

AP Literature and Composition

2018 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.

Great Expectations (1860–1861), Charles Dickens

An enormous amount of fun, this novel is by turns harrowing, exciting, funny, mysterious, and joyful. One of Dickens's best, it's stuffed with characters (possessing great names—J.K. Rowling clearly draws on Dickens for inspiration in naming her characters) and full of life. Additionally, the novel contains two endings for your consideration!

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.

Catch-22 (1961), Joseph Heller

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