AP LITERATURE SUMMER READING

1) Keep Dialectical Journals on the following two novellas:

- *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
- *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

These are both short works, but very rich in Literary Devices. Therefore, to gain the most from these books (and best prepare you for AP Literature) you should have <u>at least</u> one good quote and analysis per every two pages of text.

The Metamorphosis was originally written German; try to find a good translation. I can recommend Willa and Edwin Muir for beautifully capturing Kafka's tone, although both Corngold and Neugroschel are more exact in their respective translations. Most accelerated students find they really enjoy Kafka, despite (or maybe because of) his <u>weirdness</u>. Since *The Metamorphosis* is actually a long short story, it is often found in volumes containing other short works by the same author. I suggest getting one of these and sampling his other works. For AP, there's no such thing as too much Kafka.

Heart of Darkness is another matter. Although a brilliant work, it is also extremely dense, and many students find it exceedingly difficult. 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 and journal the long poem *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot.

Do <u>at least</u> five quotes/entries per section (except Part IV: "Death by Water"; it is very short, and two entries will suffice.) As with Kafka, I cannot overstate the importance of Eliot to AP Literature. If you aren't familiar with his poetry, you cannot truly "get" modernism or any almost any other 20th Century poetry. If you have time, read as much of him as possible; at the very least, try to read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Hollow Men," and "Gerontion."   There are plenty of good collections of his work available. The Modern Library edition has an amazing opening introduction by Mary Karr, but it unfortunately does not contain "The Hollow Men."

If this is your first exposure to T.S. Eliot, be prepared to be both dazzled and totally confused. Don't feel stupid: his work is meant to be difficult, and <u>nobody</u> gets it right away. When you journal *The Waste Land*, don't worry about understanding "what it means"; instead, choose lines you particularly like, figure out (if you can) what kind of poetic device he is using, and discuss the impression the passage makes on <u>you</u>. At this point, it's totally okay to be subjective with this poem. The important thing for now is not to figure it out, but to appreciate (and hopefully enjoy) it as art. Do not despair: I promise that we will discuss the poem in detail during the 1st semester.

3) 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. <u>The writing is optional: the reading is required.</u>

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 <u>a lot</u> 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 <u>don't</u> know.

4) 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 <u>read it</u>. This simple and very fun-to-read book will probably <u>double</u> your analytical skills and better prepare you for my class. Trust me.

Happy reading!

James C. Bloom (aka Professor Gumbo) ☺

AP Literature Instructor, MVHS