**AP English Language and Composition Summer Reading 2017**

All incoming AP English Language and Composition students are required to complete this assignment. This assignment is structured to reinforce and enrich the skills acquired in Honors English II and to help you avoid the “summer slide” of forgetfulness. This assignment is due the **September 15, 2017.**

Assignments should be typed single spaced in **12pt font.**

There are two texts to this summer reading assignment. Both texts require you to engage with it, not simply for comprehension, but also for analysis. It is imperative that for both assignments you employ good annotation and close reading skills.

**Assignment:**

Obtain a copy of *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America (2011 version)* by Barbara Ehrenreich, read and annotate the text. Annotated book is due along with the written portion of the assignment. You must be prepared to discuss the text and complete assignments related to the text when class begins.

After reading the novel, you will provide commentary on the rhetorical choices the author made in the text. Rhetorical choices refer to choices the author made to heighten the effectiveness of his or her message. You should be familiar with the following: diction, choice of detail, figurative anguage, and syntax.

**Diction:**

The author’s word choice, focusing on the connotation of words.

**Choice of detail:**

The details an author chooses to include or exclude.

**Figurative Language:**

Metaphor, personification, simile, analogy, hyperbole, and understatement.

**Syntax:**

The arrangement of words in sentences. Consider the length of a sentence: Is it overly long? Short? Punctuated unusually?

**Remember:** When noticing rhetorical devices in your reading, consider the effect of the rhetorical device,

what it reveals about the author’s tone or how it contributes to the overall meaning within the text.

**Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed:***

This text is a critical look at life for those trying to live on minimum wage. In order to discover what this is like, Ehrenreich goes “undercover” and attempts to survive while working minimum-wage jobs. Her criticism of the system is often clearly stated, but you are to observe how rhetorical choices also reveal her critical tone. When you observe rhetorical choices that reveal her tone, make note of them (with post-its or in a notebook).

After each chapter (Chapters 1-3 and the Evaluation= 4 Total), review your choices, select what you consider to be the most powerful rhetorical choice(s) and write a one-page commentary (analysis) of that choice or those choices for each section. Your goal is to explain how the choices reveal, illustrate or support Ehrenreich’s critical tone. Your one-page commentary could focus on one passage that employs several rhetorical choices (see attached model), a pattern that you find (three powerful images, four metaphors, etc.), or your selection of one or a collection of powerful choices.

**Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*:**

Like *Nickel and Dimed*, this text has a critical tone; O’Brien’s novel serves as a criticism of war. Although it

feels like non-fiction, keep in mind that it is actually a work of fiction. For this book, we are asking you to

do the same thing you did for *Nickel and Dimed*; however, we will break the book into thirds: **Part One** will end after “The Dentist;” **Part Two** after “Style;” and **Part Three** will go through the end of the book. Again, your job is to note how rhetorical choices reveal O’Brien’s tone, and to write a one-page commentary on each section, connecting a rhetorical choice to O’Brien’s critical tone.

**Model Commentary: You will submit 7 (4 for Ehrenreich’s; 3 for O’Brien) Connecting Rhetorical Devices (metaphor, diction) to Ehrenreich’s Critical Tone**

Note: In this commentary, we have chosen to focus on one passage that contains several rhetorical devices, which is one of your options. Also, notice the somewhat casual tone of this commentary—the use of “I” is okay, as is taking risks in your interpretation of the text (the offal/awful connection in this commentary, for example, might be a reach!).

Ehrenreich describes a kitchen in which she is working this way:

“The kitchen is a cavern, a stomach leading to the lower intestine that is the garbage and dishwashing area, from which issue bizarre smells combining the edible and the offal: creamy carrion, pizza barf, and that unique and enigmatic Jerry’s scent, citrus fart.” (29)

This unpleasant extended metaphor clearly reveals Ehrenreich’s distaste for her place of employment. By comparing the kitchen to a cavernous stomach, she makes it seem dark, damp, and unpleasant. This effect is emphasized by continuing from the stomach to the lower intestine which, of course, is where human waste accumulates. One may not want to hear about the disgusting parts of an eating establishment, but Ehrenreich graphically confronts the flaws in this restaurant’s kitchen.

The smells here are a disgusting juxtaposition of pleasant and unpleasant: creamy, pizza, and citrus are linked to carrion, barf, and farts. So, this restaurant attempts to offer pleasant foods like pizza or creamy dishes; they even attempt to clean, as evidenced by the citrus smell, most likely coming from, I’m guessing, dishwashing soap. However, any possible pleasantries are squashed by barf, fart, and even carrion, a word that means rotting flesh. That choice of “carrion” implies that there’s not a lot of washing in the dishwashing area, if plates of discarded food are allowed to sit long enough to rot! And, the citrus of the dishwashing soap is apparently not enough to eradicate an ever-present fart smell, which she identities as “Jerry’s scent,” a scent that doesn’t just exist, but belongs to this restaurant. Speaking of this fart scent, she calls it “unique” with a citrus-smelling quality, but also “enigmatic,” meaning that the fart smell is puzzling or inexplicable. This is a disturbing description: One does not want to be puzzled by the smells in a restaurant—that is not appetizing.

Informal diction, in particular “barf ” and “fart,” greatly magnify her disgust with this restaurant. She uses lowly, slang-like terms in order to convey that this place is lowly. Ehrenreich is a writer, one who obviously has access to a more sophisticated term for “barf,” but she doesn’t use it—replacing the word “barf ” with “vomit,” for example, wouldn’t suit her critical purpose; using the word vomit would, in fact, not sound as gross, it would be too euphemistic, too toned-down. It wouldn’t adequately convey her disgust. She is playing with other words as well: she pairs the edible with the “offal,” a word that refers to waste or rubbish, but also sounds like “awful,” helping to further her criticism.

Erhenreich’s purpose in Nickel and Dimed is to criticize the working conditions of the low-wage worker. In this instance, she is exposing the working conditions of restaurant workers, in particular, waitresses. Since most restaurant patrons never see the kitchen or dishwashing area, she is describing a mostly unknown world to the reader. And her very bleak description of this place, a description that includes odd juxtapositions of words and inexplicable smells, is one that would discourage anyone from eating, let