

Welcome to CP English 11: American Literature

This course will afford you the opportunity to explore a vast array of ideas, topics, and themes throughout the year. To begin the process, you will be responsible for reading one novel over the summer. The assignment for your novel is outlined below.

Your Research Paper Novel

You will be assigned a research paper that you must complete during the year, similar to what you worked on in English 10: World Literature. Requirements of this paper (such as page length, the number of sources, etc.) will be shared at the beginning of the school year; however, you need to begin preparations over the summer.

This paper will be different from compositions you have previously completed in your English classes. You will be focusing your writing on the analysis of a novel. You need to read the book and understand it well enough to talk confidently about the many facets of this novel: themes, characters, symbolism, relationships, historical context, etc.

ASSIGNMENT FOR THE RESEARCH NOVEL: PLEASE READ THE ENTIRETY OF THIS SECTION!

1. **CHOOSE A NOVEL.** Read the descriptions (Attachment A) and find a novel that interests you.
2. **Read and UNDERSTAND THE NOVEL.** For you to analyze this novel in detail, you need to make sure that you comprehend what you are reading. Please feel free to research/look up information to help you understand the plot, themes, symbols, development, etc. There are plenty of sources for each novel to help you with this task. Carnegie Library Databases are a great place to start your research. Please know that supplemental resources, such as Shmoop or CliffNotes, are helpful but do not replace reading the novel. While these sources can add to your understanding of the work, they cannot replace the amount of detail and information contained within your novel.
3. **ANNOTATE THE NOVEL** as you read. Requirements and examples are attached (Attachment B).
4. An **ASSESSMENT** will be assigned within the first week of class. Be prepared to share analysis of your selected novel.

ATTACHMENT A

Summer Reading Novel List

Note: *** Asterisks note texts that contain challenging content. I recommend reading a short summary before purchasing to make sure you feel comfortable.

Short Readings

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

- The story of Blanche DuBois, Stanley Kowalski and the passion that radiates between them. A play that never dulls with time, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is still as widely read, performed, and appreciated today as it's always been.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? By Edward Albee

- A dark comedy, it portrays husband and wife George and Martha in a searing night of dangerous fun and games. By the evening's end, a stunning, almost unbearable revelation provides a climax that has shocked audiences for years

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

- *The House on Mango Street* follows young Esperanza Cordero as her family moves to their own home after numerous rentals. In a neighborhood that non-residents are afraid to enter but residents are afraid to leave, Esperanza matures and discovers her own identity.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

- The plot centers on George Milton and Lennie Small, itinerant ranch hands who dream of one day owning a small farm. George acts as a father figure to Lennie, who is large and simpleminded, calming him and helping to rein in his immense physical strength.

Intermediate Readings

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton

- Wharton's story of the upper classes of Old New York, and Newland Archer's impossible love for the disgraced Countess Olenska, is a perfectly wrought book about an era when upper-class culture in this country was still a mixture of American and European extracts, and when "society" had rules as rigid as any in history.

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath ***

- In *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath portrays the downward spiral of Esther Greenwood, a young

girl growing to maturity in a time of rigidly assigned female roles.

Desperately trying to evolve from adolescence to adulthood, Esther acts out the image of a good girl while longing to be brave, daring, and different. Her muddled identity brings on mental collapse, suicide attempts, and asylum stays as she says over and over: “I Am I Am I Am.”

The Color Purple by Alice Walker ***

- *The Color Purple* discusses Alice Walker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning epistolary novel that weaves a mosaic of women joined by their love for each other, the men who abuse them, and the children they care for. When the novel opens, 14-year-old Celie is pregnant for the second time with her father’s child. From such horrid beginnings, Celie forges close bonds with other women and grows strong and independent, despite the abuse she suffers from the men in her life.

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote ***

- In 1959, Capote noticed a small newspaper item describing the mysterious murder of a Kansas ranch family of four. He decided that this might be the perfect story for him to write about. Five years of intense research followed, during which time Capote became very close to the two murderers, Richard Eugene Hickock and Perry Edward Smith. He talked to the townspeople of Holcomb, where the murders were committed, and nearby Garden City. He followed the police investigation, and the eventual appeals process until the execution of Hickock and Smith in 1965. The result, published in January 1966, was a long and highly acclaimed novel, a success critically and commercially.

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair

- In *The Jungle*, Jurgis and his wife Ona, Lithuanian immigrants, come to Chicago in search of the American dream. Harsh living and working conditions take their toll on their family, whose struggle with poverty destroys their dream and forces Jurgis to embrace the Socialist philosophy. *The Jungle* — often dismissed as political propaganda — survives as Upton Sinclair’s poignant and disturbing tale of the hardships immigrants faced in the early 20th century.

Long Readings

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

- The sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; scholars continue to praise it as a modern masterpiece, an essential read, and one of the greatest novels in all American literature. Twain’s

satiric treatments of racism, religious excess, and rural simplicity and his accuracy in presenting dialects mark *Huck Finn* as a classic. His unswerving confidence in Huck's wisdom and maturity, along with the well-rounded and sympathetic portrayal of Jim draw readers into the book, holding them until Huck's last words rejecting all attempts to "civilize" him.

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

- John Steinbeck gathered the country's recent shames and devastations — the Hoovervilles, the desperate, dirty children, the dissolution of kin, the oppressive labor conditions — in the Joad family. Then he set them down on a westward-running road, local dialect and all, the world to acknowledge.

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

- Hemingway was not known for either unbridled optimism or happy endings, and *A Farewell to Arms* offers neither. What it does provide is an unblinking portrayal of men and women behaving with grace under pressure, both physical and psychological, and somehow finding the courage to go on in the face of certain loss.

For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway

- *For Whom the Bell Tolls* combines two of the author's recurring obsessions: war and personal honor. The pivotal battle scene involving El Sordo's last stand is a showcase of Hemingway's narrative powers, but the quieter, ongoing conflict within Robert Jordan as he struggles to fulfill his mission perhaps at the cost of his own life is a testament to his creator's psychological acuity. By turns brutal and compassionate, it is arguably Hemingway's most mature work and one of the best war novels of the 20' century.

ATTACHMENT B

Annotation Guide

"An annotation is a textual comment in a book. It may consist of a reader's comment in the margin, or printed explanatory notes provided by an editor" (The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory 41).

Guidelines:

1. Detailed annotations should be spread throughout the novel. The goal is to provide yourself notes and reminders about any important information for when you revisit the novel.

2. Annotations must demonstrate higher-level thinking. In other words, they should not just be your comment on a word you notice in a line. They need to show your thoughts about a section in relation to the work as a whole.

3. Annotations should be written directly in your book. Annotations must be words written in the margins to count—they may include underlines, circles, etc.—but these alone do not make an annotation.

Note: If you cannot purchase your own book and must borrow them from a library or friend—do not mark in the books. Instead, use post-it notes in the book to make your annotations.

Grading

A: All passages important to the full understanding of the story have been noted. The annotations are marked by full detail. One gets the impression of a complete attempt to convey the entire meaning. The text has not been taken at face value; the annotations reveal an understanding of the nuances, complexities, paradoxes, and inconsistencies in the text. More than one thread exists so that multiple meanings emerge. The interpretations go far beyond the literal, derive from and are unique to that text and are varied (not relying upon repetition of ideas). ***Approximately 25 annotations per 50 pages have been made***

B: Passages have the completeness and thoroughness of a level A; however, level B work lacks the understanding of the complexities and inconsistencies that arise in the text, the originality of the insights, and the depth of analysis. At the A level, there is a sense that there is little more to be seen, while at the B level room for improvement is needed.

Some annotations may also be missing or superficial.

C: The selection and density of annotated passages encourages the surmise that the reader recognizes the central details of the story. There are instances when annotating has become indiscriminate. A thread, connecting annotations and highlighting, exists but loses focus or does not seem logical. More needs to be written in the annotations to get a full understanding. Most of the interpretations are literal or obvious and have no connection to a central meaning.

A significant number of annotations may be missing or superficial.

D: The selection and density of annotations is desultory: A little here, a little there. Though sparse, what has been annotated is sufficient to allow the conviction that the reader has read the work—though likely with half-attention. The highlighting is excessive or indiscriminate and reveals only the most minimal

grasp of the basic facts of the story. No clear, focused thread has been woven. Annotations have been reduced to a few words throughout the text. Interpretations, while at times go beyond the literal, are obvious or may reveal a misreading.

Many annotations are superficial or missing

E The annotations are scattered and random. There is the appearance that the material has not been read. No clear, focused thread exists. Annotations read as a plot summary.

More than half the annotations are missing or superficial