

# AP Literature and Composition

## 2017 Summer Reading List and Writing Assignment

Mr. Preston  
wpreston@mph.net  
aplit11.blogspot.com

### Greetings and salutations!

(That's from *Charlotte's Web*, which I encourage everyone to (re)read.)

You've signed up for AP Literature, a course that aims to provide the experience of—and prepare you for—a college-level English course. To that end, the summer assignment will give you some preparation for the kind of reading you'll encounter and the type of thinking you'll need to apply to that reading.

This is meant to be a challenging class, but if you throw yourself into it and accept the responsibility for your own learning, you'll have a great time. AP Literature isn't just about reading wonderful literature; it's about encountering writers who are trying to connect with you across time and space, reflecting on how those writers employ language and ideas, and finding ways in discussion and print to both examine and more deeply appreciate the works of those writers.

When I took this course in high school nearly 40 years ago (. . . oh, man . . .), I already enjoyed reading, and I'd been writing short stories for years, but AP Lit provided the texts—and the ways of thinking about those texts—that forever changed reading and writing for me . . . and forever changed me. I'm enthusiastic about this course because I know what can happen when you open yourself up to an artist's vision and ideas.

### Required Reading

*The Art of Fiction*, David Lodge

**Read this book first.** A host of books bear this title, so, importantly, make sure you order the one by Lodge! The book is adapted from a series of articles Lodge wrote about literary fiction; each article focuses on one area of fiction—i.e., point of view, suspense, setting—and provides you with one or two examples from some classic fiction. Here's what I like about this book: It exposes you to a lot of literary writing and describes the tools with which to read it; Lodge himself writes in a way that's academic yet accessible (you, you'll need to look up some words; get into the habit); the chapters are short and succinct; you can read the book in bursts, since it has no central story to follow. Reading this book first provides you with the schema for how to approach the rest of your summer reading.

*Ethan Frome* (1911), Edith Wharton

Part of what's so wonderful about this twisted short novel is the way Wharton uses a curious, mystified narrator—an outsider to the town of Starkfield (now *there's* a name)—to pull us through the mystery of the title character. An idea that you'll see recur in other fiction this year concerns how well we can know anyone, including ourselves.

*Catch-22* (1961), Joseph Heller

Here's another story with a mystery at its heart, but that mystery is less of a focus for this sprawling comic novel than the moral madness of war. Full of unforgettable satirical characters and comic dialogue, *Catch-22* takes on a task many novels and films would tackle in the decades to follow: looking back at “the good war,” WWII, as less a story of some great triumph than the story of how humans simply continued to do the things they have always done.

### Required Writing

**For the *second* day of class**, you will write a paper following the style of Lodge's book. Lodge provides you with 50 possible topics for exploration. Both both required novels, write about five of the aspects Lodge details. (You should be able to write about *five* different aspects for each novel, covering *ten* aspects in all; consider what you'll apply to each novel before you start writing so that you don't box yourself in.) For each section of your paper, begin with a fitting quotation from the book, as Lodge does; then, explore that element of the book. Though Lodge provides several pages about each

element, I'm expecting only a thoughtful paragraph or two about each.

No introductory material or linking paragraphs are required. This is not an argumentative essay, but a chance for you to practice examining novels through a host of lenses—and a chance for me to see how well you can organize and express your thoughts.

There will be no run-ons, (inartful) fragments, or misspellings in your work. Double space your paper using a 12-point serif font (serifs are those little jutting-out points on letters in fonts such as Times New Roman).

## **Optional Reading**

Below are some other works you might enjoy this summer, works that will expose you further to other voices and other times. I recommend that you keep notes on any additional book you read; you might simply record your thoughts as you move through a book or you might note the elements that Lodge identifies.

*Great Expectations* (1860-1861), Charles Dickens  
*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), Carson McCullers  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), Gabriel Garcia Márquez  
*Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Brontë  
*Underground Railroad* (2016), Colson Whitehead  
*Love Medicine* (1984, rev. 2009), Louise Erdrich  
*The Orphan Master's Son* (2012), Adam Johnson