All 11th grade students, whether enrolled in Honors English III or Advanced Placement English Language and Composition, are required to read two plays: Fences by August Wilson and Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.

**Fences** by August Wilson

Set in 1957, *Fences* is the story of Troy Maxson, an African American garbage collector, ex-convict, and former baseball player in the Negro League. Learning to survive in a world where racism and classism have hindered his pursuit of the American Dream, Troy is uneasy with the spirit of change faintly recognizable at the end of the 1950’s and that would characterize the 1960’s.

**Death of a Salesman** by Arthur Miller

*Death of a Salesman* is the story of Willy Loman, an aging salesman who has spent his life in pursuit of the American Dream. As Willy comes to the end of his career, he and the members of his family realize just how difficult—and perhaps futile—the pursuit of this American myth may be.

The first few weeks of class will be devoted to the study of the summer reading plays. You should bring your own copy of each play with you when you report to school. (If this proves to be problematic for you and your family, see your teacher at the beginning of school.) Because you will be required to create meaning from what you read, you are expected to be an active reader. That means you should take notes (highlighting or underlining important parts, writing notes in the margins or on the front and end covers) on the novels as you read to help you remember important parts.

Some things to take notes on as you read:

- Compare the use of setting in each play. How does setting affect plot, characterization, and theme?

- Describe the characters, both primary and secondary

- Note the primary conflicts in each play and how they are resolved

- Symbolism

- Define the American Dream. How does each protagonist pursue it? What are the consequences?

- The tension between generations that can occur when each generation values different ideals, dreams, or goals

Again, you are expected to be an active and engaged reader of the books. While you are not required to complete a writing assignment on the reading over the summer, you are responsible for the reading and creating meaning from it. Testing on the books will begin the second day of school. Bring copies of the books with you when you report to school.

Note: Students who enroll in Advanced Placement English Language and Composition may have additional materials to study to accompany the reading of the plays.