**Department of English**

**Mr. Roddy**

**English 11 Honors / Pre AP**

**Summer Reading – *The Big Sleep* by Raymond Chandler**

**Summer Reading Analysis Questions**

*The Big Sleep* is a classic American detective novel written by Raymond Chandler. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler created a new kind of detective novel that broke away from the older “Clue” style of arm-chair-detective-with-several-suspects-and-who-explains-it-all-at-the-end-civilized “who done it.”

Hammett and Chandler created what became known as “the hard-boiled” school of detective fiction, which stressed a grittier, more realistic, and more violent style and subject matter. It was less interested in “who done it” than it was in character, atmosphere, and morality.

For your summer reading assignment, I am giving you two “pre-reading” questions to research (internet is fine). Then there will be chapter questions, and finally a short essay question of no less than three paragraphs. But don’t let this stop you from enjoying this novel – it’s a great one. Have fun!

**Pre Reading Questions**

1. Look up and list seven interesting facts about Raymond Chandler (and I mean interesting—his birth date and place are not that interesting; things he thought, ideas he had, people he was influenced by, why he wrote, what he thought of writing—these would be interesting things).
2. Look up and list seven interesting things about the history of detective fiction, the last four of which should concern the “hard-boiled” school.

**During the Reading**

Chapter Questions – The Big Sleep has 32 chapters. You are to answer the chapter questions for 16 of them. If your last name begins with the letters A through M, you should answer the odd-numbered chapter questions. Names that begin with letters N through Z should answer questions for all even numbered chapters. Every chapter question is the same, and it is:

**(page 1 of 2)**

Choose one aspect of the chapter (a character, object, aspect of setting, selection of dialogue, tone, or a short selection of the writing style) that really struck you for some reason, and discuss why that particular aspect of the was so striking, interesting, beautiful, important, etc. (each answer should be in RACE format (5—8 sentences) and therefore must have at least one quote from the book to support your ideas.

**After Reading**

When you have finished The Big Sleep, write an essay of at least three paragraphs (intro, body, conclusion) in which you discuss one major theme of the novel and how it is presented. For example, one thesis statement might be, “The main theme of Raymond Chandler’s The Big Sleep is (your theme here), and it is clearly presented though the characters, setting, and symbols.” I am looking for deeply thoughtful answers (not just surface plot summaries) and clear well-organized writing. Do your best.

**(page 2 of 2)**