Judith Conant Steinbach—Summer Reading Assignments, 2010

**Honors English 12**

**Required Reading:**

*The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde
*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini

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**The Importance of Being Earnest**

Wilde is famous for making humorous and sometimes critical comments about his characters and about social institutions.

1.) Copy 20 quotes in which Wilde uses subtle humor (satire, wit, irony, sarcasm, puns) to comment on 19th century British upper-class society and its customs. Try to identify (from the list contained in the parentheses above) the kind of humor that Wilde is using in each case.

2.) Compare the societal traditions and customs of Wilde’s play to the societal customs and traditions that you are accustomed to today. This can be done in a two-column set of bullet points, or it can be written in paragraph form.

3.) Using the original text as your guide, replace five humorous interactions that are delivered by Wilde’s characters with current day references that subtly poke fun at some of our social customs, behaviors, and practices. Identify the act, scene, and line numbers of the text that you are replacing.

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**Pride and Prejudice**

Jane Austen had much to say about the concepts of “pride” and “prejudice” in her novel of the same name. Select two characters who appear to inwardly possess or outwardly display either pride or prejudice. Consider how the possession of such traits shapes Austen’s characters and either enables them to attain or prevents them from accomplishing their goals. (Consider these traits to be “preconceived assumptions,” if that helps you consider your response.) Indicate how pride and prejudice are presented by Jane Austen at the beginning of the novel and who might possess these characteristics, how they become more pronounced or less obvious as the plot unfolds, and how they factor into the resolution of the story and potential character transformation, if there is any. Your response should be in the form of a fully developed essay, with definitions and correctly cited textual evidence as support for your argument.

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**A Thousand Splendid Suns**

In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* there appear to be two main characters, whose lives intersect and for some years overlap. Identify these two characters, and in evaluating their circumstances and their struggles, determine if you could call them “rebellious” and “heroic” in addition to their obviously being “treated as inferior” and generally “dehumanized” throughout the novel. Find at least five passages for each character that indicate a combination of rebellious and even more importantly heroic characteristics. Copy each passage, and through careful analysis, explain how the quote justifies your convictions. Closely examine Hosseini’s word choice as part of your response. Identify the pages from which the quotes have been taken.