

Souderton Area High School

AP Literature Pre-Course Reading

You are required to read five AP level novels prior to the start of the course (three required titles and two of your choice from the list below). You must then write a 5 page comparative analysis of a theme common to the two novels of your choice. This essay is to be presented on the first day of class.

Three Required novels:

The assessments of these novels are embedded in the unit assessments of the AP literature course. Students are expected to make notes as they read. Class time will not be provided for reading only for discussion, analysis, and assessment.

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
Great Expectations by Charles Dickens
Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf

Two novels of your choice:

In addition to reading two texts from the list below, students should pick two of the following novels and write a 5-page comparative analysis of a theme common to both novels. **This is to be presented on the first day of the course.**

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
Moby Dick by Herman Melville
Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad
The Awakening by Kate Chopin
Catch-22 by Joseph Heller
Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce
The Jungle by Upton Sinclair
Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
Beloved by Toni Morrison
The Good Soldier by Ford Maddox Ford
A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving
Empire Falls by Richard Russo
Waterland by Graham Swift
White Noise by Don DiLillo
Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut
Thousand Acres by Jane Smiley
Sometimes a Great Notion by Ken Kesey
[Other titles of equal merit and level]

Dear AP Literature Student,

We hope you are having a fun, relaxing summer. There are a few things to note with regard to the summer assignment. First, the English department allows a reasonable substitution for any book that does not meet the tastes and preferences of individual students and their families. This is particularly pertinent to AP literature selections since this is a college level course, and its materials are based on lists published by the College Board. Secondly, you may benefit from some guidance regarding the two portions of your summer work.

There are three titles on the required list. They were selected to represent different perspectives, display the range of the novel as a genre, and prepare students for the challenge of the AP exam. Beginning with the most conventional novel, Great Expectations is the tale of a poor lad who is the recipient of a fortune that allows him to rise to success. The plot is complicated by his love for Estella, a young woman bred to break men's hearts. While the novel is long, it is straightforward in telling its tale, and its themes are obvious. Invisible Man again presents a tale of a young man who earns a college scholarship, but he soon finds out that his benefactors are betrayers and users. The novel is primarily set in the 1940's in Harlem. The African American narrator says, "I have been hurt to the point of abysmal pain, hurt to the point of invisibility...I've set out to throw my anger into the world's face." Ellison shows an African American perspective that is totally foreign to our experience as we enjoy the comfort of suburban life in America today. This book contains several sensitive passages. If this is troublesome for you and your family, simply select another title from the optional list or go to the district website and search AP Vertical Team Reading List. There you will find additional titles recommend by teachers on the team and a link to the actual AP list. At the end of the link, there is a list of the books most frequently referenced by the test. You will see Invisible Man at the top of that list; you might consider selecting another title there. Mrs. Dalloway is a diametric opposite to Great Expectations. Where Great Expectations presents an intricate plot, Mrs. Dalloway has little plot to speak of—the action transpires in the course of a single day. Where Great Expectations creates characters that all eventually figure into its plot, Mrs. Dalloway presents characters that contribute to an overall theme that is much less obvious than in Great Expectations. You might visualize Dickens's Estella growing up into a Mrs. Dalloway who is concerned only with giving parties. The novel is an example of the stream of consciousness style that is not plot dependent and that became the foundation of the modern and postmodern novel. It is not a thriller, but the poetic quality of its language is superb.

As for your optional readings, choose wisely and do your homework before reading. Take some time to find out about the books so that you can easily produce a comparative analysis. This comparative analysis is due upon the first day of class. Again be aware of your personal preferences and select a reasonable substitute if you wish. You may email us your thesis ideas, or you may email your questions so that we might formulate a thesis together. We are also willing to read your drafts prior to August 15th. In other words, if you wish to work at the last minute, you are on your own. See you in September,

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