

AP English Literature and Composition Summer Reading

Welcome to AP English Literature and Composition! This class is a rigorous, college-level course, and it is designed to challenge you to read deeply, think critically, and write clearly about the curiosities and insights you will have in response to literature. Over the year, you will engage with complex texts and grow your ability to analyze how authors create meaning. You will be using the skills you have learned in previous English classes as a starting point to develop new skills and new ways of thinking. The race is long in AP Lit, and you will be asked to challenge yourself every day until we reach the end of the school year.

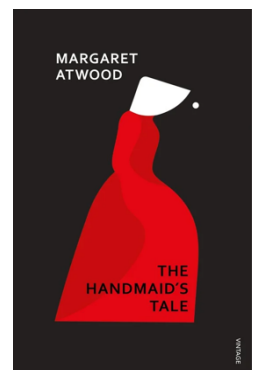
A central focus of AP Lit is determining whether a work possesses literary merit and being able to explain how and why. An important skill for this course is evaluation. You can read. You can think about what you've read. You can write about what you think. Now we need to further develop those abilities by examining how we make judgements about what we read. Actively consider how you evaluate texts.

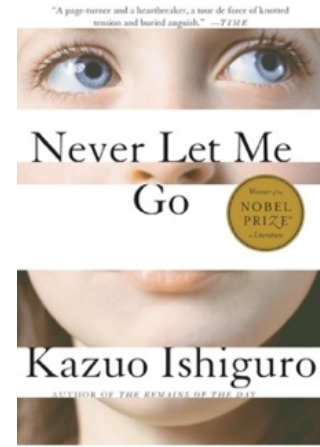
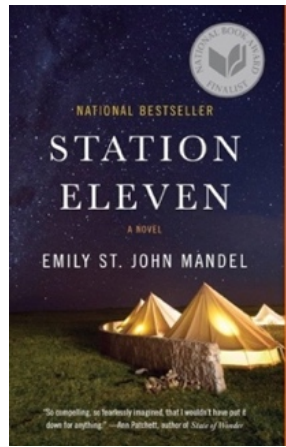
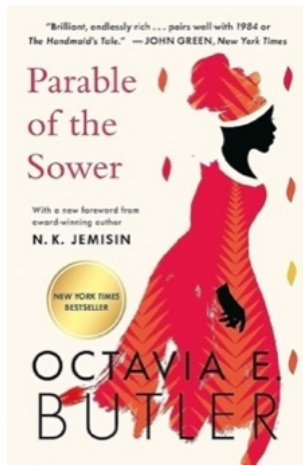
The summer assignment is meant to give you a preview of the expectations for this class. As you complete the reading, keep in mind that your goal is not perfection, but engagement: wrestle with the text, ask questions, push your thinking beyond simplified understandings, and be willing to take intellectual risks. In this class you will be expected to move beyond summary and demonstrate independent thinking. I will be here to support you as you enter the unknown, but you will be expected to put in your best effort every day.

Come prepared in the fall to discuss your ideas, build on them, and revise them through our work together as a class. Thinking critically about a work of fiction sounds like an easy task, but this class will ask you to reframe your thinking through in-depth discussions, frequent practice of multiple skills, and continuous revisions. I am so excited for the year of learning ahead!

Your summer reading assignment is to read and think seriously about **THREE** novels of literary merit.

1. As your first text, please read *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. As you read, annotate and keep track of key passages regarding the following priorities:
 - What is the author's stance or criticism regarding the sources and nature of oppression?
 - How is power enforced or inflicted, and what are its tangible and intangible consequences?
 - To what extent is individual agency (think: autonomy, freedom, independence, rebellion) successfully enacted or negotiated by oppressed individuals?
 - What role do secret behaviors and information play in the defiance or enforcement of power?
 - What is the impact of oppression on the oppressor?
 - Considering the world beyond the text (whether the context within which it was written or the context in which you are reading), what broader social criticisms, themes, or warnings arise as meaningful and relevant?
2. As your second text, choose from the following list:
 - Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro
 - Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel
 - Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler





While you read consider: What is the setting of this story? Who are the primary characters? What are their motivations for action? What types of conflicts are they involved in? How much times does the plot span? How are the events of the narrative organized? How is the dystopian world created? Considering the world beyond the text (whether the context within which it was written or the context in which you are reading), what broader social criticisms, themes, or warnings arise as meaningful and relevant?

After reading the two texts, consider the following questions: Which text has more literary merit? Which story makes “the audience want to know what happens next”? How does this story do that? Consider aspects like genre, focus, conflict, character development, narrative perspective, verisimilitude, organization, universality like themes or archetypes, details like symbols, motifs, etc.

In the first two weeks of school, be prepared for written assessments and formal discussions of your work on the two texts you read.

3. Choose a third text of your choice that you have not previously read. Choose something you are interested in or that you’ve been wanting to read for a while. **You are welcome to choose any fiction text you want and read just for the joy of reading. However, remember to consider literary merit as you select your book and choose a text that is at or above your reading level.** Then, create a Goodreads-style review of the book and make a mini-poster for the text on a piece of paper or on a drawing app. Include your rating of the text, a short description of the plot that someone might find on the back of the book cover, and the author and title of the text. Fill the entire page, use color, add decorations on the page that connect to the text. Be creative and have fun with the assignment.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Paluch at cpaluch@stjohnschs.org