English 12AP Summer Reading Assignment (2026)

All seniors entering English 12 AP in the fall must read Edith Hamilton's *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, which is a compilation of myths drawn from classical literature. Paperback editions are available at local bookstores and libraries as well as through on-line merchants. E-texts can be found **here** and **here**.

As you read, keep a reading log, take notes, or annotate in a way that will help you to remember the characters and storylines of each myth.

After you read, choose one poem from the list below and write a 649-word explication analyzing how the allusion in the poem supports the poet's aim or purpose and contributes to some complexity (e.g., characterization, ambiguity, irony, or speaker's attitude) in the poem as a whole.

On the first day of school in September, you must submit to your teacher a hardcopy/printout of your essay (MLA heading and header, one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font) and upload to turnitin.com a digital version. Include a copy of the poem you selected.

You will be graded on the following:

1. Your interpretation of the poem and the function of the allusion in that poem
2. Your understanding of how the poet makes use of specific aspects of the original myth, including what may not be explicit in the poem
3. The extent to which you avoid summary in favor of analysis
4. The clarity of your **literary argument**—both at the sentence and paragraph levels
5. Your precise use of language
6. Your proper **citations** (according to **MLA-9 format**) of **textual evidence** from the poem and of outside sources—should you choose to consult them

Before you select a poem, consider the following features of **allusion**:

1. An allusion is a reference to another work (e.g., mythological, classical, biblical, literary, or historical).
2. An extended allusion is more than an isolated reference but calls to the reader's mind the entire context of its source in order to comment on the poet's subject.
3. The reference (classical, biblical, or mythological, for example) is not itself the *subject* of the work in which it appears. For example, it would not be an allusion if a poem reviews, retells, or revises a myth or part of a myth, as do Pope in "Argus," Byron in "Prometheus," Keats in "Ode to Psyche," Tennyson in "Ulysses," Swinburne in "The Garden of Proserpine," Yeats in "The Fascination with What's Difficult," Parker in "Penelope," and Blake in "Why Was Cupid a Boy?"

Before you analyze the poem you have selected, read these posts about **complexity** in a work of literature and **sophistication** in a literary analysis essay.

Choose one poem only from the following list:

1. Margaret Atwood, "Siren Song"
2. Eavan Boland, "The Pomegranate"
3. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Labyrinth" (transl. from the Spanish by John Updike)
4. George Gordon, Lord Byron, "Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos (9 May 1810)"
5. Countee Cullen, "Yet Do I Marvel"
6. Henry Constable, *Diana*, Sonnet 10, "Prometheus, for stealing living fire"
7. Samuel Daniel, *Delia*, Sonnet 5, "Whilst youth and error led my wandering mind"
8. Samuel Daniel, *Delia*, Sonnet 13, "Behold what hap Pygmalion had to frame"
9. Samuel Daniel, *Delia*, Sonnet 34, "Why dost thou, Delia, credit so thy glass"
10. Samuel Daniel, *Delia*, Sonnet 43, "Most fair and lovely maid, look from the shore"
11. Samuel Daniel, Rejected Sonnet 12, "The tablet of my heavy fortunes here"
12. Samuel Daniel, *Delia*, Sonnet 5, "Whilst youth and error led my wandering mind"
13. Michael Drayton, *Amours*, Sonnet 22, "My hart, imprisoned in a hopeless ile"

14. Michael Drayton, *Idea*, Sonnet 14, "If he, from heaven that filched that living fire"
15. Michael Drayton, "To His Coy Love"
16. Ben Jonson, "To Mary Lady Wroth"
17. John Keats, "Ode on Melancholy"
18. Thomas Lodge, *Phyllis*, Sonnet 3, "In fancy's world an Atlas have I been"
19. Thomas Lodge, *Phyllis*, Sonnet 17, "Ah fleeting weal, ah sly deluding sleep"
20. Thomas Lodge, *Phyllis*, Sonnet 22, "Fair art thou, Phillis, ay, so fair, sweet maid"
21. Thomas Lodge, *Phyllis*, Sonnet 34, "I would in rich and golden-coloured rain"
22. Archibald MacLeish, "Psyche with the Candle"
23. Edna St. Vincent Millay, "An Ancient Gesture"
24. John Milton, Sonnet 12, "I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs"
25. John Milton, Sonnet 13, "Harry, whose tuneful and well measur'd Song"
26. John Milton, Sonnet 23, "Methought I saw my late espouséd saint"
27. Edgar Allan Poe, "Serenade"
28. Edgar Allan Poe, "Ulalume"
29. Friedrich Schiller, "The Ideals" (transl. from the German "Die Ideale")
30. William Shakespeare, Sonnet 53, "What is your substance, whereof are you made"
31. William Shakespeare, Sonnet 55, "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments"
32. Patrick Shaw-Stewart, "Achilles in the Trenches"
33. Ellen Bryant Voigt, "Song and Story"
34. Augusta Davies Webster, "Circe"

To find these poems online, search, among other sites, **Poetry Foundation**, **Poem Hunter**, **poets.org**, **Poetry 180**, or **Bartleby.com**.

A word of caution: Do not assume that **the speaker of the poem** is the poet. Avoid a biographical reading of the poem; in other words, **do not read the poet's life into the poem**.

For help with analyzing a poem, consider these **20 strategies** courtesy of *The Atlantic*, follow these **10 steps** from *MasterClass*, and consult this **practical guide** provided by the University of Victoria.

For assistance with writing about poetry, consult **"Poetry: Close Reading"** and **"Writing about Poetry"** from Purdue University's online writing lab, **"Poetry Explications"** from the University of North Carolina's online writing center, and **"Writing about Poetry"** from Hamilton College.

Further reading:

To supplement Hamilton's book, you may wish to consult *Bulfinch's Mythology*, which is readily available **online** and in libraries and bookstores.

For some thoughts on the importance of understanding allusions, read **this post** from *The New York Times* Learning Network and **this review** from *The New York Times* Sunday Book Review.

To complete a crossword puzzle on mythology, visit **this page** from *The New York Times* Learning Network.

To add poems to your daily reading routine, subscribe to the "feeds" provided by **Poetry Foundation**, **Poetry 180**, and **poets.org**.

To learn more about AP English and Composition, visit the College Board's **course description** and **student course page**.

For some thoughts on the difference between English 11 AP and English 12 AP, consider **this post** from the College Board and **this guide** from PrepScholar.

WHEN WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE…

DO:

- **FOLLOW THE PROPER ESSAY STRUCTURE:**
  - **INTRODUCTION (ONE PARAGRAPH)**
  - **MAIN BODY (SEVERAL PARAGRAPHS)**
  - **CONCLUSION (ONE PARAGRAPH)**

- **OUTLINE YOUR ESSAY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR FIRST DRAFT**

- **BEGIN WITH AN INSIGHTFUL AND ENGAGING STATEMENT THAT WHETS THE READER'S APPETITE**

- **INCORPORATE (DO NOT REGURGITATE!) IN YOUR INTRODUCTION INFORMATION FROM THE PROMPT**

- **STATE THE TITLE, AUTHOR, AND GENRE OF THE WORK(S) YOU ARE DISCUSSING**

- **UNDERLINE (OR ITALICIZE WHEN TYPING) THE TITLES OF NOVELS, DRAMAS, EPICS, AND LONG WORKS; PLACE THE TITLES OF SHORT STORIES, POEMS, AND ESSAYS IN QUOTATION MARKS**

- **END YOUR INTRODUCTION WITH A CONCISE AND FOCUSED THESIS STATEMENT**

- **HAVE YOUR TOPIC SENTENCES RELATE TO YOUR THESIS**

- **USE TRANSITION WORDS AND PHRASES TO LINK MAIN IDEAS AND PARAGRAPHS: FOR EXAMPLE, NEXT, ADDITIONALLY, SECONDLY, SIMILARLY, MOST IMPORTANTLY, FURTHERMORE, MOREOVER, THEREFORE, HENCE, THUS, OVERALL, ALTHOUGH, HOWEVER, ON THE ONE HAND/ON THE OTHER HAND, WHEREAS**

- **IDENTIFY CLEARLY THE WORK(S) AND/OR CHARACTERS YOU ARE DISCUSSING IN EACH PARAGRAPH**

- **USE THE PRESENT TENSE, THE ACTIVE VOICE, AND VIVID VERBS WHEN DISCUSSING PLOT EVENTS**

- **IDENTIFY/DEFINE/EXPLAIN/ANALYZE THE AUTHOR'S USE OF LITERARY ELEMENTS, RHETORICAL DEVICES, AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES (ADD SALT = STRONG ANALYSIS OF LITERARY TECHNIQUES!)**

- **SHOW, DON'T TELL! HOW, NOT WHAT! ANALYZE, DON'T SUMMARIZE!**

- **INCLUDE RELEVANT DETAILS AND MAKE CLEAR REFERENCES TO SPECIFIC EVENTS IN THE PLOT**

- **INCORPORATE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT, ILLUSTRATE, AND PROVE YOUR MAIN POINTS**

- **INTRODUCE AND CITE DIRECT AND INDIRECT QUOTATIONS (AP = ATTRIBUTIVE PHRASES! AP = APT PASSAGES! AP = ACCOMPANYING PAGINATION!)**

- **EXPLAIN FULLY WHAT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE SHOWS/ILLUSTRATES/ DEMONSTRATES/ EXEMPLIFIES**

- **REWORD (NOT REWRITE!) YOUR INTRODUCTION AS THE CONCLUSION TO YOUR ESSAY**

- **RESTATE OR BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE THE MAIN POINTS OF YOUR ESSAY**

- **MAKE A FINAL POINT THAT CONCLUDES (NOT MERELY ENDS!) YOUR ESSAY**
- **LEAVE THE READER WITH SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT**
- **PROOFREAD AND CORRECT ANY SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND MECHANICS ERRORS**
- **BE CERTAIN THAT YOU HAVE FULLY SUPPORTED AND PROVED YOUR THESIS IN YOUR ESSAY**

***DO NOT*:**

- **BEGIN OR END YOUR ESSAY WITH A QUESTION**
- **WRITE ONLY ONE PARAGRAPH OR PAGE-LONG PARAGRAPHS**
- **WRITE "IN THIS ESSAY…" OR "I WILL SHOW…"**
- **WRITE "IN MY OPINION…" OR "I BELIEVE…" OR "ACCORDING TO MY INTERPRETATION…"**
- **REFER TO WORKS OF LITERATURE AS "BOOKS" OR "PIECES" (REFER TO THEM BY GENRE OR AS "THE TEXT")**
- **REFER TO AUTHORS BY THEIR FIRST NAMES OR BY "MR.," "MISS," "MRS.," OR "MS."**
- **ASSUME THAT THE AUTHOR IS THE NARRATOR OR THAT THE POET IS THE SPEAKER**
- **USE THE PERSONAL PRONOUNS "I," "WE," "OUR," "US," OR "YOU" (USE "THE READER" OR "THE AUDIENCE" INSTEAD)**
- **MERELY SUMMARIZE THE PLOT (ANALYZE DO NOT SUMMARIZE! ANALYSIS NOT SYNOPSIS!)**
- **MAKE GENERALIZATIONS OR UNSUPPORTED ASSERTIONS (BE SPECIFIC! DO NOT BALONEY SHOVEL!)**
- **SECOND-GUESS YOUR INTERPETATION BY SAYING "MAYBE," "MIGHT," "PERHAPS," "COULD BE," OR "SEEMS TO BE"**
- **FOLLOW A LOCK-STEP APPROACH OR FORMULA, SUCH AS ANALYZING ONE LITERARY TECHNIQUE PER PARAGRAPH OR QUOTING ONCE PER PARAGRAPH, WHEN STRUCTURING YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS**
- **MAKE EXCESSIVE OR INAPPROPRIATE USE OF THE THESAURUS TOOL**
- **INCLUDE INFORMAL LANGUAGE, COLLOQUIAL DICTION, SLANG, OR CLICHÉS**
- **WRITE "A LOT" (I PARK MY CAR IN A LOT!)**
- **WRITE CONTRACTIONS (DO NOT WRITE DON'T!)**
- **WRITE ABBREVIATIONS, SHORTHAND, OR "TEXT-SPEAK"**
- **BEGIN SENTENCES WITH COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS -- UNLESS YOU DO SO FOR RHETORICAL EFFECT!**
- **BEGIN YOUR CONCLUSION WITH "IN CONCLUSION" OR "TO CONCLUDE" (WOULD YOU BEGIN BY SAYING "IN INTRODUCTION"?)**
- **EDITORIALIZE, OFFER PRAISE, FIND FAULT, OR MAKE A RECOMMENDATION**