

AP LITERATURE SUMMER READING

1) Keep Dialectical Journals on the following:

- *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell
- *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

Both of these works are very rich in Literary Devices. Therefore, to gain the most from these books (and best prepare you for AP Literature) you should have at least one good quote and analysis per every few pages of text.

Cloud Atlas is a very recent, postmodern novel that, despite its high literary value, has successfully become a bestseller. Despite its experimental form (six nested narratives, written in completely different styles and ranging from the mid-19th century to a far-future, post-holocaust world), the book is extremely accessible and engaging to the motivated and careful reader (which, as AP students, I would hope you are!).

Heart of Darkness is another matter. Although a brilliant work, it is also extremely dense, and some students find it difficult to understand. The good news is that it's short. However, I strongly recommend you give this book the time it deserves; if you try to tackle it in a night or two, you won't get it, and you'll be miserable. This is a book that good journaling will help you with. If you take your time and read carefully, you'll get much more out of it: you may even like it.

2) Read a collection each of Greek Mythology and Bible Stories. Dialectical Journals are unnecessary for these, but optional reading journals will be awarded extra credit, based on their breadth and depth. The writing is optional: the reading is required, and I am trusting you to be people of integrity and to do so.

For the mythology, I recommend Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, but any comprehensive collection written for adults will do fine (*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Classical Mythology* is also good). For the Bible stories, Daniel Elton Harmon's *128 of the Greatest Stories of the Bible* is ideal, but unfortunately is currently out of print (though fairly easy to find used on-line), but for my money, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Bible* is just as educational and much more fun to read. Just make sure you don't use a children's book. By the way, if you think you already know the Bible well enough, think again. Trust me: you'll be surprised at how much of the Bible relating to Western Literature you don't know.

3) Finally, I strongly and wholeheartedly recommend you get yourself a copy of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster, and take a weekend to read it. This simple and very fun-to-read book will probably double your analytical skills and better prepare you for my class. Trust me. I wouldn't lie to you.

Happy reading!

James C. Bloom (aka Professor Gumbo) ☺

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