

++Before you read on, make sure you sign up for our Google Classroom page: w6ynu5pa

Welcome to AP Literature! I know you must be excited about your upcoming senior year ahead: the challenges of college applications, the excitement of prom, and the last experiences of your high school career. I am glad that I get to be a part of that year, and I, too, look forward to the challenges of helping you prepare for college and beyond. The Advanced Placement Literature and Composition course itself is a rigorous survey of some of the world's most brilliant authors and seeks to prepare you with the skills necessary to understand them. This course is designed to expand your analytical and close-reading skills, improve your composition, and open your eyes to new forms of expression. Hopefully, you will discover new writing that you really enjoy in the process.

One of the most important things to understand about this class is that it's what you put into it. Appreciating and understanding literature revolves around effective discussion, and when students are prepared for class discussion, the whole atmosphere of the class changes. If you do the reading carefully, you will enjoy the class more, get more out of it, and be more successful. I promise not to overload you with my expectations, but I expect that you will meet the challenges that I know you are capable of. I want to hear your voice this year, and I want that voice to be informed.

In order to take AP Literature in the fall, you must complete all parts of the summer assignment on time. **I will not accept any late assignments.**

Part I Due July 15th

Why it's Important—Your relationship with reading is personal and important. I want you to not just take this course because you have to, or because you are on the AP track and it's expected, I want you to be able to engage with stories on a personal level, creating a connection. Reading empowers empathy and makes you reflect on your sense of self. If you hate reading but you still want to take this class, then I challenge you to reclaim your love for it. Reading can bring calm and a sense of purpose.

Media: ["The Art of the Metaphor"](#) by poet Jane Hirshfield

Reflect on how metaphors work and help you understand experiences and ideas.

[Mac Barnett: Why a good book is a secret door | TED Talk](#)

Reflect on the quote: "We know that these characters aren't real, but we have real feelings about them, and we're able to do that. We know that these characters aren't real, and yet we also know that they are."

Assignment:

Write a 500-word letter to me that explains your relationship with reading. Think about your experiences as a reader, thinker, writer, and learner. How has/have a book (or books) opened up secret doors for you as a reader? What are authors doing to create meaning through fiction? Incorporate the reflections from the videos assigned. I want you to also include that in an ever-expanding AI world, why take this course if you can just use AI to write for you? This is not just ChatGPT or ClaudeAI; this also includes Grammarly. I want you to connect it to Literature and reading. Why analyze texts that are fiction if AI can just tell you what to think? Why learn to write well when a computer can do it for you? This can be personal, so you can use "I" statements.

Submit your essay to Google Classroom by July 15th. No late work will be accepted. Students who do not submit will be removed from the course.

All work must be done without AI assistance- I will use the revision history and an AI detector

Part II Due: August 1, 2026

Text -- [The Nerdwriter Analyzes Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks"](#)

Evan Puschak has his own [YouTube channel \(NerdWriter\)](#) in which he offers video essays. I admire these essays that range from art, to film, to politics, to literature. He is thoughtful, well-researched, and has a keen sense of timing and audience awareness. In this video essay, he analyzes one of the iconic 20th-century American paintings, “Nighthawks.” Pay attention to not only what he sees, but also notices the biographical and historical context he weaves into his analysis. I admire how he uses both images and words to teach you about the painting.

Assignment -Write a 750-word essay. Choose a work of art that has meaning to you. It can be a work of literature. It can be a painting. It can be a song. It can be any creative endeavor that has some fascinating artistry. I want you to analyze that work of art on a similar level to Evan Puschak (the Nerdwriter). In your essay, find an organized way to explain its [artistic merit](#) and value. Don’t just provide a summary of what it is; analyze how it operates and why it is important.

Why it is important -- I want you to use your notes to enrich your personal language, background knowledge, and vocabulary. For that to happen, these notes should be so much more sophisticated than a summary. They should reveal the complexity of the work of art. You have to articulate not only what it means to you, but you should also have a broader appreciation for the artist, the cultural and historical context in which it was created, and how the work has transcended time and remains relevant.

Submit your essay to Google Classroom by August 1st. No late work will be accepted. Students who do not submit will be removed from the course.

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Part III-due August 15, 2026

Read *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini - please check for trigger warnings

3 pages of sketchnotes

Organization-see requirements below

Texts:

- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- Watch these two short videos on how to take Sketchnotes: [Sketchnotes video instruction](#) and [How I take notes](#)

Assignment -- Get a notebook of your choice with the style of paper that you prefer (lined, graph, blank, bullet point, etc.). We will use this notebook to create notes for the major works that we study, so find one that you really like.

Using your knowledge of *The Kite Runner*, you will **create three pages of sketchnotes** that demonstrate your understanding and analysis of the text in a creative and colorful way. This will be done by hand; no online creation of the assignment will be accepted.

What Are Sketchnotes?

Sketchnotes are a way to take notes using a mix of words, symbols, images, arrows, shapes, and visual organization. They are not just doodles, and they are not art projects. They are a way to help you stay focused, process information, and remember what you learned.

Instead of writing traditional bullet-point notes, you will spread ideas across the page, emphasize key points with bold lettering, connect related ideas with arrows and lines, use shapes or containers around important information, and add simple sketches or symbols to help ideas stick.

- Create this in such a way that an outside observer could learn thought-provoking details about the story
- PLEASE remember to include your NAME on the back of your paper for when you hand them in September.

For this project, you will create a 3-page visual analysis of *The Kite Runner*. Your goal is to show your understanding of the work's deeper meaning using a combination of words, visuals, symbols, quotations, and AP Literature analysis.

Across all 3 pages, Checklist

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A clear title or topic for each page ○ A mix of words and visuals ○ Short phrases instead of long paragraphs ○ At least 5–10 symbols, sketches, or visual icons ○ At least 5 arrows, lines, or connectors showing relationships between ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At least 3–4 connections to AP Literature analysis, such as: ○ theme ○ tone ○ characterization ○ symbolism ○ setting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At least 5 important quotations from the text ○ At least 5–10 key words, literary terms, or short phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ conflict ○ complexity ○ figurative language ○ meaning of the work as a whole ○ An organized layout that is easy to follow ○ Evidence that you listened, processed the text, and made thoughtful choices about ○ what mattered most

Page 1: Title, Author, Catalyst Character, and Meaning of the Work

This page should introduce the work and show your understanding of the novel's meaning of the work as a whole.

Include:

The title of the text and the author's name

A written statement of the meaning of the work as a whole

Images, symbols, short phrases, and/or quotations that support that meaning

A focus on one major character, especially a character who acts as a catalyst (someone who causes change, conflict, realization, or movement in the story) for the story

Use color in a meaningful way. Your color choices should connect to this important character and help show the character's role, personality, conflict, or symbolic importance.

Consider how color can represent ideas such as innocence, corruption, passion, power, danger, hope, death, isolation, or transformation.

This page should answer:

What is the larger meaning of the work, and which character helps reveal or complicate that meaning?

Page 2: Setting, Character, and Society

This page should explore the relationship between setting and character.

Do not simply describe where the story takes place. Instead, show how the setting affects a character, reveals something about them, or creates conflict.

Consider these questions:

- How does the physical setting affect the character?
- How do location, geography, weather, time of day, or atmosphere connect to the character's emotions or choices? How does the historical time period shape the character's life?
- How does the society or culture of the setting affect the character?
- Is the character accepted, rejected, trapped, admired, judged, or limited by society?
- What role does the character play in that society or culture?

Include:

- A character connected to an important setting
- Visual details that represent the setting
- Short phrases or labels explaining the relationship
- Arrows, lines, or connectors showing how the setting influences the character
- At least one quotation that supports your interpretation

This page should answer:

How does the setting shape, reveal, or challenge a character?

Page 3: Quotations, Character Symbols, and Figurative Language

This page should bring together the most important textual evidence and symbols from the work.

Include:

5 or more important quotations from the text

At least one quotation that supports the meaning of the work as a whole

5–10 images, symbols, or doodled words that represent key characters, conflicts, ideas, or changes

One strong example of figurative language, such as:

- metaphor
- simile
- symbol
- personification
- motif
- allusion
- imagery

For the figurative language example, include:

- The quotation from the text
- An image or symbol that represents it
- A short explanation of what it reveals about theme, tone, character, or meaning

Your character symbols should show more than who the characters are. They should show what matters about them.

Focus on ideas such as:

- How a character changes
- How a character influences others
- What a character represents symbolically
- What conflict a character faces
- What role a character plays in the meaning of the work

This page should answer:

Which quotations, symbols, and examples of language best reveal what matters most in the text?

Submit pictures of your assignment to Google Classroom by August 15th. No late work will be accepted. Students who do not submit will be removed from the course.

All work must be done without AI assistance- I will use the revision history and an AI detector

Plagiarism/AI Warning:

- If your report shows over 25% plagiarism and/or AI, you need to paraphrase better.
- Projects with plagiarism and/or AI rates above 25% will not be accepted.

Grading:

The summer project counts as a major test grade for the first marking period. Grading will focus on:

- Depth and detail
- Mechanical quality of writing

Well-written projects have minimal mechanical errors and avoid long quotes, using quotes sparingly (no more than 10 words, unless noted).

Part IV:

When you return in September, you will write a timed Literary Analysis on *The Kite Runner*.

I am so excited to see you all in September. Please reach out to me at ahilburn@bergenfield.org if you have any questions. I will have limited connectivity from June 30 to July 16 and will not be able to respond to an email during that time.

Best,

Ms. Hilburn