

## **AP Literature and Composition Summer Assignments 2025**

This summer, I'd like you to read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and a work of your choice from the included list. Please pay attention to what needs to be completed for each reading. You will also need to find some scholarship prompts which will be used in our first unit.

### **For *The Great Gatsby* and *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*:**

**Annotate.** Use sticky notes or a double-sided journal to take notes and record your thoughts on important, confusing, interesting, and/or thought-provoking passages.

**Quizzes.** Be prepared for multiple-choice quizzes *and* short answer quizzes over both books on the first day of class and during subsequent class periods. I read Sparknotes and Shmoop, too—I'll ask questions these don't cover.

**Writing assignments.** Be prepared for writing prompts related to both books in the first days of the semester.

### **For the additional work:**

Complete a **novel review**. See the example included and the instructions for writing a theme statement. This is due on the first day we meet for this class. (We will turn it in on Canvas.)

### **For college prep:**

You *must* come to class with at least three writing prompts for college applications or scholarships that are available to you. **You do not need to write any essays**; just bring the prompts. If you are having trouble finding prompts, check the Common App and applications for honors or leadership programs at KU, KSU, or whatever college you might attend.

**Finally**, try to relax and reflect a bit this summer. I look forward to working with you in the fall.

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**These are the choices for your additional work. These vary greatly in length and complexity. For example, plays are, as a rule, fairly short. Choose something that is right for you and your schedule. If you need help, see me.**

*All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr  
*All My Sons* (play) by Arthur Miller  
*An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones  
*Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy  
*A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley  
*Atonement* by Ian McEwan  
*Beloved* by Toni Morrison  
*Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley  
*Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky  
*Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingslover  
*Dracula* by Bram Stoker  
*Emma* by Jane Austen  
*Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid  
*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer  
*Fences* (play) by August Wilson  
*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens  
*Hedda Gabler* (play) by Henrik Ibsen  
*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison  
*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë  
*King Lear* (play) by William Shakespeare  
*Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng  
*Long Day's Journey into Night* (play) by Eugene O'Neill  
*Middlemarch* by George Eliot  
*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez  
*Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson  
*Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison  
*The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho  
*The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan  
*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Díaz  
*The Children's Hour* (play) by Lillian Hellman  
*The Cider House Rules* by John Irving  
*The Color Purple* by Alice Walker  
*The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas  
*Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston  
*The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck  
*The House of Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne  
*The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy  
*The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri  
*The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich  
*The Piano Lesson* (play) by August Wilson  
*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde  
*The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingslover  
*The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro  
*The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway  
*The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead  
*The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga

**Novel Review over Work of Your Choice:  
Instructions and Examples (Based upon *A Raisin in the Sun*)**

Type the following information over the book of your choice. Print and bring to class on the first day. This review will serve as study material for you at the end of the school year.

- A. Meaningful quotations with page numbers (These should be short and easy to use.): 6 or more

Ex. "He finally come into his manhood today, didn't he?" (151)

- B. Names of all main characters along with appositive phrases or identifying adjectives: 6 or more descriptors per character

Ex. Walter: Entrepreneurial, impatient, frustrated dreamer, trapped, lonely, well-intentioned

- C. Plot (specific scenes that are full of meaning and worthy of close analysis- ***describe the scene and why it mattered***): 3 or more

Ex. Mr. Lindner Scenes 1 and 2:

Mr. Lindner offers the Youngers money for their new house on two occasions in order to convince them not to move into the white neighborhood. The Youngers eventually refuse the money. This shows that the new house doesn't guarantee happiness. The Youngers face resistance to their plan from both inside and outside of their community. However, the Youngers still believe in dignity and pride as more important than self-preservation.

- D. Literary Techniques, including symbols, motif, any figurative language, point of view, etc. ***and their meaning/significance***: 3 or more

Ex. Mama's plant:

Mama spends the entire play looking after a plant that is wilting and dying in its current environment despite her best efforts. The plant represents her children who need more sunlight and space to grow. It represents her dreams for her family, which also need nurturing.

- E. Subjects (a list of topics that relate to the work): 10 or more

Ex. Segregation, Poverty, Racism, Pride, The American Dream, Feminism, Capitalism, Family Bonds, Identity, Manhood

- F. Themes: 2 or more

Ex. Advancement is only possible when those in conflict come together towards a common goal.

# How to Write a Theme Statement

## How to Determine the Theme

1. To discover the theme of a story, the reader must try to discover the author's central purpose. Ask yourself, "Why did the author write this story" and "What comment is the author making about life or human nature?"
2. In order to understand the theme, you must have a good grasp of the plot and characters, especially the central conflict. The theme usually concerns the main character and the changes he or she undergoes as a result of engaging in conflict with an opposing force. What the protagonist learns, suffers, or experiences is key to the theme.
3. Examine the story's title. Titles often provide clues as to the author's focus and intent.

## Characteristics of a Good Theme Statement

1. Theme must be expressed in a complete sentence. "Love and rejection" is not a theme statement. It is just an indication of the topic of the story. What in particular is the author saying about love and rejection?
2. Theme should describe the general meaning of a story, not specific events, actions or characters. Do not use the names of characters in the story when stating the theme.
3. The theme must hold true for the story as a whole, not just part of it. Pay particular attention to the story's conclusion to make sure that the outcome matches what you think the theme is.
4. Avoid using familiar statements, or clichés (such as "honesty is the best policy") to express the theme.
5. The theme should not be stated as advice, so do not use the word **you**. Also, do not use the words **should** or **ought**.
6. The theme should be what the author believes/communicates, not what a particular character believes/communicates.
7. Themes avoid absolute terms such as **all**, **none**, **everything**, **nothing**, **always**.