

AP Literature & Composition

Summer Reading Assignment 2025-2026

“The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart.”

—Maya Angelou

Happy Summer, future AP Lit Students! I wanted to encourage you with a little message prior to looking over the summer reading assignment. I want my students to have a summer experience that is not punitive but is preparatory. I don't want to punish you with mountains of work or use a summer assignment as a gatekeeper for the class. I want to set a foundation for the enjoyment that comes from reading, thinking, and writing creatively and analytically. I want you to learn from readers, writers, and thinkers that I admire. I'm not just handing you books and asking you to read them; I want you to observe how others analyze and how others approach the act of writing. These pieces have the levels of analysis that will promote the high expectations I have for you as my students. While I have selected two texts that serve as introductory novels to the course, I want to offer an element of choice for you to set you up for success with our first unit of the year.

First, I think it is important to recognize that organization is key for this course. Why is this important? - The process of learning something often starts out feeling disorganized and unwieldy; the most important aspects are not always salient. Consolidation helps organize and solidify learning. You will need two composition books/notebooks for major works and units for the year. These notebooks will serve as a means to consolidate what you have learned from prose and poetry all year, allowing you to retrieve the significant progress we make. Make it your own. I create a new one every year for our class. Decorate it if you like or keep it clean and clear. Before you begin reading, I would encourage you to look over this handout ([Margin Notes](#)) print/keep in your folder and watch this video ([10 Note-taking Tips](#)). After reading over the Margin Notes handout and watching StudyTee's notes system, I want you to think about how you can benefit from this organization method that will be used for this summer and throughout the year. A mature thinker chooses and develops his or her own criteria in order to evaluate the quality of texts. I respect your ability to make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, and personal experiences and when you have control over how you do that, you often exceed my expectations. So do it. Below you will find your selected readings and the independent choice reading list with the assignments. I look forward to complex and rich discussions in the fall over these readings.

As Voltaire said, "Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too." Enjoy the privilege of reading great texts. Enjoy the writing process.

Book 1: *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

Book 2: *A Thousand Mornings* by Mary Oliver

Book 3: An independent reading memoir book of your choice from the following options [linked here](#). All of these selections hold literary merit and most of them have been used or mentioned on the AP Literature exam. The works studied in this course are directed towards mature, experienced readers and may be dense, challenging, and may contain sensitive topics. It is important to read uncomfortable things. These are life stories that are being shared with you, and some have content that could be uncomfortable to read or have trigger warnings for you. I have linked a book trailer, interview, or other videos that give you insight on the writer's story, so it can help you make the decision on which one will be the right fit for you.

ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE IN HARD COPY THE SECOND DAY OF SCHOOL UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.

Assignment for book 1: buy an actual copy of this book – not digital. This book will serve as a guide on how to analyze literature using classic archetypes, common symbols, and various literary devices—skills well-read, seasoned scholars develop from years of reading GOOD literature that promotes critical thinking. This is how you should expect to read and analyze literature this upcoming year and throughout life. HTRLLAP is how we will abbreviate the book. It is suggested that you read this book first in order to better analyze the assigned novels. Read the chapters of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* in the order that they are listed. As you read, I encourage you to highlight and annotate (add explanatory notes in the margins) for each chapter as you see fit. Again, read this book for you. You will be tested on HTRLLAP in the second week of school. I will not be collecting your book, but I will be referencing it all year as it is like a textbook for this course (Note: please do not read chapter 27 "A Test Case"-we will read and discuss that one together).

Assignment for book 2: Poetry is a big part of the AP Literature & Composition. It is a staple, not an afterthought of the course. We will be tackling many poets and poems this year. Poetry stands in the gap when we have thoughts and feelings – either positive or negative – that we cannot put into words. Poetry helps us celebrate and grieve. Poetry helps us comprehend the vastness of our word and the minute details within it. Just as some people prefer jazz over pop or hip hop over country, poetry preferences exist. My goal is to get you to not be intimidated or dislike poetry because you don't understand it, but rather expose you to different stylistic forms of it and enjoy it. To get you started on the poems we will be analyzing this year, read *A Thousand Mornings* by Mary Oliver. Before you begin reading, watch [this video](#) by Timm Freitas from Garden of English on annotation skills for poetry. As you read through her

anthology of poems, reflect on her gift of observing nature. Try to use some of the skills that Mr. Freitas shares with you in the video to analyze her poems. Select one or two that you really enjoyed. We will have discussions over the poems during the first week of school. In addition, we will be writing an FRQ on one of Oliver's poems of my choice.

Assignment for book 3: You are choosing from these books because they are referenced pieces of literature that hold literary merit for the AP Lit exam. Choose wisely something that interests you as you very well may end up writing on it for the actual exam. **Create 5 pages of notes** about your book. How you organize those five pages is up to you. I know that this is vague and undefined, but look at it another way. I am empowering you to do what you feel is right. You have the freedom to do what you want. You can create whatever you want. All I'm asking you to do is create five interesting pages of notes about your reading experience. What you felt was important. What was your takeaway message from the text? I do not want to create the sense that you feel the need to access Spark Notes, LitCharts, Course Hero, AI, and the list goes on. I want to know your reading experience and what you felt was important about the characters, the point of view, the writing style, and so on. When there are little to no rules, the possibilities are endless. It is up to you to make it awesome! I encourage you to complete this in a composition book-as we will add to it for every book we read throughout the year. It will serve as a study guide for you at the end of the year. Think of the notes' handout or video that I had you watch. While reading, consider the different messages that the novel conveys about the human condition. *Think about these questions as you read:* How does a character acclimate to a new environment when he or she has certain limitations? How does the point of view impact the meaning of the story? To what extent does the protagonist go to ensure his or her own survival or fulfillment of a purpose? What is the author revealing as a message to share with humanity? Your reading composition/notebook will be due on the second day of class, so I can read over your thoughts on your selection. We will be writing an FRQ and working on a class project as an assessment with your choice text once we return to school.

If you have any questions about any of the assignments, please feel free to email during the summer. If I am out of town, I will respond once I return. Have a blessed summer!