

Mrs. Steimer  
Plano High School  
2009-2010

Advanced Placement English  
Summer Reading Assignment  
Due First Full Day of Class, **September 2, 2009**

Read three or four (or more) of the books on the “Books for Summer Reading List,” and then choose *one* book on which to write an essay. Write your essay about one of the topics listed below.

Select *one* of the following questions from former AP Literature and Composition Exams on which to write an MLA formatted essay of 2-3 double-spaced pages. Be sure to notice that each essay question has two parts: (a) an aspect of the book to discuss and (b) an explanation of how this aspect influence the meaning, focus, or value of the work as a whole. To earn a good grade on your essay, you will need to address effectively both of these parts of the question.

If you have *any* questions as you complete this assignment, please email me at [rasteimer@plano88.org](mailto:rasteimer@plano88.org)

**1994.** In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Choose a novel or play of literary merit and write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in the work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters. Avoid plot summary.

**1998.** In his essay "Walking," Henry David Thoreau offers the following assessment of literature: "In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is but another name for tameness. It is the uncivilized free and wild thinking in *Hamlet* and *The Iliad*, in all scriptures and mythologies, not learned in schools, that delights us." From the works that you have studied in school, choose a novel, play, or epic poem that you may initially have thought was conventional and tame but that you now value for its "uncivilized free and wild thinking." Write an essay in which you explain what constitutes its "uncivilized free and wild thinking" and how that thinking is central to the value of the work as a whole. Support your ideas with specific references to the work you choose.

**1999.** The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time."

From a novel or play choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict with one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may use one of the novels or plays listed below or another novel or work of similar literary quality.

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**2001.** One definition of madness is "mental delusion or the eccentric behavior arising from it." But Emily Dickinson wrote:

Much madness is divinest Sense-  
To a discerning Eye-

Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a "discerning Eye." Select a novel or play in which a character's apparent madness or irrational behavior plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain what this delusion or eccentric behavior consists of and how it might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the "madness" to the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2002.** Morally ambiguous characters -- characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good -- are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Please Note:

For this assignment, don't use a book you have read for a previous course (e.g. if you read *Huckleberry Finn* in American Literature or *The Great Gatsby* for a novel analysis your freshman year, don't write about it).

Advanced Placement Summer Reading List

***Bildungsroman (Life Stories: Growing Up Stories):***

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*  
Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*  
Willa Cather, *My Antonia*  
George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady*  
James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*  
John Knowles, *A Separate Peace*  
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*  
Edith Wharton, *Summer*

**Romances:**

Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*  
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*  
Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*  
Joseph Conrad, *Victory*  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

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E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View*  
Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*  
Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*  
Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*

**Novels About Social Issues (class structure, race, gender, imperialism, political repression and revolution, social change):**

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*  
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*  
E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*  
Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*  
Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*  
Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*  
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Voltaire, *Candide*  
Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*  
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*

**Novels About Family Life/Families**

Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*  
Willa Cather, *O! Pioneers*  
E.M. Forster, *Howard's End*  
William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*  
Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*  
Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*  
Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*  
John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*  
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

**War Stories**

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*  
William Faulkner, *The Unvanquished*  
William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!*  
Joseph Heller, *Catch 22*  
Ernest Hemmingway, *A Farewell to Arms*  
Ernest Hemmingway, *The Sun Also Rises*  
Tim O'Brien, *Going After Cacciato*  
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*  
Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night*  
Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*

**Gothic Stories/Ghost Stories/Mysteries**

E.L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*

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Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables*  
Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*  
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*  
Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

**Psychological Aberration/Mental Illness:**

William Faulkner, *Light in August*  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*  
Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*  
Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*