**9 Honors Common Reads and Discussion Forums**

**2012-2013 Example/Report**

“Thanks again for a great discussion, but I have to go now. This is a really great idea and I think it should definitely be kept in the curriculum for next year!” ~Johnathan N.

*Purpose:* To create a sense of community for 9 Honors’ students by reading a “common” book or watching a “common” film since these students are embedded within regular English 9 classes. To differentiate by creating more rigor and relevance for Honor students through challenging texts.

*Overview:*

1. 7 sections of English 9 Honors were grouped together into one discussion forum.
2. Students were given a code and then signed up for a free Edmodo account and placed in a discussion forum.
3. The first novel, *Freakonomics* was chosen due to availability and subject matter that was aligned to Symposium (questioning conventional wisdom and using the scientific method to come to better answers).
4. The book was divided into 3 sections and the students were required to “meet” online and discuss the novel.
   1. Directions and a rubric for productive and appropriate online discussions were provided through Edmodo (see below).
   2. Reminders of how to do this were given by an instructor during the online discussions.
   3. Students asked questions and responded to other students question with a focus on showing a clear understanding of the novel.

*English 9 Common Read Discussion Forum Guidelines:*

1. Do not *just* summarize. We are looking for you to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the text.
   1. Break apart their argument and identify the author’s motives (themes).
      1. It is good to guess at possible themes (it is not only *okay* to be wrong, it is *necessary* to be wrong *a lot* in order to get to the best answer).
      2. Try to back up your guesses with specific examples from the novel.
   2. Agree and/or disagree with the text and give evidence supporting your position.
   3. Propose alternative explanations or solutions to what the author provides.
2. Interact FREQUENTLY with other students by responding to their posts.
   1. Ask a question about something that is confusing or possibly symbolic/significant.
   2. Expand upon an idea brought up by another student. Make connections to your own life and experiences, historical events, and other novels or films.

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| **Ideas** | Not clear that it was read or understood. | Correctly summarizes the reading. | Clearly understands the reading. | Shows superb understanding and shows some analysis, evaluation, and application of the reading to life/the world. |
| **Participation** | Does not contribute to online discussion.  Posts are off topic or irrelevant. | Little or no original questions or comments.  Little or no responses to peers.  Posts only right before due. | Some original questions or comments.  Some well thought out responses to peers.  Posts multiple times. | Actively furthers discussion with multiple original questions/ comments and by building on peers’ responses. Examples:   1. Disagrees with peer using outside evidence or personal example. 2. Builds/clarifies an argument around a theme. 3. Asks a new related question. |
| **Analysis** | Almost no support for claims. (Too much “I agree” or “Great” without *why* you agree or like it).  No outside evidence used (other texts, real-world situations). | Not enough support for claims. (Does not consider other points of view/meet objections).  Little outside evidence used (or largely personal connections). | Good support for claims. (Considers some, but not all, objections).  Some outside evidence used to support points. | Creates fully supported claims/arguments that are debatable, insightful, clear and meet objections of people from other perspectives.  Outside evidence used well to support points (other texts: novels, films, historical documents, real-world situations, and occasional personal experiences). |
| **Respect, Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation** | Disrespectful.  Numerous grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors make communication ineffective. | Respectful.  Some grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors that distract the reader. | Respectful.  Largely free of grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors. | Questions and comments show respect to peers’ gender, orientation, culture, political, and religious beliefs.  Free of grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors. |

* 1. Find a possible flaw in an argument by another student and give evidence showing how their argument is wrong (or better yet, how they are right but didn’t know it).

1. Show that you have read and tried to understand the chapters we are discussing.
   1. Make several references to major events.
   2. Make guesses as to what the author is trying to say or prove.

**English 9 Honors Online Discussion Rubric**

***Exerpts from Freakonomics Discussion Forum:***

**Natalie S. to Freakonomics Discussion Forum v2.0 (English 9 Honors)**

**Do you agree with the author when he says, "...it isn't so much a matter of what you do as a parent; it's who you are," (175). I get the impression that parent's actions don't count, only their genes.**

Grace Y. - This struck me too. The idea that your fate as a parent is settled before you are even holding your child is somewhat degrading I think. There are plenty of extremely successful people in this world that overcame troubled childhoods with single parents, not much money, and lacked many of the other "high test score!" qualities.

Joseph K. - No matter what the statistics say, everybody's situation is different. Whether a person is born into a wealthy or poor family, well-educated or not, I don't think it's possible to generalize something so diverse.

Ela P. - I don't think your genes can accurately define who you are

consuelo m. - i would have to disagree because i think what parents do is what influences a child to do. Genes do play a role in the child's inteligence but not as much as their actions. The parents life or actions is like a mirror image to the child, because they will probably grow up to be like them. Genes can't totally define who you are because you don't know who you are until you have seen and expored things around you, which goes back my thought of actions are more important because if you see the actions taken by your parents and other adults then you can discover what more...

Joel T. - I don't agree with this statement. Me being a doctor and a ninja turtle has absolutely no affect on my kids. Whatsoever. I do think this statement is partly true though. Looking at Darth Vader. He didn't seem like to great of a pa. He cut off his son's hand, glared at him menacingly, and killed his dear old "Unca Ben". It's no wonder Luke Skywalker is sexually attracted to his sister. Maybe if dear old dad had been around Luke wouldn't have had to learn how to fight from a puppet played by Frank Oz. Wokka Wokka. I think this is a more...

Kelsey K. - I don't think any child's future is set in stone just because of the genes they were born with. Anyone can work hard and do well in life, despite not being given a leg up in their earlier days. To a certain extent intelligence may be hereditary; however, I believe your environment ultimately plays the greatest role in your success.

Me - Joel T. You are getting a little crazy. First of all, Darth Vader wasn't there so Luke was raised by his Uncle (and mentored by Obi and Yoda). Secondly, the force seems to imply genetic predisposition (especially since it is strong in the Vader family). Not to mention that Vader does redeem himself in the end by sacrificing his life to kill the Emperor, therefore making him quite a bit like the noble Luke Skywalker.

Joel T. - Whoops my bad. I shouldn't have used a star wars example, having not seen all of the movies. I do think though that parents genes and actions both contribute to the raising of their child though. Luke Skywalker was influenced by multiple people, all resulting in who he became. There are more things than just parents that make the kids who they are. Highly educated parents with morals can still have a kid who deals drugs. Genes, actions, and environment are all influences- you can't narrow down to only one influence.

Maya M. - I think the influence of the parents is much more important. You're genes are the groundwork you have to build upon. For some people it may be harder, but in the right situation we can all be great.

Will R. - Both genes and actions contribute to how a child turns out. Environment is also a factor. However, just because you have bad parents or some bad genetics doesn't mean you don't have a chance.

**Bob C. to Freakonomics Discussion Forum v2.0 (English 9 Honors)**

**On page 102, the author says, "To the kids growing up in a housing project on Chicago's south side, crack dealing seemed like a glamour profession." If the kids were to see the statistics, would the job still seem like something they might want to do when they grow up, or would they be much more willing to back off and find a safer job to do?**

Alena M. - If you showed this to little kids, it would mean nothing and they wouldn't get it. If you showed it to older kids, their grades are already in trouble and there's little chance of them being able to get into a good collage.

Consuelo M. - this ties in with the idea of it matters most what the parents DOES not who the parent IS. If they parent is a crack dealer, as a profession, then the child will learn based off of his father that this profession is okay, and that he could get far with this job. I think if older kids were to see the statistics then they wouldn't think the job would be something good and they would be willin got back off and find a safer job.

Valerie H. - I agree with Alena. I don't think showing kids the statistics of the consequences of being a drug dealer would influence the kids' decisions very much. Even if they were strongly influenced to change their minds, I'm sure some environmental factors would dissuade them eventually.

David W. - With the environment that the kids are in, they don't have the ability, or the money, to be able to just "back off" and find a safer job. Especially the ones living in "condemned, practically abandoned" buildings. They can't just go back into K-12 education, and they sure can't afford going into college. Also, showing them the statistics wouldn't matter, because many of them don't care, and some can't even read...

Jakob M. - I highly doubt most kids will even be able to understand some of the complicated statistics of crack dealing. A simple way to deter a child from drug dealing (yes, this may sound a bit... extreme) would be to yell at them for hours, days, weeks, or years about how they WILL die if they go into drug dealing (and be very descriptive about HOW they will die). Parental lying in modern society doesn't seem to matter much, and this statement actually has a good possibility of being true.

Ela P. - I think so because as David said they have no where else to go and they don't have a good education and this is a way for them to make money fast/

Louis H. - I'm not so sure. In the book, they said that in J.T.'s gang, foot soldiers, the dealers, only made $3.30 an hour(page 100). Below minimum wage. If these statistics were shown to an older kid, it might help to remove some of the glamour and push kids away from dealing crack.

Joel T. - I don't think this is a money issue. These kids aren't thinking about the money they're going to be making, they're thinking about how freaking cool it would be to be a part of a drug dealing gang. It's about community, not a job. The pay sucks, people who do it are usually unhappy, but it's the community of it. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a homeless man. I thought there was nothing cooler than a dirty, grimy guy with a sack of empty beer cans over his back. I didn't care about the high mortality rate or the lack of income. I just more...

Hannah S. - The problem is, it's not like these kids have the choice as to what job they have or how safe it is. If crack dealing seems like a glamor profession, and the majority of dealers only make a few dollars an hour, that shows the kids situation. They don't really have an option.

Kelsey K. - Well, then the statistics on education come into play, don't they? If you haven't lived a life where you're offered many choices outside of crack dealing, and if your education is too poor to go on to a higher-ranking profession, chances are the statistics won't mean much to you. Although I agree with Valerie in that in time your mindset may change as you realize that drug dealing isn't a particularly glamorous job.

Louis H. - I'm mostly saying that it depends on the kid. it may have an effect on some, but not others. Hahaha you guys should have seen Joel's post before he deleted it. He said that he wanted to be homeless when he was little, even with all the statistics against it. Even if he was joking, it shows that there are definitely some kids out there who will completely ignore the facts, and side with the glamour.

Sonia J. - I agree with David and Valerie. Statistics gives us an idea on where we are, but doesn't give direction to help them to find a job. Statistics aren't sufficient enough to change the mindset and reality of those kids. There's no way for them to back off and search for a decent life unless the society provides alternative jobs available to them. So if statistics can't change the community's mindset, what will?