

POPE JOHN PAUL II HIGH SCHOOL
9th Grade Summer Reading

Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.

- G.K. Chesterton

The 9th grade English class will explore the concept of the hero throughout the course of the year. In order to get a jumpstart, we ask that students have the assigned book(s) read before the first day of school:

English I & English 1a: *The Hobbit*, Tolkien (0-345-33968-1)

Honors English I: *The Hobbit* and *Mr. Blue*, Connolly (978-1944418076)

There are many different ways you can get your books. Consider thriftbooks.com or check out your local library. Remember that ebooks are available at your library!

In class, emphasis will be on characterization, theme development, and personal insight rather than simply on plot summary. Students may keep journals through the summer to help them recall their thoughts about their reading. These journals may be useful in preparing for class discussions in the first couple weeks. If students read their books early in the summer, they may want to review before school begins.

Writing Assignment

Answer each of these questions below in a well-developed paragraph (minimum of 5-10 sentences). Responses must be typed, double-spaced. Please write your answers without assistance from others. This writing activity will demonstrate how thoughtful you can be independently. Be sure to include quotes and paraphrases from the text in each response. You will receive points based on the above criteria.

Due the first full day of class.

JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

- 1) Compare Bilbo at the beginning of his journey with Bilbo at the end of his journey. What are the changes and what causes them? Would you call him a hero? Why or why not? What is the most valuable lesson learned?
- 2) When Bilbo took the Arkenstone to Thorin's enemies it seemed a dreadful betrayal to him. But before he dies Thorin has a change of heart and tells Bilbo, "I wish to part in friendship from you, and I would take back my words and deeds at the Gate." Why has Thorin changed? What has he learned from Bilbo?
- 3) Examine the ways in which the battle between good and evil or light and darkness is fought in *The Hobbit* and discuss what is communicated about human nature through this struggle.

Myles Connolly's *Mr. Blue*

- 4) Do some research on St. Francis. How does J. Blue compare? What are some significant contrasts?
- 5) Connolly could have chosen to have the story of Blue narrated by a fully supportive acquaintance or disciple. What is the effect of the voice of the skeptical narrator on you as a reader?
- 6) "Your failure is measured by your aspirations. Aspire not, and you cannot fail. Columbus died in chains. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. Let us all live snugly -- and life will soon be little more than a thick, gelatinous stream of comfortability and ignorance." Explore Connolly's concept of heroism as a rejection of mediocrity. What is heroic about Mr. Blue?