

AP LITERATURE SUMMER READING

1) Keep Dialectical Journals on the following:

- *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell
- *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (optional, but for potentially major extra credit)

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, if you choose to do this for extra credit, 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 with 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 or Thomas Bulfinch, but any comprehensive collection written for adults will do fine. For the Bible stories, Paul Roche (*The Bible's Greatest Stories*) is good if you want something that is a close adaptation, 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.

Happy reading!

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THE EXAM

Yearly, the AP English Literature and Composition Development Committee, made up of high school and college English teachers, prepares a three-hour exam that gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the skills and abilities previously described. The AP English Literature and Composition Exam employs multiple-choice questions that test the student's critical reading of selected passages. But the exam also requires writing as a direct measure of the student's ability to read and interpret literature and to use other forms of discourse effectively. Although the skills tested in the exam remain essentially the same from year to year, each year's exam is composed of new questions. The free-response questions are scored by college and AP English teachers using standardized procedures.

Ordinarily, the exam consists of 60 minutes for multiple-choice questions followed by 120 minutes for free-response questions. Performance on the free-response section of the exam counts for 55 percent of the total score; performance on the multiple-choice section, 45 percent. Examples of multiple-choice and free-response questions from previous exams are presented below and are intended to represent the scope and difficulty of the exam. The questions are samples; they are not a sample exam. In the questions reproduced here, the authors of the passages and poems on which the multiple-choice questions are based are George Eliot, Richard Wilbur, Gwendolyn Brooks and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Multiple-choice scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points are not deducted for incorrect answers, and no points are awarded for unanswered questions. Because points are not deducted for incorrect answers, students are encouraged to answer all multiple-choice questions. On any questions students do not know the answer to, students should eliminate as many choices as they can, and then select the best answer among the remaining choices.