

## AP Literature and Composition

Falzarano

### Summer Reading Assignment

In addition to the required choice selection activity in which the whole school is participating, you are also required to complete the following activities:

1. Read the following:

- *Othello* William Shakespeare
- *A Prayer for Owen Meany* John Irving
- Poems listed below:
  - John Donne, "The Indifferent"
  - Maria Howe, "What the Living Do"
  - Yusef Komunyakaa, "You and I Are Disappearing"
  - Sylvia Plath, "Blackberrying"
  - Edna St. Vincent Millay, "I dreamed I moved among the Elysian fields"

2. For *Othello*, complete a reading journal (preferably typed) that includes:

- a. A selection of 5 moments in the action, ranked in order of importance. Include an explanation of your ranking and what each scene contributes to the whole play.
- b. Trace the use of the word "respect" and "jealousy" as it is represented in the play. Supply quotes with all of the examples and try and interpret what Shakespeare might be telling us.
- c. How important are the soliloquies and asides in this play? Explain.

3. For *A Prayer for Own Meany*, develop:

- a. Choose one theme in the text and trace its development. At the end of your reading and note-taking, develop a thematic statement (see addendum) for the work; include a list of text that supports it and an explanation as to how the text supports the theme.
- b. A list of 4 literary devices used in this work. Choose devices you believe to be especially valuable and then explain what each device adds to the

novel.

- c. A "process" essay on one of the AP prompts provided below. The essay should not exceed 750 words (about two typed, double-spaced pages). The year notation before each topic indicates the year in which the question appeared as an open-ended question (#3) on the AP English Literature examination. Students should utilize MLA format, and indicate the "year" of the topic in their title.
4. For the poems, write a careful one paragraph response for each. Responses might include, for example, likes/dislikes, what baffled you or appealed to you, what evoked an emotional response or a memory. I am looking for a response rather than an interpretation.

**The above activities are due the first day of school!**

#### **CREATING THEME STATEMENTS:**

**A good theme statement is an assertion (yours) of what you feel to be the author's main argument (philosophical, moral, world-view, etc.) in the work.**

"Material wealth is a theme in *The Great Gatsby*."

The above is not an appropriate statement of theme. It says nothing.

"The Buchanans illustrate the evil influences of wealth."

This also is not an appropriate statement of theme.

"Material wealth corrupts the rich and destroys the poor."

Now, this is an appropriate statement of theme. WHY?

It is in the form of a complete declarative sentence.

It expresses an opinion.

It is written in a general format without specific references to characters or situations in the novel.

Process essay prompts (choose one of the six):

1966: An individual's struggle toward understanding and awareness is the traditional subject for the novelist. In an essay, apply this statement to one novel of literary merit. Organize your essay according to the following plan: 1) Compare the hero as we see him in an early scene with the hero as we see him in a scene near the end of the novel. 2) Describe the techniques that the author uses to reveal the new understanding and awareness that the hero has achieved.

1967: Frequently in novels, an important character violates the laws, the conventions, the rules of conduct of a society. In presenting such characters and actions, the author's purpose may be (1) to arouse our sympathy for the character who is violating the rules of society; (2) to divide our interest sharply between sympathy for the character and desire to support the principles of society; (3) to arouse our "satiric mirth" at the character who is violating the principles of society; and (4) to laugh with the character at the conventions that are being violated. Write a well-organized essay, illustrating in some detail two or more of these purposes.

1971: In retrospect, the reader often discovers that the first chapter of a novel introduces some of the major themes of the work. Write an essay about the first chapter of a novel in which you explain how the chapter functions to set forth major themes.

1973-- An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it concludes. In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the pleasure of significant closure has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. In an essay, discuss the ending of a novel or play of acknowledged literary merit. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1984: From a novel or play of literary merit, select an important character who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character's villainy and show how it enhances the meaning of the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1987: Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Choose such a novel or play and note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or audience's views. Avoid plot summary.