

Honors American Literature
Incoming 11th Grade (honors students, only)
Summer Reading Questions
East of Eden, by John Steinbeck*
Preferred Edition: Penguin, 2002

***Honors students must also read**
Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried.
Refer to the College Prep summer reading assignment.

Read through this entire sheet carefully before beginning to read the novel. Check the quotation assignment at the bottom and answer as you read. *East of Eden* is enjoyable and lengthy, so do not put it off until the week before school or you will significantly reduce your ability to take pleasure in it.

This assignment is due – typed and complete, on the first full day back to school. No exceptions.

QUESTIONS: Answer the following questions completely. Some answers will be longer than others, but none should have fewer than **four sentences**.

1. Describe Adam and Charles' father's treatment of them. Are they treated the same or differently? Explain using evidence from the novel.
2. Why does Charles want to kill his brother? What specifically takes place to cause Charles' anger?
3. The first two pages of chapter 8 are extremely relevant to developing Kathy's character and establishing the theme of predestination vs. free will. Explain how this theme is raised and explored through Kathy.
4. Make a list of the first names that are important in the novel. Do those with the same initials have similar traits? Jot down some words to describe their traits. Think about the theme of free will vs. fate. Are certain characters masters of their own destiny while others without free will? Are there characters who don't seem to fit their category based on their initial? Explain.
5. Consider the theme of good and evil. Think of examples of characters or couples who might represent this dichotomy. Think beyond the major characters. Is Steinbeck presenting a black and white case for mankind's propensity for either good or evil? Explain.
6. After Sam Hamilton delivers Cathy's sons, she bites him viciously. Why did Steinbeck write this into the story? What is the significance of this act? What does it imply about Cathy?
7. When Cathy leaves Adam he gives up on life and emotionally abandons his sons. Is Cyrus at fault for the failings of Adam as a father? Explain.

QUOTES: In 2-5 sentences, identify the chapter, page#, speaker, and significance of the following quotations. Read over this sheet each time you read and keep it nearby. Be sure to highlight these sections in your book as well.

1. "He developed a love for poor people he could not have conceived if he had not been poor himself."
2. "I guess if a man had go shuck off everything he had, inside and out, he'd manage to hide a few little sins somewhere for his discomfort. They're the last things we'll give up."
3. "I believe there are monsters born in the world to human parents. . . . The face and body may be perfect, but if a twisted gene or a malformed egg can produce physical monsters, may not the same process produce a malformed soul?"
4. "And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected."
5. "Some men are friends with the whole world in their hearts, and there are others that hate themselves and spread their hatred around like butter on hot bread."
6. "In human affairs of danger and delicacy successful conclusion is sharply limited by hurry. So often, men trip by being in a rush. If one were properly to perform a difficult and subtle act, he should first inspect the end to be achieved and then, once he had accepted the end as desirable, he should forget it completely and concentrate solely on the means. By this method he would not be moved by false action by anxiety or hurry or fear. Very few people learn this."
7. "There are techniques of the human mind whereby, in its dark deep, problems are examined, rejected or accepted. Such activities sometimes concern facets a man does not know he had. How often one goes to sleep troubled and full of pain, not knowing what causes the travail, and in the morning a whole new direction and clearness is there, maybe the result of the black reasoning. And again there mornings when ecstasy bubbles in the blood."
8. "Perhaps the best conversationalist in the world is the man who helps others to talk."