

AP Literature and Composition 2010-2011 Summer Reading Assignments

Welcome to AP literature! The pace is rigorous; the rewards great. This course will prepare you well for the demands of college and, more importantly, it will expose you to outstanding literature as well as hone your analytical writing and critical thinking skills. Over the course of the academic year we will be reading and writing at a rapid pace. Therefore, the summer reading program is designed to keep you active as readers and writers.

Summer Reading Assignment #1

The first summer reading assignment is Vergil's *Aeneid*, the great Roman epic poem written some 2000 years ago. The *Aeneid* is the story of Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome, and it was composed primarily to celebrate "truth, justice and the Roman way." The *Aeneid* presents a pivotal point in western literature: Vergil drew on the whole of Greek and Latin literature to create his epic. The *Aeneid* and the *Bible* were probably the two most consistently read books in Western Europe for two thousand years (Mandelbaum). Structurally, the *Aeneid* is divided into twelve books. This summer you are required to read the first six books.

You will also be responsible for selecting one of the OPEN RESPONSE questions from prior year's exams (see list below of all OPEN RESPONSE questions from past exams) to apply to *The Aeneid*.

Summer Reading Assignment #2

The second summer reading assignment is *Beowulf*, an epic poem from the Anglo-Saxon period in Europe known to be the oldest surviving national epic. This poem follows Beowulf from heroic youth to heroic old age. This is a great adventure story, and a deeply philosophical one. Scholars differ over the poem's original purpose and audience.

Upon reading please answer the following AP style prompt:

In the final line of Burton Raffel's translation, Beowulf is described as "deserving of praise." However, in many other translations, the final phrase refers not to Beowulf's meriting praise, but to his desiring, or seeking, it ("desirous of praise," "keenest for praise," "fondest of honor"). In a well-organized essay, discuss the significance of the differing characterizations of Beowulf and, based on your reading of the entire poem, explain which characterization (Beowulf as deserving praise versus Beowulf desiring and seeking praise and honor) is most consistent with the title hero. Use specific examples from Beowulf to support your points.

Summer Reading Assignment #3

Your third summer reading assignment will be a novel of your choice from the list below. As with *The Aeneid*, you must select an OPEN RESPONSE question from the attached list and apply it to this reading.

A Passage to India – E.M. Forster
Song of Solomon – Toni Morrison
Anna Karenina – Leo Tolstoy

The Handmaid's Tale – Margaret Atwood
The Sun Also Rises – Ernest Hemingway
Jane Eyre – Bronte

You will be responding to these types of prompts throughout the year including on the AP exam, a requirement for taking this course.

A well crafted essay will follow the traditional paragraph essay format: topic paragraph (with a defensible thesis that doesn't leave me wondering: SO WHAT?); body paragraphs; concluding paragraphs. You do not need formal citations for this essay, but you should definitely make clear references to each work to display your understanding and strengthen your argument.

ALSO, As you read, we would like you to complete the attached study guide outline. You will need to complete one of these for EACH REQUIRED READING (3 total). The purpose of this outline is to guide your reading and prompt you to consider how quality literature pieces work and function. You will be required to hand in a concise, well-organized review for each major piece of literature read and discussed in and out of class. Think of these as your own collection of Spark Notes. The attached outline will help you in this process. You need not follow it exactly. Perhaps a different presentation or organization works better for you, but you must include the information that is listed in items 1-10. Each response should be a solid paragraph in length. Make sure you always explain the significance of the literary techniques (especially character, behavior, symbols, quotations, and literary elements.)

AP Literature Study Guide Outline

This outline must be completed for each of your summer reading texts in addition to the other assignments.

1. Title, author, and date (era) written
2. Three main characters and 1-2 sentence description each
3. Two minor characters and 1-2 sentence description of each

Note: #2 and #3 may be mixed and matched as your literary interpretation deems necessary (e.g., two main characters & three minor; four main & one minor; etc.)

4. Three main settings and 1-2 sentence description of each (settings should come from the piece's beginning, middle and end, and each setting's significance must be explained.)
5. One paragraph plot outline (no textual support needed.)
6. Two important symbols and their references (to a character, idea, theme, etc.)
7. Two or three sentences on style and why they're used (to show what?)
8. One or two sentences of the work's dominant philosophy/theme.
9. Three short quotations typical of the work (include speaker and why the quotation is important to the scene/occasion; quotations must come from the piece's beginning, middle and end.)
10. Two literary elements and how they function in the piece (use elements discussed in English class in prior years.)

Use a format that works best for you in answering these questions. Your study guide outlines will serve as a quick refresher to the most important aspects of these texts for future reference!

OPEN RESPONSE OPTIONS:

Open-ended Questions for Advanced Placement English, 1970-2008

1970. Choose a character from a recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you (a) briefly describe the standards of the fictional society in which the character exists and (b) show how the character is affected by and responds to those standards. In your essay do not merely summarize the plot.

1971. The significance of a title such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is so easy to discover. However, in other works (for example, *Measure for Measure*) the full significance of the title becomes apparent to the reader only gradually. Choose two works and show how the significance of their respective titles is developed through the authors' use of devices such as contrast, repetition, allusion, and point of view.

1972. In retrospect, the reader often discovers that the first chapter of a novel or the opening scene of a drama introduces some of the major themes of the work. Write an essay about the opening scene of a drama or the first chapter of a novel in which you explain how it functions in this way.

1973. An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it concludes. In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the pleasure of significant closure has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. In an essay, discuss the ending of a novel or play of acknowledged literary merit. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1974. Choose a work of literature written before 1900. Write an essay in which you present arguments for and against the work's relevance for a person in 1974. Your own position should emerge in the course of your essay. You may refer to works of literature written after 1900 for the purpose of contrast or comparison.

1975. Although literary critics have tended to praise the unique in literary characterizations, many authors have employed the stereotyped character successfully. Select one work of acknowledged literary merit and in a well-written essay, show how the conventional or stereotyped character or characters function to achieve the author's purpose.

1976. The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and essays. Select the work of an essayist who is in opposition to his or her society; or from a work of recognized literary merit, select a fictional character who is in opposition to his or her society. In a critical essay, analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the society. Do not summarize the plot or action of the work you choose.

1977. In some novels and plays certain parallel or recurring events prove to be significant. In an essay, describe the major similarities and differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in a novel or play and discuss the significance of such events. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1978. Choose an implausible or strikingly unrealistic incident or character in a work of fiction or drama of recognized literary merit. Write an essay that explains how the incident or character is related to the more realistic or plausible elements in the rest of the work. Avoid plot summary.

1979. Choose a complex and important character in a novel or a play of recognized literary merit who might on the basis of the character's actions alone be considered evil or immoral. In a well-organized essay, explain both how and why the full presentation of the character in the work makes us react more sympathetically than we otherwise might. Avoid plot summary.

1980. A recurring theme in literature is the classic war between a passion and responsibility. For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive may conflict with moral duty. Choose a literary work in which a character confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibilities. In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work.

1981. The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained allusion to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature. Select a literary work that makes use of such a sustained reference. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in the work and analyze how it enhances the work's meaning.

1982. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.

1983. From a novel or play of literary merit, select an important character who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character's villainy and show how it enhances meaning in the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1984. Select a line or so of poetry, or a moment or scene in a novel, epic poem, or play that you find especially memorable. Write an essay in which you identify the line or the passage, explain its relationship to the work in which it is found, and analyze the reasons for its effectiveness.

1985. A critic has said that one important measure of a superior work of literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of pleasure and disquietude. Select a literary work that produces this "healthy confusion." Write an essay in which you explain the sources of the "pleasure and disquietude" experienced by the readers of the work.

1986. Some works of literature use the element of time in a distinct way. The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be suspended or accelerated. Choose a novel, an epic, or a play of recognized

literary merit and show how the author's manipulation of time contributes to the effectiveness of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1987. Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Choose such a novel or play and note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or audience's views. Avoid plot summary.

1988. Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1989. In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O'Connor has written, "I am interested in making a good case for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see." Write an essay in which you "make a good case for distortion," as distinct from literary realism. Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are "distorted" and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of the work. Avoid plot summary.

1990. Choose a novel or play that depicts a conflict between a parent (or a parental figure) and a son or daughter. Write an essay in which you analyze the sources of the conflict and explain how the conflict contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid plot summary.

1991. Many plays and novels use contrasting places (for example, two countries, two cities or towns, two houses, or the land and the sea) to represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the work. Choose a novel or play that contrasts two such places. Write an essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.

1992. In a novel or play, a confidant (male) or a confidante (female) is a character, often a friend or relative of the hero or heroine, whose role is to be present when the hero or heroine needs a sympathetic listener to confide in. Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the confidant or confidante can be as much "the reader's friend as the protagonist's." However, the author sometimes uses this character for other purposes as well. Choose a confidant or confidante from a novel or play of recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you discuss the various ways this character functions in the work. You may write your essay on one of the following novels or plays or on another of comparable quality. Do not write on a poem or short story.

1993. "The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter." Choose a novel, play, or long poem in which a scene or character awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader. Write an essay in which you show why this laughter is "thoughtful" and how it contributes to the meaning of the work.

1994. In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Choose a novel or play of literary merit and write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in the work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters. Avoid plot summary.

1995. Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. Choose a novel or a play in which such a character plays a significant role and show how that character's alienation reveals the surrounding society's assumptions or moral values.

1996. The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy endings. "The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting response from their readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through moral development. By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events—a marriage or a last minute rescue from death—but some kind of spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death." Choose a novel or play that has the kind of ending Weldon describes. In a well-written essay, identify the "spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation" evident in the ending and explain its significance in the work as a whole.

1997. Novels and plays often include scenes of weddings, funerals, parties, and other social occasions. Such scenes may reveal the values of the characters and the society in which they live. Select a novel or play that includes such a scene and, in a focused essay, discuss the contribution the scene makes to the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of literary merit.

1998. In his essay "Walking," Henry David Thoreau offers the following assessment of literature:

In literature it is only the wild that attracts us.
Dullness is but another name for tameness. It is the
uncivilized free and wild thinking in *Hamlet* and *The Illiad*,
in all scriptures and mythologies, not learned in schools,
that delights us.

From the works that you have studied in school, choose a novel, play, or epic poem that you may initially have thought was conventional and tame but that you now value for its "uncivilized free and wild thinking." Write an essay in which you explain what constitutes its "uncivilized free and wild thinking" and how that thinking is central to the value of the work as a whole. Support your ideas with specific references to the work you choose.

1999. The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time."

From a novel or play choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict with one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may use one of the novels or plays listed below or another novel or work of similar literary quality.

2000. Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery. In these works, the solution to the mystery may be less important than the knowledge gained in the process of its investigation. Choose a novel or play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery. Then write an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain how the investigation illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2001. One definition of madness is "mental delusion or the eccentric behavior arising from it." But Emily Dickinson wrote

Much madness is divinest Sense—
To a discerning Eye—

Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a "discerning Eye." Select a novel or play in which a character's apparent madness or irrational behavior plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain what this delusion or eccentric behavior consists of and how it might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the "madness" to the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2002 Morally ambiguous characters - characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying with them as purely good or purely evil - are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

FORM B: Often in literature a character's success in achieving a goal depends upon keeping a secret and divulging it only at the right moment, if at all. Choose a novel or play of literary merit that requires a character to keep a secret. In a well-organized essay, briefly explain the necessity for secrecy and how the character's choice to reveal or keep the secret affects the plot and contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

2003 According to critic Northrop Frye, "Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power above them, more likely to be struck by

lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning."

Select a novel or play in which a tragic figure functions as an instrument of the suffering of others. Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.

FORM B: Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures – national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional. Such collisions can call a character's unique sense of identity into question. Select a novel or play in which a character responds to such a cultural collision. Then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response and explain its relevance to the work as a whole.

2004 Critic Roland Barthe's has said, "Literature is the question minus the answer." Choose a novel, or play, and, considering Barthe's observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers answers. Explain how the author's treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

FORM B: The most important themes in literature are sometimes developed in scenes in which a death or deaths take place. Choose a novel or play and write a well-organized essay in which you show how a specific death scene helps to illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

2005 In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), the protagonist Edna Pontellier is said to possess "that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions." In a novel or play that you have studied, identify a character who conforms outwardly while questioning inwardly. Then write an essay in which you analyze how this tension between outward conformity and inward questioning contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid mere plot summary.

FORM B: One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in a novel or drama struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.

2006 Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

FORM B: In many works of literature, a physical journey – the literal movement from one place to another – plays a central role. Choose a novel, play or epic poem in which a physical journey is an important element and discuss how the journey adds to the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

2007 In many works of literature, past events can effect, positively or negatively, the present actions, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

FORM B: Works of literature often depict acts of betrayal. Friends and even family may betray a protagonist; main characters may likewise be guilty of treachery or may betray their own values. Select a novel or play that includes such acts of betrayal. Then, in a well written essay, analyze the nature of the betrayal and show how it contributes to the work as a whole.

2008 In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work. You may choose a work from the list below or another appropriate novel or play of similar literary quality. Do not merely summarize the plot.