

AP English Literature Summer Reading Assignment

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Goal: Through the Summer Reading Assignment, AP students will actively be involved in reading and writing to prepare for the rigor of the AP class. If a student does not complete the summer reading assignments, s/he will not be permitted to continue into AP Literature and Composition in the fall.

Reading & Writing Requirements:

1. *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak. This is perhaps one of the most beautifully written books of the past decade. For this novel, you will be using **Canvas** to respond to prompts as well as annotating the novel. See below (pg. 2) for tips on annotating a novel. All annotations must **demonstrate meaningful dialogue** with the text. Underlining and highlighting, while important, do not demonstrate this type of interaction. It will be your handwritten notes that show meaningful engagement with the text. **Bring this book to class on the first day of school. There will be a test on the entire novel within the first two weeks.**

Responses should be at least 300 words. All responses should include *at least one quotation* from the book that provides a specific example of/support to your argument. Cite page numbers for all quotations.

2. Student Choice Novel: For the second summer reading book, you will choose **one book from the following list** and annotate it over the summer. Within the first two weeks of school, you will participate in an academic discussion with your classmates who chose the same novel. Afterwards, you will complete a timed in-class essay. The goal of the essay is to introduce you to the kind of analysis and writing required on the AP exam.

Novel Choice Options

- *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemmingway

NOTE – You may not choose to read any book that you have previously read before either formally in school or informally on your own.

****Please also keep in mind that the shorter books may seem easier/faster to read, but they are often the more difficult ones to understand and interpret well. You will be far better off if you choose a book that interests you rather than one that seems short and easy to read quickly.****

DISCLAIMER: Some of the novels listed above contain content (plot, language, ideas) that are mature and do not necessarily reflect a Christian worldview. By signing up to take AP English Literature, you are agreeing to read texts that will challenge you and, at times, even make you feel uncomfortable. I am always available to you to answer any questions that you have, and I hope that over the course of the year, you will come to learn how to distinguish between appreciating a text for its artistic qualities and agreeing with the values and message advocated for by the author. That being said, you are required to review the content of the novel you choose from the list above with your parent(s)/guardian(s). You must turn in a **signed permission slip** for the novel you chose on the first day of class.

ANNOTATION GUIDE

additional resources available on Canvas

Annotating a literary text (or any text, for that matter) is a valuable skill for students to learn. Annotating can be defined as the process of taking notes directly on the literary text that you are reading. First, you need to know why annotating a text is useful and then how to annotate a text.

Why Annotating Is Useful

Taking notes inside a text while reading is particularly useful because it forces your brain to transact with the text while reading. Really, your brain does this all the time anyway whenever you read, but annotating provides you with the opportunity to become cognitive of your brain's work because you are writing down thoughts as they occur to you. Also, it allows you to keep track of significant plot events, characters, conflicts, literary techniques, and themes so that you can return to them more easily at a later time. In fact, studies show that after a six-week time lapse, students with an annotated text can recall all of the key information in that text after a 15- to 30-minute review session. Finally, as the old adage goes, writing it down is learning it twice. The physical act of transcribing your thoughts while reading cements the information into your memory; once this is done, you can access it later.

How to Annotate

Annotating is a skill, and like most skills, it requires practice to develop. Because most of you are probably novices when it comes to taking notes inside the text, here are a few general guidelines to follow. Once you get comfortable with this skill, you may decide to craft your own parameters for annotation. The goal here is to give you a framework at the start. Only you know how you learn best, though, so feel free to adjust or add to this list as needed.

1. **Mark key lines:** Any time you read a passage that is significant to the plot or character development, underline it and write a brief notes to yourself in the margin describing the passage and/or why it is important.
2. **Ask questions:** If a passage or scene is confusing, or if you want to know more about what is occurring, bracket the passage or scene and jot your question in the margin. Then you can bring the question to class discussion for clarification.
3. **React to what you read:** If something in the text strikes you, surprises you, troubles you, or even makes you laugh, mark it and write your reaction in the margin. Often these passages are intentionally written by the author to elicit such a response, so they can prove important later.
4. **Track themes:** As you read, you will begin to discern the text's threads or themes. Once you notice them, you can begin marking them every time they occur. This is especially valuable when it comes time to write an essay on the book. Themes are often developed through the characters, point of view, symbols, setting, etc.
5. **Label Literary Devices:** When you come across literary devices, i.e. things the author does to enhance the artistic nature of the book, underline/highlight/bracket them and label them. Literary devices include things like symbols, motifs, foreshadowing, and any figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration, imagery, etc.).
6. **Notes at the end of each chapter:** If the book is broken up into chapters, you should take a few minutes at the end of each one to list its 4-5 most important plot events. Do it right there in the book, right at the physical end of the chapter itself. That way, when you remember a key plot event but do not remember where in the text it occurs, or when you cannot recall which event occurs before which, you have a resource for easy reference instead of having to thumb through the entire book, mining it for one little piece of plot.

At the beginning, you may find this process a bit laborious, but with some practice, it will become second nature to you. Ultimately, if you stick with it and concentrate on being an active note-taker while reading, you will find that you comprehend texts more fully and are better prepared to discuss and write about what you have read.