Welcome to the start of a new collegiate adventure: the world of critical analysis! Up to this point in the year, you have been encouraged to develop your own analytical skills, and to study prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction, through the lens of your own thinking. Scholars must hone their own brains, but they also use the wisdom gained from other scholars who have come before them, and they continue to sharpen their skills by testing their ideas against those of their peers. To that end, you will now begin work on the Critical Analysis Paper, a project that will take us right up to the week before the AP Lang and Comp exam in May. The reading comprehension and analytical skills you develop as you do your research and craft your own argument will be invaluable as you prepare for the exam (and they’ll be pretty handy in college as well!). Please know that I am only an email away; any time you need help, you need but ask!

Hereewith are the key events and dates in the project (please mark them in your planners right away; assume these are all firm dates, and that each item is to be turned in electronically and in paper form by the deadline unless otherwise noted).

**Step 1:** Browse the stacks, JSTOR, and other online and physical locations for scholarly criticism to ensure that the work of fiction, drama, or poetry you have chosen has been analyzed thoroughly enough by enough scholars of American literature to provide ample resources for your own paper. Note: scholarly criticism does not mean book reviews or opinion articles, no matter how well respected the magazines may be in which they appear. Your research will center on full-length books, chapters in books, or journal articles published by university presses or publishing houses of similar academic focus, written by scholars of American literature. The journals and books must focus on American literature as literature; do not focus mainly on journals or books on other, extra-textual topics (science fiction; gender or race studies; American studies; psychology, sociology, or anthropology; “-ism” studies, such as Marxism, etc.). You need to choose a highly regarded American author (one with a serious literary reputation) from the list you were given last summer. If you have any qualms about your choice, please see me immediately. If you chose a book last summer that was truly outstanding and enjoyable, but you now see that hardly any scholars have written about that book, you need to choose something different, right away. If you chose a book that you actually read in 8th grade or earlier in high school, you need to choose a different book immediately. The purpose of this assignment is to learn how to work effectively with scholarly criticism in support of your own work in literary and rhetorical analysis.

Feb. 8: MLA citation for the book you have ultimately chosen, along with annotated bibliography (as discussed in class) of 4 useful scholarly sources. (20 points)

**Step 2:** Research! You will have some time in the BI library to get reacquainted with the resources and technology available for you as you research your topic, take notes, and develop your argument. However, as in any college course, you will do the majority of the research and other work outside of class time. After familiarizing yourself with the current and historic scholarship about your chosen work, you will craft your own thesis: an arguable point you wish to develop about this piece of literature. This is not a summary of other scholar’s points; it is your own idea, which will be bolstered by the scholarship you review in your research. Your thesis could come from topics such as these: ways in which
the author uses particular literary or rhetorical tools in order to reveal character; use of particular tools (symbolism, point of view, tone, syntax...) to reveal theme, character, etc.; purpose of humor/irony/satire, and so on. Note: the time to tell your instructor that you cannot come up with a thesis for the work you have chosen is before the firm deadlines, listed below.

**Step 3: Write!** You will have workshops and plenty of support as you move from thesis to full thesis, from sentence outline to draft, and from draft to final 5-7-page paper.

**Firm deadlines along the way to success** (assume all deadlines for the Turnitin.com copy are 7:55 a.m. on the due date listed below, whether or not your class meets on that day, regardless of snow days, absences, or any other reasons; if your class meets on that day, your **paper copy** is also due at the beginning of class; if your class does not meet on that day, your paper copy is due to the GIVE box by 7:55 a.m.):

- **Mar. 1**: Three possible thesis statements with bulleted ideas (paper) (10 points)
- **Mar. 8**: Thesis statement due (paper/Turnitin.com) (10 points)
- **Mar. 16**: Full thesis due (paper/Turnitin.com) (roughly 4-5 sentences) (10 points)
- **Mar. 22**: Annotated working bibliography (paper/Turnitin.com) (20 points)
- **Apr. 7**: Sentence outline due (paper/Turnitin.com) (10 points)
- **Apr. 18**: Complete draft due for peer review (paper/Turnitin.com) (20 points)
- **Apr. 26**: Evidence from an English instructor that you have visited the Word Write Shop once between Mar. 1 and this date. Schedule early on the website: only 2 students may visit the WWS during a given class period; only 1 during the before- or after-school sessions. English instructors will be advised to refuse last-minute appointments. No exceptions. (10 points)
- **May 2**: Final paper due in paper form and to Turnitin.com (50 points)

**Please note:** see the requirements for turning assignments in to Turnitin.com as well as in paper form. You do not need to turn in your note cards for a grade, though I am happy to review them as you go along. Bring them to class daily if you write them on paper index cards; be sure you can access them whenever we have class time for research! All items must be typed according to MLA style. If an item is due in paper form and you are not able to bring it to class in person by the deadline, you must still post it to Turnitin.com by the deadline as a placeholder, and bring the paper copy to the GIVE box in Room 309 immediately upon your return to school. If you have trouble with Turnitin.com for a given deadline, you must email a readable Word doc, pdf doc, or photograph of the completed assignment to your instructor by the deadline as a placeholder.

**May 10**: AP Lang and Comp exam

We will have many more literary and rhetorical adventures after the AP Lang exam!