American Studies (U.S. History II)
Summer Reading Assignment 2019

This summer you will be reading *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair (ISBN #0553212451). First published in 1906, Sinclair’s novel is widely considered to be a classic. You should have no trouble finding it in a library, but if you choose to buy the book, it can be easily found for as little as $4.00. Sinclair’s explosive look at the Meat Packing industry in Chicago exerted tremendous influence on the American people and was one of the main reasons that President Roosevelt pressured Congress into passing the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act in the early 20th century.

In September, we will begin covering the growth and power of America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This novel covers many of the themes we will be exploring: immigration, capitalism, unions, government regulation, transportation, city management, the legal system, and many others. Not only will you “enjoy” this novel, you will learn much about America in the early 20th century.

As part of your assignment, your history teacher will collect your responses to the following questions on the first day of class next year. Your responses must be typed and double-spaced. You will be graded primarily on your use of details and your understanding of the book, but errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation will also have an impact on your grade. When you are asked to give examples, be sure that you fully explain how and why the example is relevant and provide proper MLA formatted citations to show the reader where you found the example. The time and effort you give to this assignment as well as the way you present your answers will tell us about what kind of work you intend to do and what sort of grade you expect. In addition to answering these questions, prepare to be tested on the novel.

1. Upton Sinclair attempts to show the troubles of Americans at the turn-of-the century by focusing on the lives of the struggling poor. **Come up with one word (an adjective) that you think best illustrates the situation of the working-class in America at that time.** Give three specific examples from the novel that support your word choice.

2. **Were Jurgis Rudkus (the main character) and his family victims of American society, or do they bear some responsibility for their misfortunes? Clearly explain the reasons for your answer. **Include at least three examples from the book to support your answer.

3. **Should the government assume some responsibility in caring for those (like the Rudkus’) that are trapped in poverty?** Why or why not? Fully explain your reasons using examples from the book.

Have a great summer. If you have any questions feel free to see Mr. Kyle or any of the junior history teachers prior to the end of the year. If you have any questions over the summer, you can email Mr. Kyle at jkyle@pthsd.net.