

AP English Literature (Seniors) – Summer Reading for 2019-20

Welcome to AP English Literature class. My expectation for you is that you come prepared to participate in class. To spark early discussion and to support a year's worth of study, I have selected the works below. You will note that the due dates are staggered throughout September. Please see the individual works for the due date of each reading and assignment.

The wise student would plan ahead and complete the readings and assignments during the glorious months of summer so as not to be overwhelmed during the notoriously challenging month of September. Remember: you will be completing college applications in the fall.

As you read the books, it is an excellent scholarly habit to **annotate** the texts. You can do this by underlining passages and writing notes in the margins. If you decide to use a direct quote in a paper, you can often go back through text you have annotated and find a suitable quote more easily. It also forces you to read closely and pay attention to detail.

Do not use study aids such as Sparknotes, etc. The purpose of an AP course is to teach YOU to read and analyze works of literature, not to read the explanations and analysis of others. On the test, you will only have access to your own brain. Train it well.

During the first week of school, we will study the literary time periods of Great Britain and the United States and read (in-class) *Death of a Salesman*.

Questions? Contact me at pgraves@vermilionschools.org or 419 433-0914.

Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller

One of the most famous plays written in the 20th century, *Death of a Salesman* is a must for the AP test and the study of American drama. Despite Miller's insistence that it was not the case, the play is about the demise of the American dream and the demoralization of the individual in a capitalist society. Obtain a copy of this work for your use in class. We will be reading it the first week of school.

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad

See the attached paper for background information on this novel. Your task with this novel is to write one essay of three-four pages. You will need textual support (citations!) in your essay. You must follow MLA format and use your best writing skills. **Remember:** I know your writing style and what you are capable of in writing. If you use secondary sources, cite them. **Essays will be submitted to turnitin.com. The assignment is due on Tuesday, September 10.**

Prompt: Are Kurtz's last words --- "The horror! The horror!"— summation, judgment, or realization? Kurtz's final utterance is open to interpretation. In your response, you should identify textually feasible interpretations of what Kurtz meant as he died. Did he realize something about himself? The Dark Continent? His methodology? Humanity in general? Remember to think about why Conrad left this ambiguous.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Originally published in 1816, this gothic novel is not like the movies! Instead, it is a complex novel that explores some very human issues through the use of a monster and a convoluted structure (more on that in a minute).

Look for and take notes on the four themes below as you read. On **Tuesday, September 17**, you will **take a test on the novel and become part of a group to present one of the themes.**

1. **“All knowledge is sorrow”** Our never-ending quest for discovery / knowledge / science leads us to sorrow.

2. **The Creation/God and Adam Archetype** What does it mean to be a creator? To be the created? What are the responsibilities of each? What happens if those responsibilities are not met? How much does the created one owe his or her creator?

3. **The Feminine** What is the role of women in society, and what is the role of the “feminine” in nature and human nature? Does life require balance between the traditional roles of masculine and feminine? What happens when that balance is lost?

4. **The monster archetype** Monsters can be seen as documents of our fears. Does Shelley’s monster show us what she and the Romantics feared? Are there some universal qualities to monsters? (Are there some basic fears that all humans share?) How have our monsters changed since Shelley’s time? How does Shelley herself view the monster?

A word on the structure of *Frankenstein*: This novel has a double frame story. You’ll start out with a series of letters and meet your overarching narrator, Walton. Frankenstein (the man) tells his story to Walton; then, the novel shifts and is told from the monster’s perspective. By the end of the novel, you’ve worked your way back out to Walton.

1984 by George Orwell

Published in 1949, Orwell’s masterpiece is an excellent example of a dystopia novel along with being a prophetic work for what remained of the 20th century. For us today, the novel serves as a warning and reminder of our watched society. Remember: “Big Brother is Watching.” We are never alone, and we are far more manipulated as individuals and as a society than we would like to admit.

Annotate your copy of the novel and complete the attached guide to prepare for classroom discussion and a test or paper. **The reading and guide are due on Tuesday, September 24.**

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Biography: READ more about Conrad's biography (it's easy to find). Note that Conrad (1857-1924) was a sailor and did sail up the Congo on a steamer as Marlow does in the novel; hence, the novel is semi-autobiographical in a variety of ways.

Publication:

The novel was originally published in three nearly equal sections in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1899. Conrad wrote the complete story in one month (December 1898). Conrad was paid \$100. The novel form came out in 1902.

Historical Information:

This is the time of the colonization of Africa. Africa was being explored and mapped by Europeans, but it was still very much the Dark Continent. The novel focuses on the Belgian Congo under the authority of Leopold II of Belgium. Leopold's goal as king was to industrialize and colonize. The Congo region was full of wealth in the forms of ivory and rubber and, of course, cheap/free labor. To say that Leopold exploited the Congo might be the understatement of the century. Leopold got away with devastating the region for about 20 years. At that time (c. 1905), Great Britain and the U.S. pressured Belgium to address the atrocities that they had perpetuated.

The Congo:

A large, but unorganized area (6000 political units) made communication very difficult. The Europeans who went to the Congo to "manage" it were often young, badly trained, and corrupt. These young agents were seeking personal wealth and frequently didn't care how they got it.

Use of a frame story:

This novel contains a frame in which an unknown narrator is on board a pleasure boat called the *Nellie*. As the boat is leaving the Thames and darkness is falling (some great imagery here), one of the other men on board, Charlie Marlow, begins to tell the story of his adventures on the Congo. Periodically, Conrad reminds the reader of the unknown narrator.

Themes:

Darkness (obviously), the corrupting influence of power, man's inhumanity to man, racial inequality, gender inequality, and nature as adversary