Advanced Placement Literature and Composition
Summer Reading 2026-2027
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GOOGLE CLASSROOM CODES: will be posted here when the schedule is finalized.
This sheet will be emailed to you.

Welcome to Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition. This course places enormous importance on improving your critical reading, writing and thinking skills. In order to get you warmed up and ready to go in the fall, there is summer work for you to complete. **Please understand that by signing up for this intensive course, you are committing to this summer work. It is non-negotiable. Even if you enroll in this class late, you will be expected to complete it. Your first term grade will reflect your timely completion of this. You are also committing to taking the AP Literature exam in May, as the School Committee now requires this of all students enrolled in an AP class.** Good luck, and don't hesitate to email me if you have any questions or concerns.

Choose TWO novels to read this summer from the list below:

1. *Round House* by Louise Erdich
2. *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead
3. *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett
4. *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides
5. *A Prayer for Owen Meanie* by John Irving *
6. *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens *
7. *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood *
8. *Atonement* by Ian McEwan
9. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte *
10. *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
11. *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt
12. *Klara and The Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro
13. *There There* by Tommy Orange
14. *Sing Unburied Sing* by Jessmyn Ward*
15. *On Earth, We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong
16. *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver
17. *The Women* by Kristen Hannah

* Any book with an asterisk is able to be borrowed from the HHS English department. See Mrs. McLean in 602 before the end of school if you wish to check one out.

Please note: some of these texts have mature content and language. Please do your due diligence before reading.

You will be writing two essays - one for each novel. The first will be based on the attached AP Exam prompts, and is due via Google Classroom **on Monday August 24, 2026 by 11:59 PM.** Once course schedules have been set, check back to the top of this document for your Google Classroom code so you can join the class and submit to the assignment posted there. Timely submission of this essay is the first expectation of this class. **Please note: if any part of you considers using any AI software for this essay, this is not the right course for you.** For essay one, choose one of the prompts below and write a clear essay in response using one of your reading choices.

The second essay will be done in class in the first week that we are in class together. It will ask you to connect our learning from the first week of class with your chosen text. You may wish to read this closer to the start date of our class so it is fresh in your brain, but please be cognizant of the demands of the end of the summer. You will need quotes from this book, so make sure you have access to it in the first week of school.

Essay prompts:

Choose one of the following prompts, apply to one of the two novels you have read, and write a well-organized analysis of 2-5 pages. This must be your own original analysis, do not "look things up" online. **BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE PROMPT NUMBER IN YOUR ESSAY TITLE.**

1. Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot. (From the 1988 AP Lit exam)

2. Works of literature often depict acts of betrayal. Friends and even family may betray a protagonist; main characters may likewise be guilty of treachery or may betray their own values. Select a novel or play that includes such acts of betrayal. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the nature of the betrayal and show how it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. (From the 2007 AP Lit exam)

3. The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and essays. Select the work of an essayist who is in opposition to his or her society; or from a work of recognized literary merit, select a fictional character who is in opposition to his or her society. In a critical essay, analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the society. Do not summarize the plot or action of the work you choose. (from the 1976 exam)

4. In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Choose a novel or play of literary merit and write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in the work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters. Avoid plot summary. (from the 1994 exam)

5. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary. (From the 1982 AP Lit exam)

6. Morally ambiguous characters -- characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good -- are at the heart of many works of literature. In a well-organized essay, explain both how and why the full presentation of these characters makes us react more sympathetically than we otherwise might and how it contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid plot summary. (From the 2002 AP Lit exam)

7. It can be said that “life is a search for justice.” Choose a character from a novel or play who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well developed essay in which you analyze the character’s understanding of justice, the degree to which the character’s search for justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole. (2011)

Basic Essay Expectations

All essays should adhere to the following basic guidelines:

- MLA formatting.
- Titles of books should be in italics.
- Introduce the author’s first and last name in your introduction. Afterwards refer to the author by last name only. Include a clear thesis that answers the prompt.
- All literature analysis should be written in present tense.
- Quotations should be elegantly lead into, cited correctly (last name and page number) with a period after the parentheses. Quotations should be explained and elaborated on.
- Third person only (no I or you or we)
- If outside sources are used, a Works Cited should be submitted with your work.