

Montini Catholic High School
English Department
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Dear Advanced Placement Students:

Welcome to Advanced Placement English 12. This course follows the guidelines established by the College Board for the Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition course. The course includes some of the great masterworks of British and world fiction to offer you an overview of literary traditions as well as an in-depth study of particular contemporary writers. In Advanced Placement English you will do a great deal of independent work ranging from presenting an independently read novel to writing and revising a lengthy research paper on a topic using literature as a springboard. Please be advised that AP English is a college level course, and as such the material we study is intended for the mature reader. We will at times be discussing sensitive and controversial topics that frequently arise in college level literature. The AP Literature student must be prepared to deal with adult level reading material in a mature manner. Expect the AP Literature reading list to be challenging but ultimately rewarding.

As your Advanced Placement instructor, I expect that part of your summer will be spent completing the four-book reading requirement for Advanced Placement English. The summer reading is an important feature of the AP English Program, and our English program as a whole. It serves two functions. **First**, it keeps you active as a reader by broadening your horizons through the texts that now figure largely on Advanced Placement examinations. **Second**, it keeps you active as a thinker by requiring that you write and think about what you have read. This writing component will ease your transition into the AP Literature Program in which you write for the exam in such a way that you lead with an idea and develop that idea quickly. This is one of our central goals. As you read each selection, write down thoughts, comments and questions in **a reading journal**. This journal will be used during class discussions of the reading selections. **The complete journal is due the first day of class in August, 2010!**

The summer reading for AP English consists of three novels and a play. The reading selections and assignments follow:

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley**
Summer 2010
Reading Assignment

Before reading this novel, you will need to consult a book of **mythology**. I strongly urge you to reacquire yourself with the story of **Prometheus**. If you don't have a copy of a mythology book, you can easily find the information you need on line. Knowing this story will help immensely in your understanding of the novel's themes, since Mary Shelley subtitled this novel "The Modern Prometheus." The creation theme of the myth has a strong connection to the theme of Shelley's novel. (Hint!) *Frankenstein* was written during the Romantic period of British literature, and underscores a fear prevalent at that time -- that scientific advances could lead to dire consequences if not carefully regulated. The Romantic writers also emphasized the restorative powers of Nature and its influence on the imagination. It would also be helpful for you to read "**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Mary Shelley refers to this poem in the novel, and the two works share common themes.

Please be aware as you read that Frankenstein is the name of the **scientist, NOT the monster**. Frankenstein's creature does not have a name. This novel traces the experiences of the young male protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, and the tragic consequences of his obsession with science. The idea for this story came to Mary Shelley in a dream. She and her husband, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, were vacationing in Italy with another great poet, Lord Byron. The three decided to have a contest to see who could write the best horror story. Mary's story is the only one that was completed, and became one of the greatest Gothic horror stories ever written. (Another hint: If you don't know the definition of Gothic fiction, look it up!) Shelley explores man's desire for power, fame and adventure as opposed to his need for love and companionship. She also emphasizes that all decisions have consequences which, if ignored, can lead to tragic results.

Read closely, and take good notes. Read ACTIVELY. Take notes on the pages of the paperback. Use sticky notes to help you keep track of pages where you find important and significant details. Shelley uses the frame story technique along with flashbacks to reveal her story in pieces. **DO NOT** delude yourself that a quick reading of this novel will suffice. It will not. Once having completed the novel, you will need to go back and revisit the chapters to get a better understanding of what Shelley was attempting to do. **WARNING! Do NOT watch a movie version of *Frankenstein* and think you know the story. Every movie version that has ever been made is SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT from the novel.**

***Frankenstein* Writing Assignment**

- The novel has three narrators: Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Creature. You are to **write a short reflective piece** (1-2 pages, typed, double-spaced) on each narrator and the events and decisions that shape that character's growth, leading to major themes in the novel. **State specifically what theme each narrator brings out in the novel.**
- The frame of the novel is as follows: It begins and ends with narration by Robert Walton. Directly after Walton's first narrative section and before his ending narration, Victor Frankenstein relates the history of his life and scientific experiments. In the middle of the novel, the Creature tells his own story. Therefore, you should have a total of three short reflective pieces – one for each narrative section.
- These three pieces are due the first day of class in August, 2010.
- In your reading journal, list examples of at least 5 other literary devices (metaphors, motifs, symbols, etc.) Shelley employs in the novel.
- Notice the way Shelley frequently refers to poetry in the novel. In your reading journal, write some comments about how these references to poetry enhance your understanding of the novel.
- Your reading journal will be checked on the first day of class in August, 2010.

***The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver Summer 2010 Reading Assignment**

Barbara Kingsolver is one of the most important contemporary writers. Her novel *The Poisonwood Bible* was first published in 1998. It is the story of Nathan Price, a Baptist preacher from Bethlehem, Georgia, who packs up his wife and four daughters and takes them to the Belgian Congo in 1959 to bring the Christian faith to the "heathens." Do not be put off by the length of this book. It is immensely readable, and "has it all," so to speak. There is humor, pathos, suspense, intrigue, and much to be learned through reading about the experiences of this family in a country that is facing a great deal of political turmoil. It is notable for many reasons, but your first challenge is to put together the "true" story. The story is told through the eyes of five different narrators: Nathan's wife Orleanna, 16-year-old daughter Rachel, twin daughters Leah and Adah, and five-year-old Ruth May. Nathan himself has no voice in the novel. We learn about him only through the eyes of his wife and children. So, who is this man? He is the story's catalyst, but is a true enigma. You must be able to find the real man by putting the puzzle pieces together. As you read, analyze the reliability of each narrator.

***The Poisonwood Bible* Writing Assignment**

You will need to document your reading as you proceed.

1. It will be helpful for you to keep a **character log** in your reading journal in which you trace each character's change and growth over the course of the novel. Indicate in this log the specific catalysts to change in each character as they occur.
2. Comment on meaning. Select at least one quotation for each narrator that gives you an insight into her character and which expresses some philosophical idea about life: the meaning of love, the importance of self-knowledge, developing and/or losing relationships. Write a short reflective piece for each of the quotations you select. These reflections should be typed, double-spaced, and will be collected on the first day of class in August, 2010.
3. Summarize what you see as the spirituality of the novel and how the experiences of the Price family added to your knowledge of true spirituality. This summary should be no more than 2 pages, typed, double-spaced and will be collected on the first day of class in August, 2010.
4. Write a final 1-2 page reflective piece in which you comment on which of the 5 narrators you believe to be the MOST reliable. Give specific reasons for your choice, referring to examples from the novel. This reflection should be typed, double-spaced, and is due on the first day of class in August, 2010.

***Medea* by Euripides**
Summer 2010
Reading Assignment

Nearly 2500 years separate *Medea*, a classical Greek tragedy, from our own day. We will find a female character who demands attention, not only because of the abuse to which she has been subjected, but also because of what she has become, partially as a result of that abuse. Euripides, a unique playwright of his time because of his understanding and compassion for the downtrodden, presents a woman's battle to maintain a vestige of integrity as her world is collapsing around her. (**Note:** It will be very helpful if you consult a mythology book once again to read the story of **Jason and the search for the Golden Fleece**. This story contains important background information about the relationship between Medea and Jason that will help you understand the action of the play.)

Medea exhibits an inherent strength that does not permit her to await destruction passively. She responds to her dilemma by finding a plan for revenge on the husband who cast her and their children aside. She is willing to use their children to further her own agenda and abate her own pain. The question is, how should she be judged for her actions?

Values emphasized in the play are courage, endurance, integrity, and compassion for the abused. The consequences of non-commitment, insensitivity, living a self-serving life, and revenge are also explored. It is hoped that you will gain a deeper understanding not only of the literary elements involved in the playwright's art, but also of the human condition found within the pages of the play. **The journal entries are due the first day of class in August, 2010.**

Medea
Writing Assignment

In episodes 1 through 5, Medea receives visits from Creon, Aegeus, Jason, and the Tutor. Not only do these encounters move the plot along, but also they reveal the machinations of Medea's mind and her emotional state. They also further develop her personality. Using the format below, write the information derived from each encounter along with your personal reactions.

- Episode 1 – Medea meets Creon
- Episode 2 – Medea meets Jason
- Episode 3 – Medea meets Aegeus
- Episode 4 – Medea meets Jason
- Episode 5 – The Tutor returns

- a. Purpose of the encounter
- b. Medea's emotional state
- c. What Medea hopes to attain
- d. Her strategy
- e. The victor
- f. Reaction of the Chorus
- g. Your personal reaction

Use each one of these items (a to g) for each of the 5 episodes.

Senior All School Summer Reading Selection
***Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger**
Summer 2010 Reading Assignment

Peace Like a River is a novel about the Land family – eleven-year-old narrator Reuben, his miracle-working father Jeremiah, his outlaw older brother Davy, and his younger sister Swede. Set in the Minnesota countryside and the Badlands of Dakota in the 1960's, *Peace Like a River* takes the reader on an incredible journey with the Land family as they search for Davy after his escape from prison. Leif Enger has combined elements of tragedy, romance, adventure story and religious allusion to create a story rich in the themes of family love and religious faith and the trust that is required of both. This is a novel that should inspire much meditation as you read, and stimulate great class discussion when we meet in August.

Peace Like a River
Writing Assignment

1. As you read, write your reactions to the story in your journal. Comment on the actions of the main characters and how you feel about their experiences.
2. In your journal, list at least 5 examples of literary devices (metaphor, allusion, symbols, etc.) used by Enger in the novel. Your journal is due on the first day of class in August, 2010.
3. Write a 1-2 page reflective piece on **ONE** of the following topics. Your reflection should be typed and double-spaced. This reflection is due on the first day of class in August, 2010.
 - a. Swede, Reuben's imaginative, prolific, and precocious younger sister, creates an epic poem about a cowboy named Sunny Sundown. Talk about Sunny's ongoing saga as an ironic commentary on Reuben's larger narrative. What are the parallels?
 - b. Besides the Sunny Sundown text, several other outlaw tales, literary allusions, biblical legends, and historical asides are offered by Swede or by Reuben himself. Identify a few of these stories-within-the-story, explaining how each enriches or influences the main narrative.
 - c. Both during Davy's trial and after his escape from prison, we encounter a variety of public viewpoints on what Reuben's brother has done. Such viewpoints, usually presented as personal letters or newspaper editorials, are always steadfast yet often contradictory. What does Reuben seem to realize about the so-called "court of public opinion" in light of these viewpoints?
 - d. Prayer is described in many ways and on many occasions in the novel. What larger points about religion and human nature might Enger be making with his various depictions of people at prayer? What power does Reuben recognize in his own prayers? Discuss the impact prayer has on Reuben, and how it transforms him.

General Directions for all Summer Reading Assignments:

1. **Annotations:** Annotations are required! Highlight, underline, write comments in the margins, use sticky tabs to mark important pages. Get in the habit of reading actively now. This is a requirement for the class and a part of your grade.
2. **Vocabulary:** Purchase a good paperback dictionary and keep it handy as you read. Use a section of your journal to create a glossary of words you looked up as you read each book. I expect to see a good number of words and their definitions in this section of your journal. If a word has more than one definition, be sure you are writing down the definition that fits the context in which you found it.
3. **Connections:** Look for commonalities in the works. Be able to discuss common themes, character traits, symbols, motifs, and narrative devices.
4. **Don't procrastinate!** These books are all complex and require your undivided attention. There is no way that you will do them justice if you wait until the week before we come back to school to begin reading. Start now. Read them closely, carefully, and thoughtfully. Remember that good readers are RE-READERS! Great literature must be revisited to be truly appreciated. Be prepared to discuss all selections on day one.
5. **Keep in touch.** If you have any questions about the books as you read over the summer, e-mail me (nformanski@montini.org). I'll be happy to discuss the books with you at any time.

I look forward to working with you in class next year. Be ready for a challenging and rewarding year as we explore some of the greatest works of literature ever written. Happy reading! ☺