



WHITE PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHITE PLAINS HIGH SCHOOL
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Ellen Doherty
Principal

June 2019

Dear AP English Students:

Welcome to AP English Literature and Composition. This course is a reading-intensive course that will place many demands on you, and those demands will begin with your work this summer.

As you know, the AP examinations are administered in May, and this, consequently, gives us less time to prepare for the test than is enjoyed by many school districts throughout the country. So we have to make sure that we already have some momentum when we begin in September.

To that end, we are requiring that you read the novels ***All the Light We Cannot See*** by **Anthony Doerr** and ***The Things They Carried*** by **Tim O'Brien**, works that in very different ways examine the effect of war on individuals. We recommend that you acquire your own copies of these books so that you may mark them up (highlight, underline, and write thoughts in the margins). To deepen your appreciation for the texts, allow yourself time to reread passages and chapters, as needed. This practice will prepare you for both the rigor of the texts we will read next year and the style of close reading you are required to do on the AP Literature Examination.

Assignment:

After reading these novels, please compose an **essay of a minimum of 3 pages**, (12 point font, double-spaced), in which you examine the **theme of the impact of war on individuals as it is developed in both texts**. In order to discover your thesis, first consider how each author addresses this theme, and identify the larger questions that the texts encourage you to ask regarding war and its effects on the people who experience it firsthand. As you examine the text, it is appropriate to analyze any of the following in so far as it helps to express theme: style, diction, tone, structure, and literary elements. In your essay, be sure to have a clear, narrow, and provable thesis, and provide your interpretation of each of the texts supporting your ideas with at least 3 direct quotes from each text. Use the **MLA format** for the essay. Visit the website entitled “The OWL at Purdue” for help with the format and the writing of this essay. Also, refer to the attached list of essay tips, and proofread your essay with this list in mind. If you use a website to support you, bear in mind that we are not interested in what those websites have to say – we are interested in what you have to say and how you say it. Once you have returned to school with your essay, you will be required to post it in **Turnitin.com**, as well as submit a hard copy on the first day of classes.

Use the summer productively. We will be reading across genres and time, and many of the works planned for the course are challenging either because of their content or style. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century prose, for example, employs long, complicated sentences; classical drama uses dramatic forms radically different from the ones commonly used today. After summer reading is completed, you may want to refer to the website mentioned below to find a list of other texts that have often appeared on the AP exam. You simply cannot read too many books!

Among the works planned for the year are the following:

King Lear by William Shakespeare
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
Dubliners by James Joyce
Beloved by Toni Morrison

We will also be reading a wide range of poetry and essays. Poetry, in particular, is a focus of the course, and students taking AP English should be interested in learning more about poetic devices, forms, and strategies for inquiry.

This class is designed for students who love to read and write, and who apply themselves to every text with which they are presented. **The student who is passionate about a wide range of literature is the ideal student for this class.** Please be serious about setting up a practical reading plan for the summer months. The AP exam is very challenging, and to be successful you will need to be able to draw on a wealth of literature – not movies, not *Spark Notes* – and an understanding of literary techniques. Close, careful, sustained reading is the only way you'll be able to adequately prepare yourself for the AP test. Moreover, reading challenging texts closely will prepare you for the rigor you will encounter in your college classes.

So, enjoy your summer (hey, reading is fun!), and we'll see you in September.

Sincerely,
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P.S. For a list of texts that have appeared on the AP exam in the past, check out this link:

<https://www.crowleyisdtx.org/cms/lib5/TX01917780/Centricity/Domain/882/AP%20lit-%201971-2017-Titles%20from%20Open%20Response%20Questions.pdf>

We expect that you all will be reading additional books this summer, so consider choosing a few more from the list!

Writing Tips: Please use this as a checklist as you proofread your essay

- 1) Always connect or introduce quotes; do not just drop them into your essay.
- 2) Review the run-on sentence rule. Avoid comma splices, and review the proper use of semi-colons.
- 3) Be sure to have a strong and specific thesis that is not obvious, that is interpretive in nature, and that passes the “so what?” test.
- 4) Look at your topic sentences. Are they specific? Do they each support your thesis clearly? Topic sentences should not be quotations or statements of detail.
- 5) Avoid contractions in formal academic writing.
- 6) Do not use “you” or “I” in your essay. The tone should be analytical and objective; the point of view should be the third person throughout.
- 7) Avoid the passive voice.
- 8) Edit to remove unnecessary words. **If your idea can be expressed succinctly in five words, do not use ten.** This will improve your writing style, a focus of our work this year. (For more on this, check out a nifty little book called *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Williams and Colomb or the classic writing manual *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.)
- 9) Proofread for subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement. Use “The OWL at PURDUE” to revisit the rules if you are uncertain about them.
- 10) Be mindful of your diction; choose words appropriate to the academic task at hand. Avoid colloquialisms. At the same time, remember that your goal is to communicate clearly.
- 11) Do not summarize the plot. Be sure that you are focused on analysis.
- 12) Do not use the language of review: “In his *wonderful* novel...,” “The *masterfully* written text..,” etc. Stick to analysis.

Good writing is rewriting.

Summer Reading Overview

- Students will read required texts, *All the Light We Cannot See* & *The Things They Carried*.
- Students will write a three page essay (see ***specific assignment*** in letter above).
- Students will read additional books for pleasure this summer, as well as the school-wide title.
- The essay is due on the first day of school in September. It's important to our first week classwork, so be prepared.
- Questions can be addressed to Ms. LoScalzo at gialoscalzo@wpcsd.k12.ny.us or Ms. Cykiert at olympiacykiert@wpcsd.k12.ny.us