

## **AP ENGLISH LITERATURE + COMPOSITION**

### Summer Reading Assignment 2023–2024

Welcome to AP English Literature & Composition! The overall goal of this course is to help students be effective and confident readers, writers, listeners, speakers, and analyzers. Since this is a college-level course, the workload can be challenging and expectations are high. Further, some texts will cover more mature content and language, so an appropriate level of maturity is expected from students.

The purpose of the AP English Literature Summer Assignment is to keep reading skills sharp. “As they read, students should consider a work’s **structure, style, and themes** as well as its use of **figurative language, imagery, and symbolism**” (The College Board). Students should read deliberately, taking time to understand a work’s complexity and to analyze how that meaning is embodied in literary form. Students should also consider the **social and historical values** the work reflects. AP students think for themselves, question what they read, and present their own ideas. Every assignment I give you has a purpose, even when you may not see it. As you switch to an analytical mindset for this course, I expect you to question everything; this includes readings, assignments, and my teaching.

1. Annotate~Select one of the books from the list provided, read it, and annotate it (at least 75 annotations throughout the book). DON’T just underline, know why you are underlining it. Make sure it serves a purpose in some way. Make your annotations meaningful, look for elements that are impactful to the novel. **Highlighting/underlining alone is not annotating!** You will turn your book in on the first day of class.

- a. Figurative language, imagery, symbolism
- b. Character descriptions/changes
- c. Setting: include social and/or historical importance
- d. Structure/Sequence
- e. Vocabulary that you are unfamiliar with (define in the margins)
- f. A-HA Moments
- g. Make connections to anything: other texts, dates, opinions, people, etc.

2. Quotation Journal~Using quotations from your book, answer each of the five questions below. This should be a well-written discussion (meaning, detailed—sometimes multiple paragraphs) for each question. Typed, double spaced, using MLA format, and turned in on the first day of class.

\*From *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster; I will reference this book often. While it is not required, it is a good read.

- a. Every Trip is a Quest “The real reason for a quest is always self-knowledge.” In the novel, what is the quest? Think about the why, the challenges, and the real reason for the

quest. Choose a character and explain (in detail) how he/she gains self-knowledge through the quest. Cite from the text as you explain your answer.

- b. It's More Than Just Rain or Snow: "It's never just rain." Choose a scene where weather OR the environment is more than what it seems and explain the significance. Cite from the text and be detailed.
- c. Is That a Symbol?: Symbolism is used to produce an impact and create complexity in the novel. Identify a symbol in the novel. What is the writer doing with this image or object? Cite and support from the text.
- d. Marked for Greatness: "How many stories do you know in which the hero is different from everyone else in some way..." Who is the hero/heroine of the novel? How do you know he/she is the hero/heroine? Is there a visible, physical difference between the hero and other characters? Be detailed and cite evidence.
- e. Don't Read with Your Eyes: "...take the works as they were intended to be taken... try to find a reading perspective that allows for sympathy with the historical moment of the story, that understands the text as having been written against its own social, historical, cultural, and personal background." Choose a quote that reflects the overall meaning of the work in relation to the time period and explain. Be detailed.

3. THEME—Create an original thematic statement for your book. Theme=Central Message  
Typed in a Google Document on your ipad. We will use this the first week of school.

### Theme Topic vs. Theme Statement

**Theme Topic:** a broad idea repeated throughout a literary work, which is usually one-two words.

*Examples: Love, Adventure, Friendship, Racism, Loyalty, Power, Arrogance, Pride, Joy, Family, Human Nature*

**Theme Statement:** A sentence stating the lesson/message the author tries to reveal to the audience.


**When trying to create a theme statement ask yourself:**

*What is the message/lesson the author is trying to teach me about the theme topic?*

Theme Topic	Theme Statement
Adventure	Adventure can sometimes keep you from the people you love the most.

**Note how there are no specific characters or events in the theme statement!**

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**Themes** grow in development throughout the text through a variety of techniques used by the author:  
(plot, characters, symbols, repetition, diction, etc.)

**READ THE BOOK.** You will use this book to complete a Major Works Data Sheet the first 2 weeks of school. After completion of the data sheet, you will write a full FRQ3 from a previous AP exam.

"About the AP English Literature and Composition Course." *AP English Literature and Composition*

Course — AP Central / College Board, [apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-literature-and-composition](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-literature-and-composition). Accessed 3 May 2023.  
Foster, Thomas C. *How to Read Literature Like A Professor*. HarperCollins, 2014.

## TOP 8 AP BOOKS THAT APPEAR ON THE EXAM...

### 1. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

Ellison's *Invisible Man* is a long read but it is definitely worth your time. It expertly tackles race and bigotry, and its effect on the minds of everyone involved. Themes of race, identity, ideology, and stereotypes are explored. The story follows a marginalized character. He's not literally invisible, but he's invisible in a society that is unable and unwilling to recognize the individuality of the black man. It's as culturally relevant today as it was when published in 1954. This is the most frequently referenced title on the AP® English Literature book list since 1971.

### 2. *Great Expectations* by Charles Dicken

This exciting novel is considered a Victorian "Bildungsroman", or a coming-of-age story. Pip is a young and poor blacksmith's son, who suddenly finds himself the owner of a large fortune and is whisked off to London. One of the most versatile titles on this list, *Great Expectations* addresses many of the Victorian-era genres including: satire, crime, Silver Fork, Newgate, Gothic, serial fiction, romance, politics, and history. Dickens gives us a fun plot, but the deeper literary analysis questions on the AP® Exams will focus on his writing, or his prose. Concentrate on instances of his beautiful use of language, and how they affect the novel as a whole.

The character, Estella, gives us the beautiful quote, "Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but – I hope – into a better shape." This prompts the reader to consider how difficult times allows us to grow as people, and how Estella and Pip have grown from their sufferings.

### 3. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte

*Wuthering Heights* is one of the most highly regarded pieces on the College Board reading list. A strong example of Gothic Romanticism, it deals heavily with questions of emotion and violence. The language is easier to decipher than most literary works on the AP® reading list. But, where it really shines is in its considerations of class and gender from a woman's perspective. As you read, look out for the poetry in the language she uses in her only published novel.

### 4. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

*Heart of Darkness* is celebrated on many of the AP® English Literature prep message boards as a go-to literary work for the free response section- and with good reason! It's a relatively short novella containing mystery, psychology, and adventure. *Heart of Darkness* is particularly useful for the AP® exam in answering questions about the modern world it was written in. It deals with imperialist greed, taking place in the 1890s African Congo. Be sure to keep this in mind- Above all else, *Heart of Darkness* effectively explores and answers questions about morality. Does doing something wrong for the right reasons make it justified?

### 5. *King Lear* by William Shakespeare

*King Lear*, referenced 17 times on the exam since 1971, is the most frequently cited work by Shakespeare. *King Lear* is a brutal play containing themes ranging from familial love and duty, to anger and deception. This one play provides a wealth of both literary and stylistic elements for you to analyze. This seminal tragedy focuses on King Lear, who foolishly exiles his one loving daughter, giving his kingdom to his two evil ones. As you read, consider how themes of loyalty tie in with compassion and forgiveness.

### 6. *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

The main theme of *Crime and Punishment* is redeeming oneself through suffering. This is another long but worthwhile read at 545 pages. *Crime and Punishment* psychologically analyzes young Raskolnikov's crime to reveal how psychological analysis itself keeps us imprisoned. Intellectualizing events, says Dostoevsky, keeps us imprisoned. As the name tells us, the two major themes of the story are Crime and Punishment, and their relationship to each other.

Think about questions of sacrifice when studying this piece. Nihilism, the superhero complex, alienation, and poverty are also analyzed at length.

### **7. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce**

Another bildungsroman (or coming-of-age story), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is an examination of how morality and religion can confine an artist. *A Portrait* reflects Joyce's own development as a young boy through adulthood at university. Read *A Portrait* with an eye out for Joyce's stream of consciousness style. As Stephen, the main character, develops morally and psychologically, the style of Joyce's writing adapts and grows, so to speak. Utilize this title on questions of how style can inform the meaning of the development of characters.

### **8. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

*Jane Eyre* is a highly cited Victorian Romantic novel. At its core, this is a story of a woman yearning for more than what traditional society would allow her to have. This well-known novel centers on a strong feminist character, who fights to control her own destiny. Bronte's novel resonates deeply with current feminist movements across the globe. It focuses on themes of love, social class, and gender roles.