

AP literature summer reading list: 2009

Dear students,

We are pleased that you have registered for AP English literature and composition. You have chosen a challenging but rewarding path. This is a class for students with intellectual curiosity and a strong work ethic. We hope you will enjoy and learn from your summer reading.

-----Ms. Crewdson and Ms. Skelton

We have designed these summer assignments with specific goals in mind:

- to help you build confidence and competence as readers of complex texts
- to give you, when you enter class in the fall, an immediate basis for discussion of literature—elements like narrative viewpoint, symbolism, plot structure, etc.
- to set up a basis for comparison with other works we will read during the year
- to provide you with the beginnings of a repertoire of works you can write about on the AP lit exam next spring
- last but not least, to enrich your mind and stimulate your imagination

If you are willing and able to purchase your own copies of these books, you can annotate as you read and will have the books to refer to later in the year. If not, you can find these works in a local library or online. You will find suggestions for annotating at the end of this packet.

You will read the epic poem *Beowulf*, Albert Camus' novel *The Stranger*, and one other classic novel chosen from a list. For each of these three works, you must complete a set of notes following a template given below. Review the template before you start reading so you can take notes or annotate as you go. We will collect and assign points for these notes on the second day of school. You also will write about the novels on in-class essays during the first marking period.

Beowulf

Written by a nameless poet toward the end of the first millennium, this epic features Beowulf, a superhero who fights the fearsome monster Grendel. It is considered one of the first great works of English literature. You will be glad you read *Beowulf* when we get to John Gardner's 1971 novel *Grendel*, which presents the story from the point of view of Beowulf's chief antagonist.

We recommend Seamus Heaney's best-selling 2000 translation, which "brings the poem into focus again as a work of the greatest imaginative intensity," according to poet Edward Hirsch. Available in paperback, Heaney's translation comes with the original Anglo-Saxon text on facing pages. If you cannot obtain the Heaney translation, Burton Raffel's also is good. The full text, translated by Francis Gummere, is available at several sites online.

***The Stranger* by Albert Camus**

This absurdist / existentialist classic by a famous French writer, first published in 1942, has been read, discussed and debated by generations of students, including Whitman AP lit scholars. The narrator's unconventional attitudes towards life and death will challenge your assumptions. And you may recognize him in Gardner's version of Grendel.

If you buy this book or check it out, try to get the translation by Matthew Ward. An older translation, by Stewart Gilbert, is available online.

Choice Novels

classics from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries

(Read one from this list. DO NOT choose a novel you read earlier for a high school class.)

Emma Jane Austen

Tom Jones Henry Fielding

Moll Flanders Daniel Defoe

Robinson Crusoe Daniel Defoe

David Copperfield Charles Dickens

Middlemarch George Eliot

Vanity Fair William Makepeace Thackeray

Fathers and Sons Ivan Turgenev

Dead Souls Nikolai Gogol

The Death of Ivan Ilyich Leo Tolstoy

Anna Karenina Leo Tolstoy

Notes from the Underground Fyodor
Dostoyevsky

Madame Bovary Gustave Flaubert

The Red and the Black Stendhal

The Awakening Kate Chopin

The Portrait of a Lady Henry James

The Ambassadors Henry James

The Age of Innocence Edith Wharton

Death Comes to the Archbishop

Willa Cather

The Return of the Native Thomas Hardy

Jane Eyre Charlotte Bronte

Wuthering Heights Emily Bronte

Billy Budd Herman Melville

Moby-Dick Herman Melville

The Scarlet Letter Nathaniel Hawthorne

An American Tragedy Theodore Dreiser

Babbitt Sinclair Lewis

Heart of Darkness Joseph Conrad

Lord Jim Joseph Conrad

The Trial Franz Kafka

The Power and the Glory Graham Greene

Sons and Lovers D.H. Lawrence

A Passage to India E.M. Forster

To the Lighthouse Virginia Woolf

The Unvanquished William Faulkner

Light in August William Faulkner

Reminder Notes (three sets required)

Following the template given below, entitled “Reminder Notes,” type up a set of notes on *Beowulf*, *The Stranger* and your other novel. These notes will help you to review for an in-class essay or discussion as well as for the AP lit exam in the spring. Another purpose is to encourage thought and reflection on your reading. Online study guides that offer instant summaries and interpretations short-circuit this valuable process. DO NOT USE THEM.

To earn an A on your notes, be sure they are

- ready to hand in at the start of class on the second day of school
- typed
- complete and thorough, reflecting careful thought and attention
- your own work with the text—no other materials used

Reminder Notes template

Number your notes to follow this template so they will be easy to check. Be careful about spelling. Feel free to add other elements you would like to remember.

1. title and author (check spelling) and publication date
2. major characters (check spelling), their roles in the story and relationship
summarize what drives them (motivation)
3. minor characters you might like to remember
roles and relationships
any foils?
4. setting (time and place)
5. plot
summarize it briefly
chart the exposition, rising action, climax, turning point, denouement, etc.
note key conflicts that propel the plot
6. themes, big ideas (list and comment briefly on at least three)
7. describe at least three key scenes and why they are important
8. discuss the ending—is it open-ended or neatly resolved?
what do the characters learn, how do they change?
9. narrative point of view—describe it and note how it contributes to meaning/impact
10. writing style—describe and offer at least two specific examples
11. note key symbols, motifs, and / or images—how do they contribute to meaning?
 - symbol: a person, image, word, object, color, idea, action, event, etc. that evokes meanings beyond the literal
 - motif: a recurring, unifying element (image, symbol, character type, action, phrase, etc.)
 - image: a word, phrase, or figure of speech that appeals to the senses
12. patterns (what goes with what, what contrasts with what?)—these might involve images, characters, events, etc.
13. copy out at least three memorable quotes, noting page number if relevant, speaker, and context

Ideas for annotating literature

Every text is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work.

--- novelist Umberto Eco

- Use a pen so you can make circles, brackets, and notes. If you like highlighters, use one for key passages, but don't get carried away and don't only highlight.
- Look for patterns and label them (motifs, diction, symbols, images, behavior, whatever).
- Mark passages that seem to jump out at you because they suggest an important idea or theme—or for any other reason (an arresting figure of speech or image, an intriguing sentence pattern, a striking example of foreshadowing, a key moment in the plot, a bit of dialogue that reveals character, clues about the setting, etc.).
- Mark things that puzzle, intrigue, please or displease you. Ask questions, make comments—talk back to the text.
- At the ends of chapters or sections, write a bulleted list of key plot events. This not only forces you to think about what happened, see the novel as a whole, and identify patterns, but you create a convenient record of the whole plot.
- Circle words you want to learn or words that jump out at you for some reason. If you don't want to stop reading, guess, then look the word up and jot down a relevant meaning later. You need not write out a full dictionary definition; it is often helpful to put the relevant meaning in your own words. If SAT prep has dampened your enthusiasm, rediscover the joy of adding to your “word hoard,” as the Beowulf poet calls it.
- The Harvard College Library has posted an excellent guide to annotation, “Interrogating Texts: Six Reading Habits to Develop in Your First Year at Harvard.” (http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/lamont_handouts/interrogatingtexts.html)