**Welcome to Honors English III!! Summer 2014**

This letter will tell you everything you need to know to get started on your Honors III studies over the summer. Please don’t hesitate to come talk to me or e-mail me if you have any questions or concerns.

This summer you will be reading two books. First, everyone will read the non-fiction account of Chris McCandless and his great Alaskan adventure in *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. Next, you may choose one of the two following novels to read: *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien or *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. Please be sure to do any research you need to in order to choose a book, since both novels deal with some tough issues, and *The Things They Carried* uses strong language on occasion. Visit my website (address below) for more information on both books. Start the summer with your novel choice, and then read *Into the Wild*.

Honors English students are responsible for acquiring their own copies of the books. Check with local libraries, bookstores, or even upperclassmen who may be willing to part with their copies. If you have a smart phone or eReader (like Kindle or Nook), you might consider getting digital copies of the books.

As you read this summer, you will also be e-mailing me your responses to discussion questions. Please write or paste your response in the body of the email itself (that cuts down on technical glitches). You will be required to post four responses in time for four separate deadlines: June 15th, July 1st, July 15th, and August 1st. The four questions are printed on the back of this letter so that you may e-mail your responses at any time. If you know you’ll be away from a computer at these deadlines, post IN ADVANCE!

The questions listed here (and posted on the class wikispace page in case you lose this letter!) are to prompt your thinking. Each response must be at least 200 words long (yes, I will be checking), and, of course, school appropriate.

Remember: summer reading is an English department requirement for all honors courses. These online discussion responses will count as your first test grade of first semester when we return to school in the fall, so make sure you meet all four deadlines! If you run into technical issues over the summer, you can e-mail or phone me, and we’ll work something out. Please contact me at least 24 hours BEFORE the deadline if you are going to miss it for any reason. **Any deadlines that are missed and unexplained will result in docked grades.**

If, for some reason, e-mailing is just not a possibility for you, you will need to snail mail your postings to me through the school in plenty of time for the deadlines. Come see me BEFORE you leave for the summer, and we’ll set it all up.

I think that’s it! Check the back of the letter for the questions/prompts. Contact me if you have any questions or need more information.

RESOURCES:

Newton Public Library—computers; books;

librarians—always a good resource!

Newton High School: 316-284-6280—

secretaries—always a good resource!

Miss Bergman’s Website:

[englishbookcorner.wikispaces.com](http://www.englishbookcorner.wikispaces.com)

Have a great summer, and I’ll see you next fall!

Miss Bergman

[cathlina.bergman@usd373.org](mailto:cathlina.bergman@usd373.org)

785-893-2734

HONORS III SUMMER READING QUESTIONS: **Make sure your answers are SPECIFIC enough that I can tell you are reading! Vague answers get low scores.**

**1st Question: Due June 15th**

**Where I should be in the reading:** about halfway through *The Help* or *The Things They Carried*

Let's start off with an easy one! From whichever novel you are currently reading—*The Help* or *The Things They Carried*—, pick a character that you relate to. Someone you connect with or feel sympathy for or just find fascinating. Tell us about that character and in what ways you and this character are alike and different. Do you think most readers would find this character sympathetic, or is he/she a hard character to like and root for? What do you think will happen to this character in the rest of the book?   
  
**2nd Question: Due July 1st**

**Where I should be in the reading:** finished *The Help* or *The Things They Carried*

Question for *The Help:*  For most of the novel, the three narrators—Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter—take turns telling the story in 1st person. However, for Chapter 25, the author suddenly shifts to a 3rd person point of view and has an external narrator tell about the events at the Benefit. Why? What could Stockett show this way that would have been lost if only one of the women had told the story? Which narrator would you have had narrate that chapter, and why?

Question for *The Things They Carried*: Tim O’Brien is the name of the author of the book, and there’s also a character in the story named “Tim O’Brien.” However, this is not a typical autobiography or an exact account of O’Brien’s actual experiences in Vietnam. Why, do you suppose, did Tim O’Brien the author choose to write his story as if it’s fiction? Consider these details: O’Brien insists most of the story is invented; he deliberately confuses the question of which soldiers were involved in which incidents; he declares, “story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth”; the title is *The Things They Carried*, not *The Things I Carried*.

**3rd Question: Due July 15th**

**Where I should be in the reading:** about halfway through *Into the Wild*

Unlike most books we read in English class, *Into the Wild* is non-fiction. Since it is based on a true story, author Jon Krakauer is not creating characters and plot lines from his imagination but instead researching people’s actions and speculating as to the motivation behind the actions. However, Krakauer does let Chris tell some of his own story by including passages from Chris’s journals and notes in the margins of his books. How well did Krakauer balance the two? Do you get a complete sense of Chris’s story in the book? How might the story be different if Krakauer had not included Chris’s own words—that is, if Krakauer had simply told the story for Chris? Give a specific example of something we learned through Chris’s writing that you found especially helpful, interesting, or illuminating.

**4th Question: Due August 1st**

**Where I should be in the reading:** finished *Into the Wild*

*Into the Wild* tells the story of Chris McCandless and his “great Alaskan adventure,” but Chris travels to several other places as well. In what ways is Chris really on a quest to find his true self, a person true to his own values? What are those values? What circumstances or people in Chris’s life are obstacles for this journey? In your opinion, is Chris successful in meeting his goals? If yes, in what ways? If no, then why not? What could he have done to be more successful?