

June 2018

Dear Future Advanced Placement English Students:

Congratulations on your decision to enroll in our Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition program. You will be expected to do a great deal of reading and writing in AP English, and the summer reading assignment is tailored to prepare you for this rigorous college-level course. This assignment will introduce the college-level interpretive strategies that we will develop over the course of the school year in a manner that emphasizes depth rather than breadth.

In total you will read two texts: *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster (**be sure to get the 2014 edition as it differs significantly from the earlier editions**) and *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders. After you read these texts over summer vacation, you will answer an array of substantial analytical questions in which you will thoughtfully apply Professor Foster's concepts to the novel by George Saunders. **Read Professor Foster's book first and use it as a guide while you read and annotate the novel.** The purpose of this task is two-fold: To gain a deeper understanding of the various ways that seasoned literary experts like Professor Foster approach a text and to apply Foster's tools and techniques to *Lincoln in the Bardo* in order to enrich your own personal investigation of this literary work. Produce thorough, thoughtful, fully-developed, AP-quality work. **Your responses to these analytical questions are due the first day of school; please come to class with a hard copy of your typed responses. Late work will not be accepted.** During the first week of school, your AP English teacher will provide instructions for uploading your summer reading responses to turnitin.com. You will be required to upload your responses to turnitin.com to prove the authenticity of your work.

The overarching concepts and interpretive tools that you glean from this AP Summer Reading process will serve as the foundation for your Advanced Placement English experience. During the first week of school, you will display your newfound knowledge and analytical prowess through a Socratic seminar in which you will demonstrate your understanding of both summer reading texts. From there, the course curriculum will begin with a re-examination of these works, delving into a more nuanced understanding through class activities and discussions. Just like summer reading assignments at the university-level, your AP Summer Reading curriculum will directly set the stage for your first weeks in AP English. AP English is a college-level class, and we do not take this label lightly. We are dedicated to offering you a program of the highest caliber that will prepare you for college-level analysis and composition.

Lastly, we want to remind you that **if you choose to opt out of the AP English program after July 1st, you will not be guaranteed a place in a Senior Seminar, and you might be placed in English 12 CP due to scheduling restrictions.**

We look forward to working with you in the fall and hearing your feedback regarding this summer's reading selections.

Best wishes,
Shawn Chen, Diana Sieker, and Alan Zeoli

How to Read Literature Like a Professor Summer Reading Questions

As you read *HTRLLAP**, answer the following questions. Your responses should be completely your own. Consulting with other students or online resources, and/or sharing your work with other students will be treated as violations of the Mira Costa Ethics Policy. Be prepared to submit a hard copy of your typed responses to your AP English teacher on the first day of school (late work will not be accepted), and be prepared to submit your responses to turnitin.com the first week of school.

When the questions ask for concrete examples, please use **concrete details and quotations** from the summer reading book (*Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders). When you type up your responses, please number each response. **DO NOT** re-type the actual questions; otherwise, your responses will be flagged for plagiarism on turnitin.com.

***These questions correspond with the 2014 edition of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, an updated version of the 2003 edition. There are two new chapters (Chapter 10: “Never Stand Next to the Hero” and Chapter 25: “It’s My Symbol and I’ll Cry If I Want To”) along with a new preface, postlude, and envoi, which means that you must purchase the updated version to answer all of the questions below.**

Introduction (xi-xvii)

1. What is a Faustian bargain? Give an example of a Faustian bargain from the summer reading text.

Ch. 1 “Every Trip is a Quest (Except When It’s Not)”

2. What are the five characteristics of the quest?
3. What is the usual reason behind a quest?
4. Explain the summer reading book’s “quest,” identifying the key characteristics. Use Foster’s explanation of the setup in *The Crying of Lot 49* on pages 4-5 as your guide (meaning your explanation should be as detailed and clear as his).

Ch. 2 “Nice to Eat With You: Acts of Communion”

5. Complete this sentence about communion: “breaking bread together is an act of “_____”
6. Why does Foster assert that a meal scene in literature is almost always symbolic?
7. Think of an example of a positive “communion” scene from the summer reading book. Briefly describe the scene and explain its symbolic meaning.
8. Think of an example of a negative “communion” scene from the summer reading book. Briefly describe the scene and explain its symbolic meaning.

Ch. 3 “Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires”

9. What are the essentials of the vampire story?
10. What are some things besides vampirism that vampires and ghosts represent in literature? Use the summer reading book to exemplify this concept.

Ch. 4 “Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?”

11. How does O’Brien’s *Going After Cacciato*’s Paul Berlin embody every author’s “creative process”?
12. Why would Professor Foster prefer the eel metaphor to describe literature as opposed to T.S. Elliot’s monument metaphor?
13. Define intertextuality. In what way does the summer reading book draw upon familiar works?

Ch. 5 “When in Doubt, It’s from Shakespeare...”

14. List the reasons Professor Foster believes that an author would allude to or draw from a Shakespearean work.

Ch. 6 “...Or the Bible”

15. What is the connection between a “loss of innocence” and the Biblical “Fall”?
16. In what ways does the summer reading book incorporate biblical elements?

Ch. 7 “Hansel and Gretel”

17. What is the literary canon?
18. Explain the summer reading book draws parallels to a familiar fairy tale. Briefly describe the plot and how the fairy tale allusion plays out. To what effect? (e.g.: To be ironic? To invert the original meaning of the source text or emphasize it?) Explain.

Ch. 8 “It’s Greek To Me”

19. How does Foster define “myth”?
20. What are the four great struggles of the human being? Find concrete examples of at least two of these struggles from the summer reading book.

Ch. 9 “It’s More Than Just Rain or Snow”

21. Foster says, “weather is never just weather.” What can rain, snow, fog, and rainbows represent in literature?
22. Detail the ways in which weather functions in the summer reading book: Describe one scene from the book, and explain its significance in detail.

Ch. 10 “Never Stand Next to the Hero”

23. Identify a subordinate character from the summer reading book, explain his or her relationship with the protagonist, and analyze the character’s underlying narrative purpose(s).
24. As Foster asserts, characters are not real people but products of the writer’s and reader’s imagination. Select any character from the summer reading text, and explain how your conception of that character is a product of your memory, observation, and invention. Use textual evidence illustrating the writer’s creation of that character that sparked your “invention” of the character.
25. Like Foster's continuum of the "flatter" and "rounder" characters in *Hamlet*, list at least five characters from the summer reading text in order from the flattest character to the most round, and write a brief explanation as to why you placed them in this order.

Interlude “Does He Mean That?”

26. What are Professor Foster’s arguments behind his claim that all writers consciously evoke other writers’ works in their own writing?

Ch. 11 “...More Than It’s Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence”

27. What are the two categories of violence in literature? Describe and define each.
28. What are the four reasons that authors kill off characters in literature?
29. Choose an act of violence or a death from the summer reading book and, using the information in this chapter, identify its literary purpose. Be sure to include specific details to make your answer clear and complete.

Ch. 12 “Is That a Symbol?”

30. What is the difference between symbolism and allegory?
31. What are the tools we must use to figure out what a symbol might mean?
32. What are the questions readers should ask of the text when trying to determine the symbolic meaning?

33. Symbolism in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Orwell's *Animal Farm* is obvious, but what about the "problem of the caves" in Forster's *A Passage to India*? What kind of tools does Professor Foster offer when exploring this kind of symbolic ambiguity?
34. What different interpretations of this cave does Professor Foster offer?
35. Dissect a significant symbol from the summer reading book using the tools Foster recommends.

Ch. 13 "It's All Political"

36. Foster explains why all literature is "political." Summarize his argument.
37. Give an example proving Foster's statement is true in terms from the summer reading text.
38. What kind of social criticism underscores the warmth and fuzziness of Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*?

Ch. 14 "Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too"

39. Foster asserts that a character need not have all of the distinguishing characteristics of Jesus Christ in order to be considered a Christ figure in literature. Why? Explain.
40. The list of characteristics on pages 119-120 is very important, and you should take the time to learn it. I would write them out by hand as a mnemonic aid. Choose one character from the summer reading book that can legitimately be considered a Christ figure and briefly explain which of these characteristics apply and what purpose the author likely had in creating the character this way.

Ch. 15 "Flights of Fancy"

41. What does it mean when literary characters fly? Find an example of a character "flying" in the summer reading book, and examine the deeper meaning of their "flight."

Ch. 16 "It's All About Sex..."

42. In what way did Sigmund Freud change reading, writing, and literary criticism?
43. What are some things that can represent male sexuality in literature? Use the summer reading book to exemplify this concept.
44. What are some things that can represent female sexuality in literature? Use the summer reading book to exemplify this concept.

Ch. 17 "... Except Sex"

45. Foster writes, "When they're writing about other things, they really mean sex, and when they write about sex, they really mean something else." Take one sexual scene from the summer reading text, and analyze its deeper significance.

Ch. 18 "If She Comes Up, It's Baptism"

46. What are some of the things that baptism (or immersion in water) and drowning can mean in literature?
47. Identify and briefly explain the meaning of a baptism or drowning scene from the summer reading book.

Ch. 19 "Geography Matters..."

48. What are some of the roles geography plays in literature, and what are some of the effects of geography on literature?
49. What does it mean when an author sends a character south?

Ch. 20 "...So Does Season"

50. What are the symbolic meanings of the seasons?
51. Choose a scene from the summer reading book in which season is important or symbolic. Briefly describe the scene, and explain the deeper significance of the symbolic season.

Interlude “One Story”

52. If there is only one story, what have we all been writing about over the years?
53. Professor Foster returns to the idea of intertextuality. How does he define this term? What else does he add or emphasize on the subject?
54. How is the avoidance of previous texts in your own writing a way of actually speaking with these texts in your work?
55. What is an archetype?

Ch. 21 “Marked For Greatness”

56. For what reason(s), do authors give characters deformities, scars or other physical markings in literature?
57. Choose a character from the summer reading book who has some kind of physical marking. Describe the marking, and explain the deeper significance of that physical trait.

Ch. 22 “He’s Blind for a Reason, You Know”

58. For what reason(s) do authors choose to make characters blind in literature?

Ch. 23 “It’s Never Just Heart Disease...And Rarely Just Illness”

59. What are the “principles governing the use of disease in works of literature”? Identify an example of an illness from the summer reading book, and analyze its significance.

Ch. 24 “Don’t Read With Your Eyes”

60. Explain how reading *Sonny’s Blues* with contemporary eyes can change the meaning of the story.
61. In what way do Deconstructionists read a text? How does that differ from Professor Foster’s method?
62. What is the danger, according to Foster, in trying to empathize with the worldview during the time that a text was written?

Ch. 25 “It’s My Symbol and I’ll Cry If I Want To”

63. Select an unconventional symbol from the summer reading book—a significant object, event, person, or place that you have never encountered in literature before—and analyze its deeper meaning applying the strategies that Foster provides.

Ch. 26 “Is He Serious? And Other Ironies”

64. What does Professor Foster mean when he proclaims, “Irony trumps everything”? How does he define it?
65. Fill in the blank: “What irony chiefly involves, then, is “_____”
Explain what Foster means by this.
66. Explain what literary theorist Northrop Frye means when he says an entire work functions in “ironic mode”?
67. How is Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* ironic?
68. How is Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* ironic? What has probably inspired his sense for irony?
69. How does Anthony Burgess manipulate irony in *A Clockwork Orange* to convey a particular theme?
70. Name the three types of irony in literature, and give a brief example of the summer reading book.

Ch. 27 “A Test Case”

71. Selecting one of the summer reading books, complete the task that Foster sets out for you, paying close attention to his test case example. For “What does the story signify?” create a thesis statement. For “How does it signify?” defend that thesis statement in 200-250 words. Don’t go overboard.

Envoi

72. How does Foster suggest that readers learn to identify trends? Why are trends important?
73. What is Foster's parting advice for his reader?