

2017 AP English Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

Required Book:

How to Read Literature Like a Professor by Thomas C. Foster

Summer Choice Novels:

The Elegance of the Hedgehog by Muriel Barbery, Alison Anderson (Translator)

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel

Everything I Never Told You by Celeste Ng

The Fishermen by Chigozie Obioma

AP Lit is considered a college class. Thus, this course will provide you with the intellectual challenges and workload consistent with a typical undergraduate university English literature course, beginning with your summer reading assignment. The texts that you are assigned to read this summer are typically read at the college level, so they will be advanced in content as well as reading level and may include controversial content.

First, Read, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

- This text is an easy to read introduction to the patterns of symbolic meaning in literary texts and is a helpful secondary source for AP English. You should read it before you read your summer choice novel, as it may help to make some parts of the novel more meaningful to you.
- Answer five of the provided journal questions (attached). Your answers will let you practice your literary analysis. You will be using your summer choice novel to respond to the journal questions. Your responses should NOT be superficial, but in-depth with specific responses and references to the text.
- Type your journal responses using MLA format including the correct heading your name, class name, etc. and citations for quotes. If you are unsure how to follow MLA guidelines visit the following website for help: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource>. Please label your journal responses.

Second, Choose ONE of the following novels to read. The synopsizes of the novels are from Goodreads.com.

The Elegance of the Hedgehog by [Muriel Barbery](#), [Alison Anderson](#) (Translator)

We are in the center of Paris, in an elegant apartment building inhabited by bourgeois families. Renée, the concierge, is witness to the lavish but vacuous lives of her numerous employers. Outwardly she conforms to every stereotype of the concierge: fat, cantankerous, addicted to television. Yet, unbeknownst to her employers, Renée is a cultured autodidact who adores art, philosophy, music, and Japanese culture. With humor and intelligence, she scrutinizes the lives of the building's tenants, who for their part are barely aware of her existence.

Then there's Paloma, a twelve-year-old genius. She is the daughter of a tedious parliamentarian, a talented and startlingly lucid child who has decided to end her life on the sixteenth of June, her thirteenth birthday. Until then she will continue behaving as everyone expects her to behave a mediocre pre-teen high on adolescent subculture, a good but not an outstanding student, an obedient if obstinate daughter.

Paloma and Renée hide both their true talents and their finest qualities from a world they suspect cannot or will not appreciate them. They discover their kindred souls when a wealthy Japanese man named Ozu arrives in the building.

Only he is able to gain Paloma's trust and to see through Renée's timeworn disguise to the secret that haunts her.

This is a moving, funny, triumphant novel that exalts the quiet victories of the inconspicuous among us.

Station Eleven by [Emily St. John Mandel](#)

An audacious, darkly glittering novel set in the eerie days of civilization's collapse, *Station Eleven* tells the spellbinding story of a Hollywood star, his would-be savior, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region, risking everything for art and humanity.

One snowy night Arthur Leander, a famous actor, has a heart attack onstage during a production of *King Lear*. Jeevan Chaudhary, a paparazzo-turned-EMT, is in the audience and leaps to his aid. A child actress named Kirsten Raymonde watches in horror as Jeevan performs CPR, pumping Arthur's chest as the curtain drops, but Arthur is dead. That same night, as Jeevan walks home from the theater, a terrible flu begins to spread. Hospitals are flooded and Jeevan and his brother barricade themselves inside an apartment, watching out the window as cars clog the highways, gunshots ring out, and life disintegrates around them.

Fifteen years later, Kirsten is an actress with the Traveling Symphony. Together, this small troupe moves between the settlements of an altered world, performing Shakespeare and music for scattered communities of survivors. Written on their caravan, and tattooed on Kirsten's arm is a line from *Star Trek*: "Because survival is insufficient." But when they arrive in St. Deborah by the Water, they encounter a violent prophet who digs graves for anyone who dares to leave.

Spanning decades, moving back and forth in time, and vividly depicting life before and after the pandemic, this suspenseful, elegiac novel is rife with beauty. As Arthur falls in and out of love, as Jeevan watches the newscasters say their final good-byes, and as Kirsten finds herself caught in the crosshairs of the prophet, we see the strange twists of fate that connect them all. A novel of art, memory, and ambition, *Station Eleven* tells a story about the relationships that sustain us, the ephemeral nature of fame, and the beauty of the world as we know it.

Everything I Never Told You by [Celeste Ng](#)

Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet. So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia's body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos. A profoundly moving story of family, secrets, and longing, *Everything I Never Told You* is both a gripping page-turner and a sensitive family portrait, uncovering the ways in which mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives struggle, all their lives, to understand one another.

The Fishermen by Chigozie Obioma

In a Nigerian town in the mid 1990's, four brothers encounter a madman whose mystic prophecy of violence threatens the core of their close-knit family.

Told from the point of view of nine year old Benjamin, the youngest of four brothers, *The Fishermen* is the story of an unforgettable childhood in 1990s Nigeria, in the small town of Akure. When their strict father has to travel to a distant city for work, the brothers take advantage of his extended absence to skip school and go fishing. At the ominous, forbidden nearby river, they meet a dangerous local madman who persuades the oldest of the boys that he is destined to be killed by one of his siblings. What happens next is an almost mythic event whose impact—both tragic and redemptive—will transcend the lives and imaginations of its characters and its readers.

Dazzling and viscerally powerful, *The Fishermen* never leaves Akure but the story it tells has enormous universal appeal. Seen through the prism of one family's destiny, this is an essential novel about Africa with all of its contradictions: economic, political, and religious; and with the epic beauty of its own culture.

Third, Read your Summer Choice Novel and...

...as you read the novel, annotate your copy (see some annotation tips below) and keep in mind what you've read in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. Pay attention to how you can apply what you've read from Foster's book to heighten your understanding and enrich your reading of the novel. Your annotations should reflect high level of engagement with the text. These annotations will facilitate your understanding, essay writing, and class discussions

Annotate: to furnish a literary work with critical commentary or explanatory notes

1. Underline or circle names of characters as they are introduced. Provide a label if you can.
2. Provide your own comments and commentary in margins.
3. Circle unfamiliar words.
4. Underline passages that are interesting, especially well-written, or that have to do with important themes, topics, or issues that the author addresses.
5. Underline passages that you can relate to on a personal level.
6. Write questions in the margins.
7. Write short summaries of what's going on in a stanza / paragraph / chapter.

and

2016 AP English Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignment (cont.)

Fourth, Journal Questions: Directions: Choose **FIVE** chapters from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* that you think apply to your novel, and analyze your novel using the literary techniques you learned about in Foster's book. Discuss the application to your novel by using specific textual evidence from both books to support your interpretation. Avoid listing or just "pointing out" information you should analyze and look for the larger meaning created via the use of literary techniques (why or how is it important to the overall understanding or meaning of the novel?) You may organize your analysis in any way you choose, but it should be typed and formatted following MLA format. Each answer should be at least one and a half pages long.

Introduction: How'd He Do That?

Using your summer choice novel, what memories, symbols, and patterns do you recognize from other works of literature, film, or music?

Chapter 1: Every Trip Is a Quest (Except when it's not)

List **FIVE** aspects of the **QUEST** and then apply them to your summer choice novel; you should use pages 3-5 of Foster's book.

Chapter 2: Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

Is there a "communion" scene in your summer choice novel? Is it a bonding for the characters or a failure? Describe the scene and how it contributes to the overall meaning of the novel.

Chapter 3: Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires

What are the essentials of the vampire story and what do they represent? Apply this to your summer choice novel.

Chapter 4: Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?

Define "intertextuality." Discuss an example that has helped you relate to your student choice novel.

Chapter 5: When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare

Discuss how your summer choice novel alludes to or reflects Shakespeare and show how the author uses this connection thematically. Reread pages 39-41 carefully. In these pages, Foster shows how Fugard reflects Shakespeare through both plot and theme. In your discussion, focus on theme.

Chapter 6 . . . Or the Bible

What are some of the ways that your summer choice novel alludes to the Bible?

Chapter 7: Hansel and Gretel

How does your summer choice novel reflect a fairy tale? Discuss the parallels. Does it create irony or deepen appreciation?

Chapter 8: It's Greek to Me

What are some of the ways that your summer choice novel alludes to mythology?

Chapter 9: It's More Than Just Rain or Snow

Discuss the importance of weather in your summer choice novel and how it applies to the plot.

Chapter 10: Never Stand Next to the Hero

Describe a flat/static character from your novel and discuss the importance of his or her relationship with the main character.

Chapter 11: . . . More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence

Present examples of the kinds of violence found in your summer choice novel.

Chapter 12: Is That a Symbol?

What's the difference between symbolism and allegory? How does the author of your summer choice novel use symbolism/allegory in the text?

Chapter 13: It's All Political

Assume that Foster is right and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that your summer choice novel is political.

Chapter 14: Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too

Apply the criteria on page 126-129 to a major character in a significant literary work and discuss how he or she fits the criteria of a Christ Figure.

Chapter 15: Flights of Fancy

Explain how your summer choice novel has a scene in which flight signifies escape or freedom. Explain in detail.

Chapter 18: If She Comes Up, It's Baptism

Is there a "baptism scene" in your summer choice novel? How was the character different after the experience? Discuss.

Chapter 19: Geography Matters . . .

Discuss at least four different aspects of your summer choice novel that Foster would classify under "geography".

Chapter 20: . . . So Does Season

If your summer choice novel mentions a specific season, then discuss how the author uses the season in a meaningful, traditional, or unusual way.

Interlude: One Story

Write your own definition for archetype. Identify an archetypal story and apply it to your summer choice novel.

Chapter 21: Marked for Greatness

Figure out Harry Potter's scar, then select another character (from your summer choice novel) with a physical imperfection and analyze its implications for characterization.

Chapter 22: He's Blind for a Reason, You Know

What does physical blindness mirror in one of the characters in your summer choice novel?

Chapter 23: It's Never Just Heart Disease. . .

What are some of the symbolic possibilities associated with the heart? How is it manifested in a character from your summer choice novel?

Chapter 24: Don't Read with Your Eyes

How did your summer choice novel force you to not read with your eyes?

Chapter 25: It's My Symbol and I'll Cry if I Want To

What private symbol is used in your summer choice novel? Explain its significance and how the author uses it in the novel.

Chapter 26: Is he Serious?

Does your summer choice novel adhere to the phrase "Irony trumps Everything/?" Explain how the author uses irony in the novel?

