

## A.P. English Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

Dear Scholars (and Parents):

Welcome to A.P. English Literature and Composition! This is a College Board approved course and is considered a COLLEGE-level class. Its curriculum is designed to give scholars the same experience as a first-year college literature course. As a scholar in this class, you will be expected to read and carefully analyze college-level texts, both fiction and non-fiction. Summer reading and writing are required of all AP scholars. In addition to classroom assignments, you will be expected to read a book from a designated reading list every six weeks and take a written test on that text which will illustrate a close reading of it.

This summer you should choose **one** of the following novels to read:

- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*.

“Jane Austen is one of the great masters of the English language, and PRIDE AND PREJUDICE is her great masterpiece, a sharp and witty comedy of manners played out in early 19th Century English society, a world in which men held virtually all the power and women were required to negotiate mine-fields of social status, respectability, wealth, love, and sex in order to marry both to their own liking and to the advantage of their family. And such is particularly the case of the Bennets, a family of daughters whose father's estate is entailed to a distant relative, for upon Mr. Bennett's death they will loose home, land, income, everything. But are the Bennett daughters up to playing a winning hand in this high-stakes matrimonial game without forfeiting their own personal integrity?” – Amazon.com

- Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*.

“There's something for everyone in this book: Windswept castles, difficult and neurotic family members, dark secrets about tragic former lovers, good triumphing over evil, all that good juicy stuff that makes a great romantic story. What elevates *Jane Eyre* is Bronte's remarkable style and skill and her sharp and complex characterizations.” – Amazon.com

- Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*.

“Emily Brontë's only novel, *Wuthering Heights* remains one of literature's most disturbing explorations into the dark side of romantic passion. Heathcliff and Cathy believe they're destined to love each other forever, but when cruelty and snobbery separate them, their untamed emotions literally consume them. Set amid the wild and stormy Yorkshire moors, *Wuthering Heights*, an unpolished and devastating epic of childhood playmates who grow into soul mates, is widely regarded as the most original tale of thwarted desire and heartbreak in the English language.” – Amazon.com

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*.

One of Chinua Achebe's many achievements in his acclaimed first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is his relentlessly unsentimental rendering of Nigerian tribal life before and after the coming of colonialism. First published in 1958, just two years before Nigeria declared independence from Great Britain, the book eschews the obvious temptation of depicting pre-colonial life as a kind of Eden. Instead, Achebe sketches a world in which violence, war, and suffering exist, but are balanced by a strong sense of tradition, ritual, and social coherence. His Ibo protagonist, Okonkwo, is a self-made man. The son of a charming ne'er-do-well, he has worked all his life to overcome his father's weakness and has arrived, finally, at great prosperity and even greater reputation among his fellows in the village of Umuofia. Okonkwo is a champion wrestler, a prosperous farmer, husband to three wives and father to several children. He is also a man who exhibits flaws well-known in Greek tragedy.

- Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

“Tess is the daughter of the poor John Durbeyfield who learns from the village parson that his family is related to ancient nobility, being the last of the family the D'Urbervilles. In trying to make use of this

connection, Joan – John’s wife - suggests that Tess pursue the son of the local family of Mrs. D’Urberville. As it turns out the Mrs. D’Urberville has merely taken the name for convenience, but Tess becomes involved with her son. Alec, nonetheless, gives her employment but takes advantage of her and in unpleasant circumstances seduces her. They have a child together who dies early and cannot be baptized because he is illegitimate. The second stage of the novel concerns the family of the Reverend Mr. Clare and his son Angel. Angel and Tess marry but, when she admits the incident with Alec, their relationship is torn apart leading to Angel’s departure for South America and Alec’s second attempt to ensnare Tess. This leads to murder, escape and superficial impurity on the part of Tess who is finally brought to ‘Justice.’” – Bibliomania.com

- Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*.

“This is a cautionary tale of a young man raised high above his station by a mysterious benefactor and has remarkable characters and a compelling story. The novel begins with young orphaned Philip Pirrip--Pip--running afoul of an escaped convict in a cemetery. This terrifying personage bullies Pip into stealing food and a file for him, threatening that if he tells a soul ‘your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate.’ The boy does as he's asked, but the convict is captured anyway, and transported to the penal colonies in Australia. Having started his novel in a cemetery, Dickens then ups the stakes and introduces his hero into the decaying household of Miss Havisham, a wealthy, half-mad woman who was jilted on her wedding day many years before and has never recovered. Pip is brought there to play with Miss Havisham's ward, Estella, a little girl who delights in tormenting Pip about his rough hands and future as a blacksmith's apprentice. It is an infection that Pip never quite recovers from; as he spends more time with Miss Havisham and the tantalizing Estella, he becomes more and more discontented with his guardian, the kindhearted blacksmith, Joe, and his childhood friend Biddy. When, after several years, Pip becomes the heir of an unknown benefactor, he leaps at the chance to leave his home and friends behind to go to London and become a gentleman. But having expectations, as Pip soon learns, is a two-edged sword, and nothing is as he thought it would be.” – Amazon.com

- Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*

“A murder in the silent after-hour halls of the Louvre museum reveals a sinister plot to uncover a secret that has been protected by a clandestine society since the days of Christ. The victim is a high-ranking agent of this ancient society who, in the moments before his death, manages to leave gruesome clues at the scene that only his granddaughter, noted cryptographer Sophie Neveu, and Robert Langdon, a famed symbologist, can untangle. The duo become both suspects and detectives searching for not only Neveu's grandfather's murderer but also the stunning secret of the ages he was charged to protect. Mere steps ahead of the authorities and the deadly competition, the mystery leads Neveu and Langdon on a breathless flight through France, England, and history itself.” – Amazon.com

It is recommended that you purchase your own novels so that you can write in the margins and highlight meaningful quotes. However, if you would rather check a novel out from the school, copies are available for your use.

### **Suggested (but not required) Reading:**

Foster, Thomas C. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines*

What does it mean when a fictional hero takes a journey? Shares a meal? Gets drenched in a sudden rain shower? Often, there is much more going on in a novel or poem than is readily visible on the surface—a symbol, maybe, that remains elusive, or an unexpected twist on a character—and there's that sneaking suspicion that the deeper meaning of a literary text keeps escaping you. In this practical and amusing guide to literature, Thomas C. Foster shows how easy and gratifying it is to unlock those hidden truths, and to discover a world where a road leads to a quest; a shared meal may signify a communion; and rain, whether cleansing or destructive, is never just rain. Ranging from major themes to literary models, narrative devices, and form, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* is the perfect companion for making your reading experience more enriching, satisfying, and fun. - Amazon.com

**The Summer Reading Assignment:** You should closely read the novel and be prepared for a test on it the first week of school. In addition, I would like you to keep a reader response journal for each novel that you read. The instructions are included with this letter. We will be using Turnitin, so please do not copy and paste from websites. Academic dishonesty can result in zeros and other serious consequences.

It is imperative that you complete your summer reading assignments to be successful the first term in A.P. Literature and Composition. Because this is an academically rigorous class, you should consider this as the first test in accepting the challenge. Please do not procrastinate and think that you can read the novel the first week of the school year. These assignments require time, focus and comprehension.

If you should have any questions, you may email Mrs. Rowe:  
[vrowe@taylorisd.org](mailto:vrowe@taylorisd.org)

Sincerely,

Mrs. Rowe