

## **Honors U.S. History Summer Reading Assignment**

The book that is being assigned to incoming Honors U.S. History students is James Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (please use the second edition of the book from 2007). The second edition of the book is available in paperback for less than \$14, and there are nine copies of this edition available in the Monroe County Library System. This book is an analysis of the shortcomings of mainstream American History textbooks, and in addition to critiquing the traditional presentation of U.S. History that students usually encounter in school, provides some interesting views of an alternative version. Since the Honors course spends a great deal of time addressing the idea of historical "interpretation," this book should get the students in an appropriate "mindset."

Each chapter of the book can be read as a "stand alone" examination, as each explores a different area, or era, of American History. The student should read and take notes on the entire book, but only needs to address four of the chapters when writing his or her essay. For each of these four chapters, the student should begin with the author's thesis for that part of the book, and then discuss the evidence that the author used to back up his thesis. The analysis of each chapter should be about a page in length (so the entire paper should be about four pages long). There is some choice in which chapters to write about, within the following requirements:

- \*Everyone should write about Chapter 1
- \*Write about one chapter from Chapters 2-4
- \*Write about either Chapter 5 or 6
- \*Write about one other chapter from Chapters 7-10

Please write the paper in the following fashion, as this will be the way that you will write your papers throughout the year:

1. Type your essay on a computer, making it your best possible effort
2. Save it and also print it; put it aside for at least a day
3. Scrutinize your essay with a red pen, marking the mistakes that you see, and writing instructions about what you need to revise (this is now your rough draft)
4. Make the changes that you have noted on the file that you saved
5. Print it up again (this is your final draft)
6. Put both drafts into a two-pocket folder (this is what you will hand in)

The paper should be written while adhering to the guidelines of the "Pet Peeves" sheet that accompanies this assignment. Note: you do not need to use citations, as I will know what book is the source of your information. If you have a question about the assignment, you may reach me at my school email address:

[thunt@allendalecolumbia.org](mailto:thunt@allendalecolumbia.org)

## Mr. Hunt's Writing "Pet Peeves"

- 1) Write in the past tense. After all, you are writing about history.  
(Note: a sentence like "Washington would sign the law" is an example of the conditional. Instead, write "Washington signed the law.")
- 2) Do not use the "Passive Voice". Bad: "In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed." Good: "In 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act."
- 3) Do not use the word "you" (Ex.: "If you were a communist, you would be persecuted.") I am not a communist, so please do not write about me. Instead write: "If *one* were a communist..."
- 4) Do not use contractions (don't write don't; you shouldn't write shouldn't).
- 5) The word "this" should not stand alone as a noun or direct object.  
(Ex.: do not write "This resulted in...". Instead, write "This change resulted in....").
- 6) The most commonly misspelled word in my classes: led. (The past tense of the verb "lead" is "led". Do not write "He lead the charge").
- 7) The word "its" is the possessive of "it". Notice that there is no apostrophe. "It's" is a contraction of "it is" and thus should not be used anyway. (See #4)
- 8) The verb "try" should be followed by an infinitive, not "and." You are describing one action, not two. (Not "try and show the way;" rather: "try to show the way.")
- 9) The word "fewer" should be used if you can count the number ("fewer calories"). The word "less" is used when the amount cannot be quantified ("less food").
- 10) The word "who" refers to a person ("the woman who led the movement"); the word "that" refers to groups or things ("the law that changed the tax policy")
- 11) Avoid slang and clichés ("In 1865, Abraham Lincoln bought the farm").
- 12) Note: Presidents do not pass legislation. Congress does.
- 13) Write out numbers less than thirteen (one, two, three, etc). Use numbers if it is 13 or over.

**\*\*Always strive for precision and clarity!\*\***