

Greetings future AP Literature students!

I'm excited that each of you have decided to take this class. I'm writing with instructions for your **Summer 2022 Summer Reading Assignments**. There are two major components to this assignment and they serve different purposes which I'll explain in more detail below. Because the AP Lit curriculum asks us to cover so much in a rather short amount of time, I aim to make everything we do as purpose-filled as possible, so I hope that as you move through your summer reading, you can have the sense that you're doing important work that will serve you well throughout and lay a foundation for the year. Please email me or come see me with any questions that you may have about what I'm asking you to do.

I also want to go ahead and say that everything you'll need for these assignments can be accessed via this link to a google drive folder:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PsAy\\_6OSOT-oZFspOxh53nJV4u95C4Id?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PsAy_6OSOT-oZFspOxh53nJV4u95C4Id?usp=sharing)

### **Task 1: Short Fiction Reading and Analysis Essay**

I'm asking you to read eight short stories by various authors who detail all kinds of experiences and employ numerous stylistic choices and literary techniques. These short stories together create a true "survey" of short fiction. My goal is to show you some truly "good" and "interesting" stories that each have something quite different to say. My hope is that there will be at least one story that you resonate with among these eight (though obviously my *greatest* hope is that you enjoy all of them to some extent). These eight stories comprise our first unit of AP Lit, so we will study them in depth when we get back to school. You're just getting a head start on them this summer.

#### List of Stories

"Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin

"The Progress of Love" by Alice Munro

"Tenth of December" by George Saunders

"Recitatif" by Toni Morrison

"A Worn Path" by Eudora Welty

"The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allen Poe

"The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

"What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" by Raymond Carver

Though you are responsible for reading all eight stories (and can expect a series of reading checks on each one at the beginning of the year as we get to it in class), I am asking you to choose TWO stories to write about. Again, among the eight stories, **please choose just TWO of them, and write a standard five paragraph analytical essay in which you make a connection between them.**

I'm leaving this prompt quite broad for a reason—I want to see what kinds of connections you organically make between texts. It gives you a lot of agency to follow your instincts and allows me to see what YOU in particular noticed as you read.

Here are some examples of possible thesis statements for this prompt. I hope that these examples help to show you what sorts of things constitute a connection between two works of literature. (note: I have completely made these up, these thesis statements don't necessarily say true things about the stories that I'm writing about):

O'Connor's "Good Country People" and Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" tell the stories of disenfranchised people who are down on their luck. The added component of race as a theme in Baldwin's story distinguishes it from O'Connor's, and adds a layer of complication. (It would be a good idea for me to go ahead and name what this layer of complication is...if this were a perfect thesis).

"The Conscience of the Court" and "The Story of an Hour" each portray very forward-thinking feminist figures. However, Chopin's heroine's narration is quiet and inward, while Hurston's is loud and fierce. Both figures successfully convey their desire to be heard though they express this desire in stylistically divergent ways.

Notice that in both hypothetical thesis statements I've drawn a connection between two stories (for instance, "both stories tell stories about people who are disenfranchised." But then I go on to **distinguish and specify the connection** a little bit by saying that one of the stories works the idea or manifestations of race into its story while the other doesn't, and I assert that this changes things in the story. My job in the essay, because of what my thesis is, is to both establish the ways in which both stories treat the disenfranchised, but also to explain that there is a clear difference in the two stories, and that that difference is caused by one of the writers' treatment of race).

There is a rubric in the google drive folder that you can refer to as you write!

This essay will be submitted to turnitin.com **during our first class** in August.

### **Task 2: A Text Of Your Choice!**

This is the even more fun part. Please choose a novel of "literary merit" (this is an AP term I will explain at the end of this document) and read it over the summer. The first step is choosing a novel or a play that interests you. In the same google drive folder that contains the short stories, I've placed a list of novels and plays that have appeared on the AP Lit exam since 1971 that you can use for inspiration. It's a lot, to be honest! So please come to me for advice or email me as

you begin choosing if you want some help! Overall you want to pick something that a) is fun and interesting to you and b) has the potential to help you on the AP Exam's FRQ #3 which allows you to answer the prompt using any text you can think of. This part of your Summer work is meant to add to your bank of literary knowledge for that reason.

When we get back to school, you'll be asked to make a short presentation on the book you chose. These presentations will be informal—no powerpoints or formal presentations. Just you, the book, and the rest of the class. It will feel conversational and non-intimidating. Just a chance to share. This is the format that the talk should take, so use this list in order to prepare for it:

### **Book Talk Format**

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Introduce the title and author of your chosen book. (It would be great to have the book with you for this).
3. Tell us what the book is about, generally speaking. You don't need to give a full summary of the text (and you don't necessarily want to spoil anything big). Just find a way to tell us what the book is about.
4. Talk a little bit about the book's thematic concerns (i.e. what **themes** are at play/orbiting/circulating/present in the book or play). Give examples when pertinent.
5. Read a passage from the book (at least 5ish sentences) that you thought was an example of really good writing on the part of the author and explain what you thought was good about it. This is a chance for you to talk about **style**.
6. Read a passage from the book (at least 5ish sentences) that you find very significant to the novel or play as a whole and explain the passage's significance.
7. Speak a little bit about this: if you were going to write an analysis essay over this book, what topic might you choose to write about?
8. Would you recommend this book to others (you can be completely honest). Explain why or why not.

### **What is Literary Merit?**

This is a difficult concept to define and tends to cause some controversy (which I'd love to talk about later). I'm borrowing a definition that I found online which reads:

According to the Macmillan dictionary, "Literary merit" relates "to books that are considered to have value as art." So, what is art? According to Merriam Webster's dictionary, art is "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects." It's not merely about entertainment and making money; it's about producing soul-moving literature. (Amy Carter, Chapin High School).

Novels and plays that are "of literary merit" will typically be ones that are in the "canon" or are "canonical" (perhaps another word that we need to define!). It just means books and plays that either a) have been around for a long time and have continued to grow in their value and

meaning to society and/or b) are perhaps newer but have true literary value and meaning in society. All of the books that you've been taught in the upper school have been of literary merit, whereas books like *Fifty Shades of Grey* or *Twilight* are not considered to have literary merit. If you have any questions about whether or not something you want to read is acceptable, feel free to run it by me!

### **Google Drive Folder Link**

Once more, here is the link to the google drive folder where you can access everything you need that is related to the summer reading and summer assignments:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PsAy\\_6OSOT-oZFspQxh53nJV4u95C4Id?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PsAy_6OSOT-oZFspQxh53nJV4u95C4Id?usp=sharing)