Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts
2026 AP Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignments

I am looking forward to working with you this year to engage in the important, challenging, and immensely enjoyable task of studying literature. While this course will help prepare students for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam, the overall goal of this course is helping students be effective and confident readers, writers, listeners, speakers, and viewers.

Since this is a college-level course, the workload is challenging and expectations are high; consequently, time management skills are crucial. However, students will find that their hard work, fortitude, and dedication will be beneficial, rewarding, and gratifying. Further, as this is a college-level course, some texts will cover more mature content and language, so an appropriate level of maturity is expected from students. The summer assignment for AP Literature and Composition is designed to prepare you for the college-level reading demands of this course. The purpose of the AP English Literature Summer Assignment is to keep reading and writing skills sharp and help students prepare for the class in the fall and the AP English Literature Exam in the spring.

The goal of the AP English Literature and Composition course is described below: "An AP English course in Literature and Composition should engage students in the careful reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature. Through the close reading of selected texts, students deepen their understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers. “As they read, students should consider a work's structure, style, and themes as well as such smaller-scale elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism and tone. Students should read deliberately and thoroughly, taking time to understand a work's complexity, to absorb its richness of meaning, and to analyze how that meaning is embodied in literary form. In addition to considering a work's literary artistry, students should consider the social and historical values it reflects and embodies. Careful attention to both textual detail and historical context should provide a foundation for interpretation, whatever critical perspectives are brought to bear on the literary works studied" **(The College Board)**.

This is your first assignment for the year and will count for 50 points. All work should be in MLA format, typed, 12-point font, Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri, double spaced, with one-inch margins. Work for both assignments should be submitted on CANVAS by the first day of class at 8:00 am. Be prepared to discuss the book and your editorial response when you return to school.

Enjoy!

Mrs. Pamela L. White, EdS.
pamela.white@clayton.k12ga.us

The purpose of the summer reading assignment is complex:

- ➢ To help build confidence and competence as readers of complex text.
- ➢ To give you, when you enter the class in the fall, an immediate basis for discussion of literature elements such as theme, characterization, viewpoint, symbolism, plot structure, setting, etc.
- ➢ To set up a basis for comparison with other works we will read during the year.
- ➢ To provide you with the beginnings of a repertoire of works you can write about on the AP Literature exam next spring.
- ➢ To establish the mindset of a lifelong learner.
- ➢ To offer you the experience of the intellectual depth and rigor of college level coursework.
- ➢ To expand your repertoire of works of “recognized literary merit” in preparation for the AP exam.

Assignment I: *How to Read Literature like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster (70 points)
Don't be daunted by the title—this is an entertaining and amazingly insightful foray into the meanings of literature beyond the literal.
Carefully read Foster's book—complete the following writing assignments:
(Adapted from Donna Anglin)

Introduction: How'd He Do That?
How do memory, symbol, and pattern affect the reading of literature? How does the recognition of patterns make it easier to read complicated literature? Discuss a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbols or patterns.

Chapter 1 -- Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)
List the five aspects of the QUEST and then apply them to something you have read (or viewed) in the form used on pages 3-5.

Chapter 2 -- Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion
Choose a meal from a literary work and apply the ideas of Chapter 2 to this literary depiction.

Chapter 3: – Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires
What are the essentials of the Vampire story? Apply this to a literary work you have read or viewed.

Chapter 4 -- If It's Square, It's a Sonnet
Select three sonnets and show which form they are. Discuss how their content reflects the form. (Submit copies of the sonnets, marked to show your analysis).

Chapter 5 – Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?
Define intertextuality. Discuss three examples that have helped you in reading specific works.

Chapter 6 -- When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare...
Discuss a work that you are familiar with that alludes to or reflects Shakespeare. Show how the author uses this connection thematically. Read pages 44-46 carefully. In these pages, Foster shows how Fugard reflects Shakespeare through both plot and theme. In your discussion, focus on theme.

Chapter 7 -- ...Or the Bible
Read "Araby" (available online). Discuss Biblical allusions that Foster does not mention. Look at the example of the "two great jars." Be creative and imaginative in these connections.

Chapter 8 -- Hanseldee and Greteldum
Think of a work of literature that reflects a fairy tale. Discuss the parallels. Does it create irony or deepen appreciation?

Chapter 9 -- It's Greek to Me
Write a free verse poem derived or inspired by characters or situations from Greek mythology. Be prepared to share your poem with the class. Note that there are extensive links to classical mythology on my Classics page.

Chapter 10 -- It's More Than Just Rain or Snow

Discuss the importance of weather in a specific literary work, not in terms of plot.

Interlude -- Does He Mean That

Chapter 11 --...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence
Present examples of the two kinds of violence found in literature. Show how the effects are different.

Chapter 12 -- Is That a Symbol?
Use the process described on page 106 and investigate the symbolism of the fence in "Araby." (Mangan's sister stands behind it.)

Chapter 13 -- It's All Political
Assume that Foster is right and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that one of the major works assigned to you as a freshman is political.

Chapter 14 -- Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too
Apply the criteria on page 119 to a major character in a significant literary work. Try to choose a character that will have many matches. This is a particularly apt tool for analyzing film -- for example, Star Wars, Cool Hand Luke, Excalibur, Malcolm X, Braveheart, Spartacus, Gladiator and Ben-Hur.

Chapter 15 -- Flights of Fancy
Select a literary work in which flight signifies escape or freedom. Explain in detail.

Chapter 16 -- It's All About Sex…

Chapter 17 -- ...Except the Sex
OK ..the sex chapters. The key idea from this chapter is that "scenes in which sex is coded rather than explicit can work at multiple levels and sometimes be more intense that literal depictions" (141). In other words, sex is often suggested with much more art and effort than it is described, and, if the author is doing his job, it reflects and creates theme or character. Choose a novel or movie in which sex is suggested, but not described, and discuss how the relationship is suggested and how this implication affects the theme or develops characterization.

Chapter 18 -- If She Comes Up, It's Baptism
Think of a "baptism scene" from a significant literary work. How was the character different after the experience? Discuss.

Chapter 19 -- Geography Matters...
Discuss at least four different aspects of a specific literary work that Foster would classify under "geography."

Chapter 20 -- ...So Does Season
Find a poem that mentions a specific season. Then discuss how the poet uses the season in a meaningful, traditional, or unusual way. (Submit a copy of the poem with your analysis.)

Interlude -- One Story

Write your own definition for archetype. Then identify an archetypal story and apply it to a literary work with which you are familiar.

Chapter 21 -- Marked for Greatness
Figure out Harry Potter's scar. If you aren't familiar with Harry Potter, select another character with a physical imperfection and analyze its implications for characterization.

Chapter 22 -- He's Blind for a Reason, You Know

Chapter 23 -- It's Never Just Heart Disease…

Chapter 24 -- ...And Rarely Just Illness
Recall two characters who died of a disease in a literary work. Consider how these deaths reflect the "principles governing the use of disease in literature" (215-217). Discuss the effectiveness of the death as related to plot, theme, or symbolism.

Chapter 25 -- Don't Read with Your Eyes
After reading Chapter 25, choose a scene or episode from a novel, play or epic written before the twentieth century. Contrast how it could be viewed by a reader from the twenty-first century with how it might be viewed by a contemporary reader. Focus on specific assumptions that the author makes, assumptions that would not make it in this century.

Chapter 26 -- Is He Serious? And Other Ironies
Select an ironic literary work and explain the multivocal nature of the irony in the work.

Chapter 27 -- A Test Case
Read “The Garden Party” by Katherine Mansfield, the short story starting on page 245. Complete the exercise on pages 265-266, following the directions exactly. Then compare your writing with the three examples. How did you do? What does the essay that follows comparing Laura with Persephone add to your appreciation of Mansfield's story?

Envoi
Choose a motif not discussed in this book (as the horse reference on page 280) and note its appearance in three or four different works. What does this idea seem to signify?

Assignment #2: Using quotations from both texts (HTRLLAP and your chosen NOVEL from the list below) as well as your own commentary, answer each of the five questions accompanying each quotation below. (30 points) *This should be a well-written discussion (i.e.: detailed—multiple—paragraphs) of the message Foster is expressing in HTRLLAP and the message the author is expressing in his or her novel.

1. Every Trip is a Quest (Ch. 1): "The real reason for a quest is always self-knowledge" (Foster 7). a. In the novel, what is the quest? Choose a character and explain (in detail) how he/she gains self-knowledge. Cite from the text as you explain your answer.

2. It's More Than Just Rain or Snow (Ch. 10): "It's never just rain" (Foster 44). a. Choose a scene where weather OR the environment is more than what it seems and explain the significance. Cite from the text and be detailed.

3. Is That a Symbol? (Ch. 12): "Some symbols do have a relatively limited range of meanings, but in general a symbol can't be reduced to standing for only one thing. If they can, it's not symbolism, it's allegory" (Foster 56). a. Identify a symbol in the novel/play. What is the writer doing with this image or object? What possibilities are suggested by the movement of the narrative? What does the image or object FEEL like it is doing? Cite and support from the text.

4. Marked for Greatness (Ch. 21): "How many stories do you know in which the hero is different from everyone else in some way…" (Foster 102). a. Who is the hero/heroine of the novel? How do you know he/she is the hero/heroine? Is there a visible, physical difference between the hero and other characters? Be detailed and cite evidence.

5. Don't Read with Your Eyes (Ch. 25): "…take the works as they were intended to be taken…" (Foster 119). a. Choose a quote that reflects the overall meaning of the work and explain. b. What did you glean from this reading experience? Be detailed.

AP Recommended Reading (this, of course, is not a full list)

THE GREAT GATSBY by F. Scott Fitzgerald
AS I LAY DYING by William Faulkner
THE HELP by Kathryn Stockton
SONG OF SOLOMON by Toni Morrison
THE COLOR PURPLE by Alice Walker
THE SCARLET LETTER by Nathaniel Hawthorne
TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee
IN COLD BLOOD by Truman Capote
THE AWAKENING by Kate Chopin (pronounced sho pan)
BRAVE NEW WORLD by Aldous Huxley
A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS by Khaled Hosseini
SILENT SPRING by Rachel Carson
ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN by Mark Twain
THE CATCHER IN THE RYE by J.D. Salinger
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Dear 2026-2027 College Board Advanced Placement Literature & Composition Students and Parents:

Welcome to the Advanced Placement Program! I look forward to meeting you and your parents at Open House and I know the year will be both challenging and rewarding for you. The Advanced Placement course includes an entire year of reading informational texts, speeches, essays, literature as well as a thorough preparation for the Advanced Placement Exam.

As you are aware, AP students receive college credit for passing the Advanced Placement Exam. Hence, passing the AP Exam affords you a unique opportunity. You will automatically earn credit at most colleges and universities, meaning you will not have to take the standard first-year English 101 course, which will save you both time and money. (Please be aware, that in some cases, universities require a higher passing rate than a three (3) for credit, and in others cases, some universities do not allow credit for AP courses. Please check with the College Board: www.collegeboard.com for clarification.)

Since Advanced Placement is taught on the college level, understand that both the complexity and frequency of assignments is far more rigorous than in a Honors or Regular English course. To ensure your success in this class, your daily attendance is mandatory. Furthermore, class discussions are frequent, and require a level of maturity and sophistication commensurate with a college level class. (See AP Summer 2026-2027 Assignments above.) Meeting deadlines and completing assignments with fidelity is a must for success.

(Please be advised that it is the student's responsibility to keep abreast of all homework/class assignments posted both in class and on CANVAS for the year. Failure to comply will impact your grades.)

Please return the completed bottom portion of this acknowledgment letter, along with your parent or guardian's signature.

This acknowledgment is due directly to Mrs. White, on or before May 22, 2026. (Once you submit this form (on time), as requested, please make sure you alert Mrs. White with your intention, by email, at pamela.white@clayton.k12.ga.us, and outline your understanding and acceptance of the above conditions. If you cannot make it to room 316 to deliver this form in person, you may drop it off in the front office and ask them to place it in my mailbox.

Attached is your AP Summer Reading Assignment. Please review it carefully, and make sure to submit it as directed above.
I look forward to working with you next year!
Mrs. Pamela White
AP English Literature & Composition Teacher

(RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM DIRECTLY TO MRS. WHITE, ON OR BEFORE MAY 21ST, 2025)

College Board AP Literature & Composition Class

I acknowledge and understand that AP Literature & Composition is a College Level Class and that the complexity and frequency of assignments is far more rigorous than Honors or Regular Senior English. Furthermore, I understand and agree that I will be required to submit quality work on time. All deadlines will be firm. I also acknowledge that daily class attendance is mandatory.

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Student name (please print)

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Student Email

_____/_____/2026

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Parent/Guardian name (please print)

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Parent/Guardian signature

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