

AP ENGLISH SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT 2026

Dear AP English Students,

The summer reading assignment is designed to prepare you for the level of critical reading and the depth of discussion required in AP English. We will begin the year with a series of canonical works which explore representations of gender, sexuality, and identity. As a critical frame for our analysis of these texts, we will use feminist theory/gender studies, one of several critical approaches that you will study in AP English. The selections vary in focus and cultural context; however, they all provide a series of critical terms and concepts to use as tools for examining both literature and life. It's important to make a plan and spread out your work over the summer. During the first week of classes, you will complete an in-class essay based on the novel you selected from the choice list and we will be discussing the three required texts for several weeks.

Challenging literature commands your full intellectual attention. Therefore, begin your reading early in the summer so that you have plenty of time to enjoy and carefully contemplate the complexities and nuances of the literature.

AP English Required Summer Reading: Novels

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

A novel of intense power and intrigue, *Jane Eyre* has dazzled generations of readers with its depiction of a woman's quest for freedom. Having grown up an orphan in the home of her cruel aunt and at a harsh charity school, Jane Eyre becomes an independent and spirited survivor-qualities that serve her well as governess at Thornfield Hall. But when she finds love with her sardonic employer, Rochester, the discovery of his terrible secret forces her to make a choice. Should she stay with him whatever the consequences or follow her convictions, even if it means leaving her beloved?

The Awakening by Kate Chopin

This novella is the story of Edna Pontellier, a wife and the mother of two sons, living in the Creole south in the late 19th century. Edna feels trapped in a marriage where she is unable to express her emotions and has no discernible identity, and she opens herself up to certain new experiences which awaken her soul. Liberated, she is determined to live a more independent and purposeful life. *The Awakening* is a landmark modernist work which illustrates the confines of late 19th century America for women and the beginning of an era of changing social attitudes towards their role in society.

Sula by Toni Morrison

Two girls who grow up to become women...two friends who become something worse than enemies. In this brilliantly imagined novel, Toni Morrison tells the story of Nel Wright and Sula Peace, who meet as children in the small town of Medallion, Ohio. Their devotion is fierce enough to withstand bullies and the burden of a dreadful secret. It endures even after Nel has grown up to be a pillar of the black community and Sula has become a pariah. But their friendship ends in an unforgivable betrayal, or does it end? Terrifying, comic, ribald and tragic, *Sula* overflows with life.

Plus a choice novel from the following list (Pick ONE):

Purple Hibiscus by Chimimanda Ngozi Adiche

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Alias Grace by Margaret Atwood

Emma by Jane Austen

Go Tell it on the Mountain by James Baldwin

Wuthering Heights by Charlotte Bronte

Kindred by Octavia Butler

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky

The Memory Keeper's Daughter by Kim Edwards

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

James by Percival Everett

The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner

Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (do not choose if it was your choice book last year)

The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The Road by Cormac McCarthy

Atonement by Ian McEwan

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy

King Lear by William Shakespeare

White Teeth by Zadie Smith

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy

The Color Purple by Alice Walker

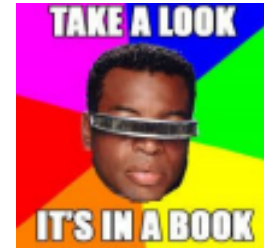
The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

The Nickel Boys by Colson Whitehead

Orlando by Virginia Woolf

Sing, Unburied Sing by Jesmyn Ward

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde



AP ENGLISH SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT (Due on the first day of school)

1) **Annotation.** You **MUST** annotate each of the four texts, engaging fully with the language and thinking critically.

-Read purposefully and critically, **annotating** and thinking deeply as you read.

- Look for the development of certain **themes, metaphors, and symbols**;
- Examine how **characterization** is achieved;
- Consider the role of **point of view** and how the story is told (flashbacks, switch in focal characters);
- Explore how the **setting** is depicted and what this reveals about characters and themes.

-How to annotate:

- **Highlight language:** underline or highlight key words, phrases, and sentences as you read
- **Comment in the margins:** write down your observations; include commentary on your understanding- questions, comments, ideas, reactions, predictions
- **Put a star next to important quotes** that you'd like to refer to in class discussions
- **Be consistent.** It should be clear in your annotations that you have read the entire text. This may not necessarily mean annotations on every page, but your engagement with the text should be clear throughout.

Note: **Annotations will be checked for a summative grade.** You must have a new copy of each text (the annotations must only be your own) and you must bring these books in with you to class. It's fine to listen to an audiobook, but you must also annotate the book. If you have another system (using sticky notes to comment throughout, taking notes at the end of each chapter, etc), that's fine. The goal is to see your ideas and analysis as you read.

2) **Reading Journals.** You will write **TWO** one-paragraph journal entries about **EACH** of the required novels. (Not the choice novel).

You will choose when to write these entries and what you want to focus on. Comment on a scene or an aspect of the text that you find particularly engaging. Use an analytical voice (avoid "I statements") and be specific, using quotes from the text. Avoid plot summary. This is fairly open ended, allowing you to remark on what you find intriguing and complex.

Unless you have a school-documented computer accommodation, **your journals must be handwritten in a physical notebook and will be turned in at the start of the school year.** If you have a computer accommodation, it should be typed in a GoogleDoc, giving your teacher full access to your revision history.

Happy reading!