

AP English Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignments

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Written assignments may be handwritten or typed. Both the paragraph and essay are due on the first day of school.

Required Texts

1. *Beowulf*, translated by Seamus Heaney

Consider also listening to Heaney read the poem using the following link:

Part One:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaB0trCztM0>

Part Two:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zsxxg5P-DnY>

*Note this audio version does skip sections of the poem. *Beowulf* is an example of oral literature, so listening to Heaney read the poem will enhance your understanding and appreciation of poetic elements (such as alliteration).

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

This text will serve as an anchor text for the course, and we will reference it throughout the year.

Written Assignments:

A. After reading Thomas C. Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, choose one chapter and apply it to your reading of *Beowulf*. Write a detailed paragraph explaining both Foster's idea/concept and your interpretation as it applies to *Beowulf*

Chapters that fit well with *Beowulf*:

"Is that a Symbol?"

"Every Trip is a Quest"

"Concerning Violence"

"Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too"

"...Or the Bible"

B. Choose ONE of the following AP essay prompts and write a four to five-paragraph essay on *Beowulf*. Your essay should include an opening paragraph introducing the epic poem, *Beowulf*, and a thesis statement defining your central argument about the text. Consider this essay a rough draft and

a way to transition to writing about literature. The following are actual AP English Literature and Composition prompts. While they don't specifically list *Beowulf*, you are to write only on *Beowulf*.

1. In many works of literature, a physical journey – the literal movement from one place to another – plays a central role. Choose a novel, play, or epic poem in which a physical journey is an important element and discuss how the journey adds to the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.
2. A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning. Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.
3. In a novel by William Styron, a father tells his son that life “is a search for justice.” Choose a character from a novel or play who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well developed essay in which you analyze the character’s understanding of justice, the degree to which the character’s search for justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole.
4. It has often been said that what we value can be determined only by what we sacrifice. Consider how this statement applies to a character from a novel or play. Select a character that has deliberately sacrificed, surrendered, or forfeited something in a way that highlights that character’s values. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the particular sacrifice illuminates the character’s values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole.
5. Select a novel, play, or epic poem that features a character whose origins are unusual or mysterious. Then write an essay in which you analyze how these origins shape the character and that character’s relationships, and how the origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole
6. Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. Then gift may be an object, or it may be a quality such as uncommon beauty, significant Social position, great mental or imaginative faculties, or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is often also a burden or a handicap. Select a character from a novel, epic, or play who has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing the complex nature of the gift and how the gift contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.
7. In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.” Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.
8. The most important themes in literature are sometimes developed in scenes in which a death or deaths take place. Choose a novel or play and write a well-organized essay in which you show how a specific death scene helps to illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

9. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.

10. The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained allusion to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature. Select a literary work that makes use of such a sustained reference. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in the work and analyze how it enhances the work's meaning.