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Dear Advanced Placement Student,

We are very happy you have enrolled in the Advanced Placement English Literature Course. To begin our work, we have chosen three novels that represent the authors and styles tested on the AP exam.

The three works required for Advanced Placement English are the following:

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.

*Ragtime* by E.L. Doctorow.

*Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse

In addition to reading these three works, you will write an in-class timed essay the week of September 14<sup>th</sup>. In order to prepare for this essay, please choose **one** of the prompts on the attached sheet for *Ragtime* and **one** prompt for *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Please prepare notes that would help you to write an essay on that text. Although you will prepare for two essay prompts, you will only write about one of these novels. We will choose the novel on which novel you will write.

We will ask you to hand in these notes when you write the essay. If you use sticky notes, you will submit the book with the notes. Please remember, notes should demonstrate your most insightful analysis of character, theme and symbol; do not take notes on plot.

Have a wonderful, restful summer!

Sincerely,

Ms. Kathy Coleman

Ms. Maura Sheehy

**AHS Advanced Placement English Literature  
Summer Writing Prompts 2010**

These prompts are taken from past AP Literature exams. Choose one of the following prompts to prepare for an essay on *Ragtime* and one prompt for an essay on *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

1. Many novels use contrasting places (for example, two countries, two cities or towns, two houses, or the land and sea) to represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the work. Choose a novel that contrasts two such places. Write an essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how their contrasting elements **contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole**. (1991)

2. In his essay "Walking," Henry David Thoreau offers the following assessment of literature: In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is but another name for tameness. It is the uncivilized free and wild thinking in *Hamlet* and *The Iliad*, in all scriptures and mythologies, not learned in schools, that delights us.

From the works that you have studied in school, choose a **novel**, play, or epic poem that you may initially have thought was conventional and tame but that you now value for its "uncivilized free and wild thinking." Write an essay in which you explain what constitutes its "uncivilized free and wild thinking" and **how that thinking is central to the value of the work as a whole**. Support your ideas with specific references to the work you choose (1998)

3. In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present activities, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past **contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole**. (2007)

4. In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Choose a novel or play of literary merit and write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in the work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters. Avoid plot summary. (1994)

5. "You can leave home all you want, but home will never leave you." —Sonsyrea Tate  
Sonsyrea Tate's statement suggests that "home" may be conceived of as a dwelling, a place, or a state of mind. It may have positive or negative associations, but in either case, it may have a considerable influence on an individual. Choose a novel or play in which a central character leaves home yet finds that home remains significant. Write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the importance of "home" to this character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Explain how the character's idea of home **illuminates the larger meaning of the work**. Do not merely summarize the plot. (2010 Form B)