

## 11th Grade American Literature Summer Assignment

Welcome to your most important year of high school: your junior year! This year our English class will focus on a chronological study of American Literature to compliment your history class which will focus on American History. Your summer assignment for the class includes TWO components below and will be due when we return to school in September:

1. READ American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang (available at many libraries, bookstores, and at amazon.com). Although the text is easy to read, it brings up many of the complex issues of assimilation and American identity that we will discuss over the course of our studies. We will use the text the first couple weeks of class to discuss some of the major themes that will be important throughout the year. **Be prepared for written quizzes and writing assignments based on the book in September.**

2. Using American Born Chinese as a starting point, WRITE a **graphic novel** of your own **family's history** of being in America. Part of what makes America unique, strong, and vibrant is that we are a nation of immigrants. Unless you are part of a Native American tribe, your family has come here from somewhere else at some point in history. This project asks you to create a graphic novel that tells some aspect of your family's history in America, just like Gene Yang's book.

For example, you could describe when your family first came here - what was life like for your family when they arrived? How is America different from the place they left? What kind of jobs did members of your family have when they came? What challenges did they face? Where did they live?

You could also tell the story of a family member - especially a grandparent, parent, sibling, or aunt/uncle. Why is this person important to your family? What kind of life did they have? Why do you look up to this person? What challenges and obstacles did s/he overcome?

Tell an important family legend. What is a story that is often recounted at family gatherings? Retell it, or have a relative tell you & you can recreate it.

Describe a family tradition: what are important foods or traditions in your family? Who's the best cook in your family? What do they make? What holidays do you celebrate? What do you do to celebrate them? You could take this a few directions.

The purpose of this assignment is to engage your own family's history in our wider studies of American Literature. We all have a story of living in America, and as we establish the major themes in the class, we can often see connections in our own lives as well. (see back for other ideas)

**CCLS:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

(TURN OVER)

Here are some ideas of what my former students wrote about in previous years:

- the challenges of meeting parents' expectations in their own family
- the challenges of learning English when coming here from another country
- a family's decision to adopt a cousin whose parents' passed away
- how the election of Obama was particularly important to an African American family
- how an uncle leaving to go on military tour effected the family
- the importance of the Carnival celebration in Antigua to family & culture
- visiting family in Trinidad for the first time, reconnecting w/older family members
- the struggles of grand/parents coming here and looking for work, experiencing discrimination
- the story of single parents struggling to make ends meet
- the importance of a Quinceañeras for a Mexican family
- how a particular religion has influenced the family
- the influences of an older sibling to your life
- what life used to be like in the country your family came from
- how parents/grandparents first met
- the struggles of parents to have another child

Your own graphic mini-novel requires the following components:

1) A **page introduction** that provides an overview of your project. It should explain:

- The artistic choices you've made including the depiction of characters and framing
- The characters in the book and why they are important
- A brief summary of the narrative and why you are writing about it
- Any other information that is important to help the reader understand your work

2) A graphic novel of at least **four pages of art** with approximately four frames each. No stick figures! You can use photos or online images if you are artistically challenged.

Stuck? Confused? Feel free to email me at [amatthusen@ewsis.org](mailto:amatthusen@ewsis.org).

Grading Criteria:

**A 90-100:** This project has all of the components: cover page, written explanation, and four pages of art. Each component is of very high quality and shows thoughtful planning and preparation. The story is relevant and connects to the assignment's description. It is clear that the student spent ample time compiling, refining, and polishing the graphic novel. The project was submitted on time or early. This graphic novel is clearly exemplary work.

**B 80-89:** This project has all the required components and demonstrates that the student put time and thought into the work. All components are of very high quality, but may not be as exemplary or polished as those of a higher grade.

**C 70-79:** This project has all or most of the project requirements. Some of the submission may appear hastily done, or did not take the same time and effort of those projects receiving a higher grade. The project may have been only somewhat late.

**D 60-69:** This project does not appear to have significant time spent on it. Some parts may be missing. The artwork, writing, or general appearance may give the impression it was not completed with careful and ample attention. The project may be late.