

2020 Summer Reading & Writing Assignment

AP English Literature & Composition

The vast majority of novels, plays, and poems we read in AP English Literature & Composition contain multiple Biblical and ancient Greek/mythological allusions. Authors depend on readers' knowledge of these references in order to further the understanding of their messages. In addition, the AP test frequently expects students to find these allusions in the prose and poetry excerpts provided both on the multiple choice portion of the exam and within the essay prompts. In studying these allusions over the summer, you will be increasing your own background knowledge to aid your understanding of the texts you will read this coming year and in college.

Because literature has drawn commonly on knowledge of the Bible and because so many students in the 21st Century lack that background knowledge, I have added selections from the Bible to the summer reading. The stories are those frequently alluded to in literature and should become part of your cultural knowledge. Realize that you should NOT read these selections in terms of faith but rather in terms of literature: characterization, conflict, symbolism, and theme. Selections from the Bible can be found at <http://bartleby.com/108/> if you do not have your own text. Consistent with college reading lists, the King James Version is used because of its stylistic language and literary merit.

Reading Assignments:

Specifically, over the summer, you are responsible for reading the following excerpts from the Bible and completing the chart below:

Old Testament	Source	Nutshell Summary	Allusive Meaning
Creation Story; Fall of Man	Genesis 1-3		
Cain and Abel	Genesis 4: 1-16		
The Flood	Genesis 6: 9-25		
The Tower of Babel	Genesis 11: 1-9		
Sodom and Gomorrah	Genesis 18		
Lot and his Wife	Genesis 19		
The Ten Commandments	Exodus 20: 1-17		

Golden Calf	Exodus 32		
Samson and Delilah	Judges 16:16		
David and Goliath	I Samuel 17		
King Solomon's Wisdom	I Kings 3		
Patience of Job	Job 1, 2, 3; 40, 41, 42		

New Testament	Source	Nutshell Summary	Allusive Meaning
The Beatitudes	Matthew 5:1-12		
John The Baptist Head on a Platter	Matthew 14: 1-12		
Feeding the Five Thousand	Matthew 14:13-21		
Judas/silver coins	Matthew 26: 14-16		
Gethsemane/ Temptation of Christ	Mark 14: 32-42		
The Crucifixion	Mark 15		
The Good Samaritan	Luke 11:29-38		
Parable of the Lost Sheep	Luke 15:1-7		
The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-22		
Render Unto Caesar	Luke 20:19-26		
Lazarus	John 11		
The Resurrection	John 20, 21		
Four Beasts	Revelation 4-6		
Seven Plagues	Revelation 15		
Judgment of the Beast	Revelation 20		

Additionally, you are responsible for reading *The Odyssey* by Homer, which most students have already completed as part of their middle school Language Arts curriculum, *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* (from *The Theban Plays*) by Sophocles, and *The Inferno* (from *The Divine Comedy*) by Dante Alighieri. There are no specific translations required though I recommend acquiring the translation of *The Inferno* by John Ciardi from the Signet Classics series as it is accessible with helpful endnotes.

While I recommend obtaining personal copies of these texts in which to annotate for purposes of class discussion in September (and used copies often can be obtained via online book sellers for a substantially-reduced price), all of these texts are available from multiple sources without cost in the public domain. For your convenience, I have listed below a link to each work:

Translations by Robert Fagles:

The Odyssey:

<https://www.boyle.kyschools.us/UserFiles/88/The%20Odyssey.pdf>

Oedipus Rex:

https://yale.imodules.com/s/1667/images/gid6/editor_documents/malafronte/sophocles_oedipus_the_king_trans_fagles.pdf?sessionId=974944b9-6f61-4b7b-9d27-edbd3751332b&cc=1

Antigone:

<https://www.olma.org/ourpages/auto/2013/9/5/51879406/Antigone.pdf>

John Ciardi's translation of *The Inferno*:

https://archive.org/stream/inferno00dant_2/inferno00dant_2_djvu.txt

Written Assignments:

In connection with your reading, you will complete the following two essay assignments and the chart above for the King James Bible. All assignments must be in MLA format and submitted through www.turnitin.com by the first day of class in September. I encourage you, however, to space your work over the course of the summer and to submit your work through turnitin.com as soon as it is completed. To submit your work through www.turnitin.com, the Class ID for 2020-21 AP English Lit & Comp. Summer Assignments is "25117083," and the case-sensitive password is "Homer."

First, submit an essay of no more than 500 words on one of the following topics comparing *The Odyssey* and *Oedipus Rex*/*Antigone*:

1. Compare and contrast the character of Penelope in *The Odyssey* to Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex* and Antigone in *Antigone*. Possible topics for discussion here might be the degrees to which these different women conform to or

- exceed the roles of females as dictated by ancient Greek society, the ways in which the works make use of certain norms concerning women in order to heighten narrative or dramatic effect surrounding these women, the interactions of these women with divine beings, and expressions of piety or family loyalty demonstrated by these women.
2. Compare and contrast the figure of Odysseus in *The Odyssey* with Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*. Possible topics for discussion here would include the role of knowledge (and its application) in characterizing an individual, the interactions of these heroes with gods and fate, their association with beasts, the relationships between these figures and their various family members, and the effect of Odysseus' and Oedipus' actions on those around them.

Second, submit an essay of no more than 500 words on one of the following topics related to *The Inferno*:

1. Dante attempts to create a place conveying God's perfect justice. Assess whether he is successful or creates a picture of a cruel God that encourages torture as punishment.
2. Dante presents a ranking of moral failures. Evaluate why sins are ranked accordingly.
3. Discuss Dante's journey as one of self-discovery and a necessary journey in order to attain spiritual insight and balance. What does he learn about himself and the world in which he lives? Consider Virgil's role in Dante's edification.
4. Discuss three examples of the allegories used in the Cantos. Synthesize imagery used and the thematic aim of the collective allegories.
5. Compare and contrast the descriptions of and purposes offered for the underworld by Dante and Odysseus (based on in *The Odyssey*) as well as the effects on each character of their respective encounters in hell.

Third, using the chart form above for the KJB, complete the third and fourth columns by inserting a "nutshell" (1-2 sentence) plot summary of the passage as well as its commonly understood allusive meaning. For example, what does one mean when calling someone a "Judas," or asking if someone "received her 30 pieces"?

For the essays, your goal is to offer and defend an interpretation of the text supported by specific evidence from the text (versus offering personal opinion). While you need to provide direct text with citation, avoid block quotations. Your essay must offer an original and debatable argument, so be sure to go well beyond plot summary. Use of secondary sources, *i.e.*, literary criticism, is not forbidden, but

is not recommended. Do cite all sources, including the text you are writing about, in correct MLA style. (See Purdue's Online Writing Lab at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> as a resource guide on MLA style.)

Neglect to acknowledge indebtedness for facts, ideas, or expression will be interpreted as plagiarism. There are no exceptions to this rule. "Plagiarism" is a word defined from the Latin term for "kidnapper." Plagiarism involves taking someone else's words or ideas and pretending that they are your own. It is literary theft. If you are unsure about whether or not you need to acknowledge a source in your writing, it is better to be safe than sorry.

If you have any questions regarding obtaining the texts or submitting the assignments over the summer, please contact the English Department Supervisor. I also encourage you to consult www.mrsmartling.eboard.com (using the "AP Lit & Comp" tab, "Summer Assignment" post-it note), for supplemental notes, including links to note taking, the AP literary analysis rubric, as well as lecture notes on epics and tragedies.