

# Olathe West AP Literature & Composition Summer 2026 Assignment

Dear Senior AP Scholars,

Greetings! We are excited to work with you next year. The writing and analytical skills you have developed in previous years in AP Language and Honors English will serve you well in our classes. The senior class emphasizes intensive study of works from various genres and periods along with writing assignments focusing on the critical analysis of literature.

**To ensure a successful beginning to next year, you should read one of the following contemporary novels: *Circe* by Madeline Miller / *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy / *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead / *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr**

\*You should not choose a title you have already read, either on your own or for another class. It is best if you purchase, check out, or download your own copy; however, if this is not possible, please contact us at the emails listed below about getting a copy.

The work you do this summer is the foundation for the beginning of next year. You should complete your reading by the first full day of class. All students will write an essay over their chosen title shortly after school starts, and we will continue working with these titles for the first 2-3 weeks of school with such activities as small group and whole class discussions, passage analyses, etc. Therefore, if you do not read during the summer, you will be behind from the first day of school. You will not complete any written assignments during the summer; however, you may wish to annotate or take notes. Please see the additional information on the back of this page for during-reading suggestions.

You may earn college credit for senior AP Literature in one of two ways. First, you may choose to take the AP exam in May 2027. If you choose this route, college credit awarded depends on your AP exam score and what your chosen college awards. Second, you may enroll in College Now. Our one-year class counts as two classes at JCCC: Composition I and II; you will enroll and pay for each semester separately. If you are considering College Now, we recommend that you read further information about College Now at:

<https://www.jccc.edu/admissions/early-college/high-school-concurrent-enrollment/>

We are excited to work with you and anticipate a challenging, stimulating, and rewarding year. Please feel free to email us if you have any questions. We will check email periodically throughout the summer.

Sincerely,  
Your AP Literature Teachers

Olathe West: Mardy Ortman ([meortman@olatheschools.org](mailto:meortman@olatheschools.org)) Aaron Schwartz ([amschwartz@olatheschools.org](mailto:amschwartz@olatheschools.org))

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**Need help choosing a book? Read a synopsis at the following links:**

*Circe*: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/madeline-miller/circe/>

*The Road*: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/cormac-mccarthy/the-road/>

*The Nickel Boys*: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/colson-whitehead/the-nickel-boys/>

*All the Light We Cannot See*: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/anthony-doerr/all-the-light-we-cannot-see/>

## Additional Information on the Summer Reading

As you read your novel, you should consider annotating, taking notes, or writing journal entries to help you analyze and remember important aspects of the novel. Although such work will not be collected for a grade, such work will be useful when we work with the novel in class as well as helping you process and retain the novel.

You might consider the following elements of the novel as you annotate or take notes:

### Structure

- Are events told sequentially? Does the author employ flashbacks or jumps in time?
- What is the central conflict of the novel? What makes the conflict complex and thought-provoking?

### Perspective

- Does the author use first- or third-person perspective?
- Is there one consistent perspective or does it shift?
- How does the perspective chosen affect your understanding of different characters?

### Setting

- What is the setting in terms of time, place, and situation?
- How does setting affect the plot and characters?

### Characters

- Is there a clear protagonist? If not, why not?
- Is there a clear antagonist? If not, why not?
- How is the reader supposed to feel about the main characters? What is the author's attitude towards them?
- Identify a couple of key dynamic relationships in the novel. What makes those relationships shift?

### Style

- How would you characterize the writing style? Consider aspects like formality or informality, complexity of sentence structure and/or vocabulary, use of dialect, reliance on specific techniques like imagery and figurative language.

### Symbolism

- What objects, locations, words, or images in your novel convey symbolic meaning? (If you struggle to locate symbols, think first about anything that comes up frequently in the novel and seems to be meaningful to the characters.)

### Theme

The theme is a central message of a work. It makes an argument about life, human nature, or the human experience. It is NOT a single word.

NOT a theme: Revenge.

Theme: Revenge can lead to momentary satisfaction but not long-term fulfillment.

- What themes can you identify from your novel? Consider what the author seems to think about what makes life meaningful, what brings characters happiness or redemption, or what people tend to be like.