

IB English II HL
***An American Childhood* Summer Assignment**
Ms. Dearing/Ms. Vioria

Welcome to IB English II Higher Level! You have decided to pursue the IB English Higher Level course, which means that you have agreed to complete a very rigorous and demanding curriculum during your senior year here at AHS. Good for you for challenging yourself and for being willing to put in the effort and time this course will require. And it WILL require a great deal of time, effort, energy, and motivation from you—beginning with this summer assignment.

Your junior English class has set the groundwork and prepared you to do the kind of in-depth analysis the IB curriculum requires. Over the summer, you will be required to read our first text, Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood*, and complete a separate assignment based on the book. It is important that you read the book in its entirety and that you complete this assignment ON YOUR OWN, without the help of any online or real-life resources. Your work on this first assignment will help us determine your strengths and weaknesses as students, and we will base our instruction over the year on this information. So do your absolute best, and do YOUR OWN WORK ☺

Assignment Overview:

1. Read the book *An American Childhood* as dictated by the course book list. Make sure to read the prologue and epilogue as well, as they are important bookends to the story.
2. As you read, you need to complete a dialogue journal. Use the attached example as a template for your own dialogue journal, and **type your completed journal** before you turn it in. **You need to choose (25) quotations or brief passages from throughout the book.** Each quotation should consist of AT LEAST 2-3 sentences and may be as long as a paragraph. (These are significant passages, not “snippets” of only a few words). Each selected passage must be accompanied by your own comments, thoughts, analysis, and/or questions. **These comments are not plot summary, but rather should be analytical in nature and need to address the specific literary features from the quotation as well.**

**When your return to school in the fall, we will begin our senior IB curriculum with a study of this memoir. Be prepared to discuss and analyze specific passages from the book, as well as write various levels of commentary on the major themes and ideas presented. The work will require you to analyze key moments in the book, make connections between characters, and offer insight and analysis into Dillard's use of language, style, and diction. This is the nice way of saying...if all you do is read the plot summary online, you will be unable to complete the required work for this unit. Good luck and welcome to HL IB English II!

Sample Dialogue Journal
An American Childhood

Selected Passages (with page #)	Comments, Analysis, Ideas, Questions
<p>“Ah, the boys. How little I understood them! How little I even glimpsed who they were. How little any of us did, if I may extrapolate. How completely I condescended to them when we were ten and they were in many ways my betters. And when we were fifteen, how little I understood them still, or again. I still thought they were all alike, for all practical purposes, no longer comical beasts now but walking gods who conferred divine power with their least glances” (90).</p>	<p>In this passage, Dillard’s description of her relationship with the boys in her neighborhood highlights the ways gender shapes her ideas of the world, even from a very young age. She realizes that the feminine world in which she’s lived her whole life has isolated her from the world of the boys; in this moment, she is made aware of the power the boys will hold on the girls, and the importance that will be placed on gaining the attention of the boys. I especially like how she compares the boys to “comical beasts” who have become “walking gods.” In this moment, Dillard seems to be both in awe of and confused by the power the young men have gained seemingly overnight; there is a hint that this is a power they have not necessarily earned, but have been given by the girls themselves.</p>
<p>“There, at the twig’s top, the moth shook its sodden clumps of wings. When it spread those wings—those beautiful wings—blood would fill their veins, and the birth fluids on the wings’ frail sheets would harden to make them tough as sails. But the moth could not spread its wide wings at all; the jar was too small. The wings could not fill, so they hardened while they were still crumpled from the cocoon” (160).</p>	<p>In this paragraph, Dillard is using the birth of the moth in her classroom as an extended metaphor for her own struggle to free herself from the confines of her home and family and enter the world as her own independent young woman. The image of the moth attempting to spread its wings within the small jar is a metaphor for Dillard herself attempting to “spread her wings” and escape the safety and limits of her house and home life. The extended metaphor also serves as a warning, or perhaps a foreshadowing, of the dangers that come to the moth when it is not allowed to spread its wings—they eventually harden and crumple within the confines of the jar. This perhaps foreshadows Dillard’s own suffering or inability to reach her potential if not allowed to free herself from the confines of her family life.</p>