



WHITE PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WHITE PLAINS HIGH SCHOOL
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Dear AP English Students:

Welcome to AP English Literature and Composition. This course is a reading-intensive course that will place many demands on you, and those demands will begin with your work this summer.

So that we may begin with some momentum in September, we are requiring that you read the novels *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, works that in very different ways examine the effect of war on individuals. We recommend that, if possible, you acquire your own copies of these books so that you may mark them up (highlight, underline, and write thoughts in the margins). You can even purchase a used copy from Amazon or from Thrift Books. To deepen your appreciation for the texts, allow yourself time to reread passages and chapters, as needed. This practice will prepare you for both the rigor of the texts we will read next year and the style of close reading you are required to do on the AP Literature Examination. Please click the links to the History Channel pages that provide some context for each novel. Doerr's novel is set in Europe during World War 2, and O'Brien's novel is set both in Vietnam and in America during the Vietnam War. **An outline of the writing assignments follows this letter.**

AP Literature and Composition is designed for students who love to read and write, and who apply themselves to every text with which they are presented. Students who are **passionate about a wide range of literature are the ideal students for this class.** Please be serious about setting up a practical reading plan for the summer months. The AP exam is very challenging, and to be successful, you will need to be able to draw on a wealth of literature – not movies, not *Spark Notes* – and an understanding of literary

techniques. Close, careful, sustained reading is the only way you'll be able to adequately prepare yourself for the AP test. Moreover, reading challenging texts closely will prepare you for the rigor you will encounter in your college classes.

We will be reading across genres and time, and many of the works planned for the course are challenging either because of their content or style. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century prose, for example, employs long, complicated sentences; classical drama uses dramatic forms radically different from the ones commonly used today. After summer reading is completed, you may want to refer to the website mentioned below to find a list of other texts that have often appeared on the AP exam. You simply cannot read too many books!

Among the literary works planned for the year are *King Lear*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Dubliners*. [Poetry is a focus of the course, and students taking AP English should be interested in learning more about poetic devices, forms, and strategies for inquiry.](#)

We expect that you all will be reading additional books this summer, so consider choosing a few more from the list! For a list of texts that have appeared on the AP exam in the past, check out this link:

<https://www.crowleyisdtx.org/cms/lib5/TX01917780/Centricity/Domain/882/AP%20lit-%201971-2017-Titles%20from%20Open%20Response%20Questions.pdf>

So, enjoy your summer (hey, reading is fun!), and we'll see you in September.

Sincerely,
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Assignment

Before reading each book, learn what you can about the historical context of each. Click the links below and read carefully.

Link to historical context: <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>

Link to historical context: <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history>

WRITING PROMPT: In each novel, characters face moral dilemmas that define their experiences with war. Write an essay in which you examine the characters' complex experiences with war and explain how those experiences shape the meaning of each work as a whole. ("The meaning of the work as a whole" is an AP Literature phrase which essentially means a central theme of the text.)

Be sure to note literary elements and devices such as characterization, conflict, imagery, motif, and symbol as you develop your argument. Be sure that your discussion of elements and devices is woven into your discussion. (That means, this is not an essay about literary elements and devices; it's an essay about meaning. Your discussion of elements and devices is important insofar as it explains how you arrived at your interpretation.)

Your essay should be five **well-developed paragraphs in length**, and it **must include multiple quotes from the text**. Remember to use the ICE strategy when you use a quote: introduce the quote, cite it, and explain the idea it illustrates.

Writing Tips: Please use this as a checklist as you proofread your essay

- 1) Always connect or introduce quotes; do not just drop them into your writing.
- 2) Review the run-on sentence rule. Avoid comma splices and review the proper use of semi-colons.
- 3) Be sure to have a strong and specific thesis that is not obvious, that is interpretive in nature, and that passes the "so what?" test.
- 4) Avoid contractions in formal academic writing.
- 5) Do not use "you" or "I" in your essay. The tone should be analytical and objective; the point of view should be the third person throughout.
- 6) Avoid the passive voice.
- 7) Edit to remove unnecessary words. **If your idea can be expressed succinctly in five words, do not use ten.** This will improve your writing style, a focus of our work this year. (For more on this, check out a nifty little book called *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Williams and Colomb or the classic writing manual *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.)

- 8) Proofread for subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement. Use “The OWL at PURDUE” to revisit the rules if you are uncertain about them.
- 9) Be mindful of your diction; choose words appropriate to the academic task at hand. Avoid colloquialisms. At the same time, remember that your goal is to communicate clearly.
- 10) **Do not summarize the plot. Be sure that you are focused on analysis.**
- 11) Do not use the language of review: “In his *wonderful* novel...,” “The *masterfully* written text..,” etc. Stick to analysis.
- 12) Always, always, always proofread more than once.

Good writing is rewriting.

Summer Reading Overview:

- Students will read required texts, *All the Light We Cannot See* & *The Things They Carried*.
- Students will write an essay in response to the prompt above.
- Students will read additional books for pleasure this summer.
- The writing is due on the first day of school in September. Late papers lose points and won't be accepted after the first five class days of school.
- The paper will be submitted to turnitin.com (this will be explained on the first day of class). Have yours ready for submission. Turnitin.com will pick up any language lifted from the Internet, and it is also now able to detect writing produced by AI. If you are found to have cheated on this assignment, your position in AP English Literature may be revoked and the teachers who run NHS will be notified. Write in your own words from your own mind. That is what your teachers will respect and value.
- Questions can be addressed to Ms. LoScalzo at gialoscalzo@wpcsd.k12.ny.us or Ms. Cykiert at olympiacykiert@wpcsd.k12.ny.us

