



## Summer Reading Assignment: AP English Literature and Composition

AP English Literature and Composition is a skills based course teaching you how to read and write clearly about fiction and poetry. The following assignment is designed to get you reading and writing in a similar fashion to the way you will read and write during the year and on the AP exam. While I am only requiring you to read two books and two poems, it is recommended that you read more literature this summer. There are many lists of recommended books for AP online. Reading extensively is likely to help you on the test's open-question prompt.

1. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, by Thomas Foster.
  - a. Foster's book is a helpful guide to reading literature independently. He focuses on identifying allegories, symbolism, and character archetypes across fiction, and how to use your past reading experience to help you access the complexities and depths of difficult texts.
  - b. Type up your answers to the following questions about the text. This should be ready to be printed off and handed in on the first day of class. Your answers should be free of grammar or spelling errors.
    - i. What is Foster's purpose for writing this book?
    - ii. Who is his primary audience?
    - iii. What is his primary argument?
    - iv. List, in detail, two of his most compelling arguments.
    - v. Describe, in detail, a "light-bulb" moment you had when reading this book. What was something that made sense and helped you understand a previous text?
    - vi. What are your opinions about Foster's "Christ-figures?" How does that influence how you interpret fictional stories?
    - vii. How did you apply Foster's principles and arguments to *1984*?
    - viii. What symbols, symbolic moments, or archetypal characters did you find in *1984*? List off the most important examples, and explain how they reveal or expound upon the book's bigger meanings.
2. Read George Orwell's *1984*, and use sticky notes to track the development of Winston Smith. How does Orwell develop this character, and what details reveal Winston's motivations, values, and perspectives?
  - a. Choose a page or two from *1984* in which Winston's character is developed, and write a hand-written essay analyzing *how* George Orwell develops his character in that passage. Here are some things to keep in mind about your hand-written essay:
    - i. Include a strong thesis statement. Remember, a thesis statement is an argument. Your statement needs to be a defensible interpretation of the passage.
    - ii. Include evidence (quotes and paraphrases) from the passage to support your claims. You should include plenty of commentary too, linking claims to evidence and expounding upon them.
    - iii. Write a conclusion linking the passage and Winston Smith's development in it to greater themes or arguments of the novel.

- iv. Your essay should be at least 2 full pages in length, be well organized (a new paragraph for each significant supporting claim), and be ready to be turned in on the first day of school. It is worth 10 summative points, the heaviest weighted category of grades in my class.
  - v. Your writing must be legible to receive full credit.
3. Read the poems “To Helen,” by Edgar Allen Poe, and “Helen,” by H.D., and use them to hand-write an essay answering the following prompt:

“The following two poems are about Helen of Troy. Renowned in the ancient world for her beauty, Helen was the wife of Menelaus, a Greek King. She was carried off to Troy by the Trojan prince Paris, and her abduction was the immediate cause of the Trojan War. Read the two poems carefully. Considering such elements as speaker, diction, imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you contrast the speakers’ views of Helen.”

- a. Your essay should include a strong thesis statement providing a defensible interpretation of the two poems.
- b. Your essay should include evidence from the poems, supporting claims, and commentary linking the two and expounding upon them.
- c. Your essay should include one of the following. This should be developed as a significant part of your argument and support, not just added on in your conclusion:
  - i. Connection between your argument and a broader context (why does your interpretation matter beyond the poems themselves.
  - ii. Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the poems.
  - iii. Account for alternative interpretations.
  - iv. Employ a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.

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