secretive
20. thwart (v): prevent (someone) from accomplishing something

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn: Vocabulary #2

Directions: For each vocabulary word, write one sentence that pertains to the novel (a character, situation, etc.) that correctly uses the vocabulary word in a way that shows meaning. On the test, you'll need to be able to use words correctly in sentences.

1. lull (v): to calm or send to sleep
2. putrid (adj): decaying with a foul odor
3. debonair (adj): sophisticated, charming
4. lament (v): to mourn

5. fastidious (adj): having exacting attention to detail

6. contrite (adj): apologetic; feeling sincere regret for a misdeed

7. contorted (adj): twisted or misshapen

8. infinitesimal (adj): so small as to be irrelevant

9. contemptuous (adj): showing contempt, scornful

10. poignant (adj): creating a feeling of sadness or empathy

11. vaudeville (n): variety show with comedic performances

12. mollify (v): to pacify or appease

13. matriculate (v): to enroll and pass through a school

14. munitions (n): collection of weapons

15. sachet (n): small perfumed bag