



Mira Costa High School

1401 Artesia Boulevard ▪ Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
(310) 318-7337 ▪ Fax (310) 303-3814

June 2021

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. In total, you will read two texts:

- *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster (**the 2014 edition**)
- *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead

The overall purpose of the summer reading 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 to *The Nickel Boys* in order to enrich your own investigation of this work. **Read and annotate Professor Foster's book first and use it as a guide while you read and annotate the novel.**

At the start of the school year, there will be **three** summer reading assessments:

- An annotation check of both books assessing your ability to engage with a text
- An objective test assessing your understanding of Professor Foster's analytical techniques
- A Socratic seminar assessing your application of Professor Foster's concepts in your analysis of *The Nickel Boys*

To prepare for the Socratic Seminar, you will compose four interpretive paragraphs, formulate five questions, and cite five quotations as context for your questions (see instructions on next page). Please produce thorough, thoughtful, fully-developed AP-quality work. **Your annotated books and your four interpretive paragraphs, five questions, and five quotations (as typed digital copies) are all due the first day of school. Late work will not be accepted.** During the first day of school, your AP English teacher will provide instructions for uploading your summer reading work to turnitin.com. You will be required to upload your assignment to turnitin.com to prove the authenticity of your work.

The overarching concepts and interpretive tools that you glean from this summer reading process will serve as the foundation for your Advanced Placement English experience. Our 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 June 11th, you will not be guaranteed a place in a Senior Seminar, and you may be placed in English 12 due to scheduling restrictions.**

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

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

AP English Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

STEP 1: Read and annotate *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster.

Required Edition: Obtain the **2014 edition** of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, an updated version of the 2003 edition. There are two new chapters in the 2014 version (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.

Comprehension Assessment: During the first week of school, you will take a comprehensive multiple-choice test that assesses your understanding of the analytical techniques outlined in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. Thus, be sure to read the book carefully and closely, annotating as you read.

STEP 2: Read, annotate, analyze, and prepare to discuss the summer reading book, *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead.

Annotation Assessment: On the first day of school your summer reading book annotations will be graded for points. Your annotations are expected to appear as frequent notes—personal observations, questions, or interpretations—written in the margins that can be found throughout the entirety of the texts. Underlining or highlighting alone is not sufficient and will result in a lower grade. In addition, your annotations must be your own. Copying another student’s annotations will result in a zero on the assignment for you both.

Analytical Assessment: Select four of the following chapters from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, and apply relevant techniques from those chapters to the summer reading text. For each technique, compose an **interpretive paragraph (four total)**. Each paragraph should begin with an interpretive claim, followed by compelling evidence (at least two quotations from the summer reading text) and persuasive analysis/commentary in which you apply the Fosterian techniques. Your paragraphs should be typed in MLA format. Be prepared to submit a digital copy of all four paragraphs the first day of school to verify the authenticity of your work in addition to bringing in a hard copy of the paragraphs to the Socratic seminar. Your interpretations must be your own. Using outside sources or sharing ideas and/or wording with other students will result in a zero on the assignment.

- “Every Trip is a Quest”
- “Is That a Symbol?”
- “When in Doubt It’s from Shakespeare...” “Or the Bible” (Allusions)
- “Yes, She’s a Christ-Figure, Too”
- “Geography Matters”
- “Marked for Greatness,” “He’s Blind for a Reason, You Know,” or “It’s Never Just Heart Disease...And Rarely Just Illness”
- “It’s More Than Just Rain or Snow” or “If She Comes Up, It’s Baptism”
- “It’s All About Sex”
- “Is He Serious? And Other Ironies”
- “A Test Case”

Socratic Seminar Assessment: Prepare to take a Fosterian approach to the summer reading text in a formal Socratic seminar. During the Socratic seminar, you and your classmates will identify the most relevant and fruitful Fosterian techniques for analyzing the summer reading book, exploring the interpretive possibilities that these Fosterian strategies engender. In addition to the four interpretive paragraphs, you will formulate **five interpretive discussion questions** regarding the application of Fosterian techniques—questions that either elaborate upon the techniques you examined in your four interpretive paragraphs or questions that involve other techniques you did not get to cover in your paragraphs. Please follow each question with **one quotation** from the summer reading book as context. Be prepared to submit a digital copy of the questions and quotations the first day of school in addition to bringing in a hard copy to the Socratic seminar. Using outside sources or sharing ideas and/or wording with other students will result in a zero on the assignment.