

AP Lit & Comp Summer Reading

Due First Week of School

Welcome to my class, my destined ones—my mariners!

The goal of AP Literature and Composition, on paper anyway, is for students to engage in the careful reading and critical analysis of literature, deepening their understanding of the ways writers use literature to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers. The basis of my class, such as it is here described, will therefore be a rigorous reading and writing program. I expect you to provide your own texts next year in order to be able to annotate (and better experience) each piece. You can wait to purchase these books when I give you the heads-up on each, or you can acquire them all now, this summer. Unless I specify otherwise, any edition of the books will work, used or new, with or without augmented critical commentary. Here is the list of books we will read during the school year:

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad

Othello by William Shakespeare (this is in your textbook, but if you would like a separate copy, you should get the Folger Shakespeare Library edition)

The Awakening by Kate Chopin

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky (**must be** the Pevear-Volokhonsky translation)

IMPORTANT NOTE: The class textbook is:

Perrine's Literature Structure, Sound, & Sense AP 12th Edition

- You must purchase this book from Heritage (that is the best way to ensure both availability and a low price). The cost this year for this edition is just under \$100. I will give you the book in class, and you can settle up with the bookkeeper later in the year.

And now, the DREADED Summer Reading Assignment:

Do NOT hurry through this assignment, either in an effort to get it done and out of the way or because you procrastinate yourself into a corner, so to speak. In fact, if you are planning on reading the whole of *The Divine Comedy*, I would give yourself all of July to do so. Not only will the summer reading assignment be a big part of your grade for the first semester, it will also help prepare the correct mindset for the journey we are about to share (—and what a fulfilling journey it can prove to be!). The first week of school will include an essay over the summer works as well as a worksheet assignment. Below is the list of books to be read before the first day of school in August.

Read:

1. *Cry, the Beloved Country*, by Alan Paton
2. *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
3. *The Inferno* (or, if you like, all three parts of *The Divine Comedy*) by Dante Alighieri
(I think the Allen Madelbaum translation is best)

- **Important Note:** I will also be checking your annotations--inside your books, so make sure when you are highlighting, writing, or underlining, you can speak as to *why* you are doing so.

WARNING!!!!

I have the highest expectations of my AP Literature students, both as students and people, not merely because it is part of my job to push you and to hold you accountable, but because I want you to get everything you can from this course. Start now thinking of it as the greatest opportunity of your life, the chance for which you have been preparing all along, a challenge shaped specifically for you, my mariners; and know that giving any less than your best effort, day in, and day out, would be to squander too much for all our sakes. I do not mean to suggest that my class will exceed its own proportions—that you must choose between success in it over success in any other class or activity. No, that has never been the case. But I do expect such discipline as would characterize the best students in our school, not to mention the most enthusiastic lovers of literature.

Please come to school prepared on the first day with:

1. Your summer work (in whatever form you have it)
2. Pencils (I am no fan of pens)
3. An open mind.

Yes, this course is a great start to becoming a well-read individual. That’s true—not unlike any of your previous classes. But that is hardly the point of the journey I am proposing we take. “I am become a name,” Tennyson’s Ulysses recognizes. I suppose, rather than writing “an open mind” for #3 above, I might quote Wordsworth here, and say, “bring with you a heart/ That watches and receives.” But I’ll take a slightly different tack instead. See below. (I quote this guy a lot, by the way.)

Champing at the bit, whatever else,

Mr. DeStefano

*“Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned the earth much?
Have you practiced so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?*

*Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun....there are millions of suns left,
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand....nor look through the eyes of the dead....nor
feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.”*

Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*)

*****You can also find this on-line at HHS website*****