

Mr. DePalma
AP Literature and Composition
2017-2018 Summer Reading Assignments

Summer Reading Assignment #1

The first summer reading assignment is *Beowulf*, an epic poem from the Anglo-Saxon period in Europe known to be the oldest surviving national epic. This poem follows Beowulf from heroic youth to heroic old age. This is a great adventure story, and a deeply philosophical one. Scholars differ over the poem's original purpose and audience.

Upon reading please answer the following AP Open Response style prompt:

In the final line of Burton Raffel's translation, Beowulf is described as "deserving of praise." However, in many other translations, the final phrase refers not to Beowulf's meriting praise, but to his desiring, or seeking, it ("desirous of praise," "keenest for praise," "fondest of honor"). In a well-organized essay, discuss the significance of the differing characterizations of Beowulf and, based on your reading of the entire poem, explain which characterization (Beowulf as deserving praise versus Beowulf desiring and seeking praise and honor) is most consistent with the title hero. Use specific examples from Beowulf to support your points.

Summer Reading Assignment #2

Please read the entirety of documents I will provide to you prior to Summer 2016 including Aristotle's thoughts from *Poetics* and his definition of a Tragic Hero.

*According to Wikipedia, "Aristotle's **Poetics** is the earliest surviving work of dramatic theory and the first extant philosophical treatise to focus on literary theory. In it, Aristotle offers an account of what he calls "poetry" (a term which in Greek literally means "making" and in this context includes drama—comedy, tragedy, and the satyr play—as well as lyric poetry, epic poetry, and the dithyramb). He examines its "first principles" and identifies its genres and basic elements. His analysis of tragedy constitutes the core of the discussion."*

While the connection between your reading of Oedipus Rex and Poetics should be fairly clear, we will discuss this documents relevance to your work in our early activities.

Summer Reading Assignment #3

Your third summer reading assignment will be to read the classic play *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. This is the first play in the Oedipus Trilogy, some of the most famous, lasting plays from Ancient Greece; the birthplace of drama. Upon completion of the play you must apply the following AP Open Response style prompt to your close reading of OEDIPUS REX and respond to it:

Choose a complex and important character in a novel or a play of recognized literary merit (in this case, Oedipus Rex) who might on the basis of the character's actions alone be considered evil or immoral. In a well-organized essay, explain both how and why the full presentation of the character in the work makes us react more sympathetically than we otherwise might. Avoid plot summary.

The two essay prompts above are loosely based on AP style OPEN RESPONSE prompts; only you are being told which text you must respond to. You will be responding to these types of prompts (and poetry and prose based prompts) throughout the year, including on the AP exam, a requirement for taking this course

Writing Suggestions:

A well-crafted essay will follow the traditional paragraph (5) essay format: topic paragraph (with a defensible thesis that doesn't leave me wondering: SO WHAT?); body paragraphs; concluding paragraphs. **Please use the a=b because of x, y, and z formula as the basis of your thesis.** These will likely be in the 3 page range. They shouldn't be much longer. Understand that 2.5 pages would be tough unless masterfully done. I MUST SEE THAT YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THE THESIS EQUATION AND ITS PARTS BEFORE I WILL LET YOU WRITE THESIS STATEMENTS WITHOUT EMPLOYING IT STRICTLY...and even that will be restricted (we will explain).

*) ALSO, as you read, you must create what we call a *Study Guide*. You will need to complete one of these for REQUIRED SUMMER READINGS #1 & #3 (2 total). This practice will continue in class as you will be required to hand in concise, well-organized outlines for each major piece of literature read out of class. Think of these as your own collection of Spark Notes. The attached outline will help guide you in this process. You must include the information that is listed in items 1-10. Each response should be at least a solid paragraph in length. Make sure you always explain the significance of the literary techniques (especially character, behavior, symbols, quotations, and literary elements.)

AP Literature Study Guide Outline

This outline must be completed for each of your summer reading texts in addition to the other assignments.

1. Title, author, and date (era) written
2. 3+ central characters (use your discretion and justify) and descriptions of each
3. Minor characters (use your discretion and justify) and description of each
4. Main settings and description of each (settings should come from the piece's beginning, middle and end, and each setting's significance must be explained)
5. Concise but Effective Plot outline (no textual support needed.)
6. Two or more important symbols and their significance
7. Thoughts on the author's style and its impact on the text/reader
8. Some thoughts on the work's dominant philosophy/theme
9. Three quotations important to and typical of the work (include speaker and why the quotation is important to the scene/occasion; quotations must come from the piece's beginning, middle and end)
10. Two or more literary elements and how they function in the piece (use elements discussed in English class in prior years and this year)