

AP Literature and Composition Summer Assignments 2026

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.

Afterlife by Julia Alvarez
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
Behold the Dreamers by Imbolo Mbue
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
Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi
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 (This should not be actions they take; it should be what we learn about them from their actions.)

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—think about how it contributes to character development, plot development, and development of theme***): 3 or more

Ex. Mr. Lindner Scene 1:

Mr. Lindner offers the Youngers money for their new house in order to convince them not to move into the white neighborhood. The Youngers 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, this is the one time that the whole family is on the same page, showing that they are able to come together against a larger opponent (racism). The Youngers show they believe dignity and pride is 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**.