

## **AP English Literature Summer Reading Assignment**

*Welcome AP Literature and Composition students!*

This course is designed to engage students in the careful reading and critical analysis of literature while also deepening their understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers. Therefore, you will be required to read [How to Read Literature Like a Professor](#) by Thomas C. Foster, which will give you unparalleled insight into the meaning of literature, and a dystopian novel of your choosing.

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1. Read [How to Read Literature Like a Professor](#) by Thomas C. Foster. For each chapter, define key terms and write a brief summary of the most important ideas of the chapter—basically, what you should take away from the chapter. It should be something that you can apply to other works of literature, something that will help you interpret other works. Here is a model for you to follow:

### **Sample**

- INTRODUCTION: How'd He Do That?
  - Foster posits (or proposes) “bargains with the devil”—popularized by Dr. Faustus where the eponymous character trades his soul for a favor from Lucifer—can take the shape of a deal in which the character sacrifices his integrity or identity for selfish desires, not just his soul.
  - *Book/play mentioned that interested me: Dr. Faustus*

*Please, read the introduction even though I have summarized one of many important ideas from the chapter; it has more important information.*

**Also**, list the titles of three novels or plays mentioned throughout the book that interest you following the summary statements.

### **RECAP:**

1. *Define key terms*
2. *Write a brief summary of each chapter*
3. *List three novels mentioned that interested you*

*You may find a list of the chapter titles in Appendix B to this document.*

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PART 2. You will read *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (now a HULU-original television show) detailing the plight of Offred living in Gilead, a dystopia that oppresses women. If you are not sure what a dystopia is, see Appendix A (at the end of this document).

While reading the novel, create a thematic quotes log (example below) with at least 10 quotations that provide some insight into the author’s position on **ONE** subject from the following:

- Gender Roles
- Religion and Theocracy
- Fertility
- Rebellion
- Love
- Storytelling and Memory

You will take the subject assigned to you, write down quotes related to it, and then create a thematic statement and justify how that quote supports your statement. Please include proper citation of the texts (page numbers), and if the quote refers to or is said by a particular character please include the character’s name.

[NOTE: **A thematic statement and a subject are two different things.**

A subject is something like “Justice,” “The Meaning of Life,” “Politics,” or “Love.”

A thematic statement is an arguable statement and the author’s treatment of the subject; for instance, “One cannot find happiness without first finding love” is a theme because it is arguable and applicable to other movies, books, songs; therefore, a thematic statement is also (almost) universal and can be applied to society in general, so make sure it is not specific to a single character from the novel.]

**Points will be deducted if themes are not written in an arguable, universal way.**

Here is an example of one thematic quote entry: **(Remember, you will need 10.)**

Quotation (page number)	Theme	Explanation/Analysis
<p>“The old family servants suspected that he was the son of the Baron’s sister by a worthy gentleman of that neighbourhood, whom the young lady would never agree to marry because he could only claim seventy-one quarterings, the rest of his family tree having suffered from the ravages of time” (19).</p>	<p>The qualities necessary to become royalty are ridiculous and arbitrary; thus, no royal family member is better than a non-royal person. [Notice that this statement is universal and can be applied to any person at any time.]</p>	<p>The quotation shows that Candide, who can only identify seventy-one generations (or “quarterings”) in his family tree, is not of proper enough lineage to marry the maiden Cunegonde, even though they may be related. Seventy-two, which is later revealed to be a more appropriate number of generations to know, is so arbitrary that it seems the author is poking fun at what it takes to become royalty. One’s birth and family seem only to matter in a superficial way.</p>

Here is what I **DO NOT** want to see:

Quotation	Thematic Statement	Explanation
<p>“The old family servants ... suffered from the ravages of time.” [Notice that this quotation does not have a page number, and it skips over meaningful parts of the quote.]</p>	<p>Royalty [Notice that this is a subject, not an arguable statement. By itself, it is essentially meaningless.]</p> <p>Another bad example: Voltaire thinks Candide is just as royal as Cunegonde. [Notice that this is too specific to the characters in the novel, and not universal/applicable to readers’ lives today.]</p>	<p>Candide is the main character and he is in love with Cunegonde, but she won’t marry him because he doesn’t have enough quarterings. [Notice that this explanation is mainly plot summary/a paraphrased restating of the quotation and it does not reflect/discuss any thematic ideas.]</p>

*You may find a thematic-quote log template in Appendix C to this document.*

What is a **DYSTOPIA**? To put it as simply as possible, a dystopian novel can be described as a **dark vision of the future**.

Here are a few other definitions:

- "An imaginary, wretched place, the opposite of Utopia." (*Cassel's Concise English Dictionary*)
- "An imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives." (*Merriam-Webster's On-line*)
- "The word 'dystopia' is the commonly used antonym of 'eutopia' [i.e. utopia] and denotes that class of hypothetical societies containing images of worlds worse than our own. [...] Dystopian images are almost invariably images of future society, pointing fearfully at the way the world is supposedly going in order to provide urgent propaganda for a change in direction." (*Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*)
- "[...] dystopian fiction looks at totalitarian dictatorship as its prototype, a society that puts its whole population continuously on trial, a society that finds its essence in concentration camps, that is, in disenfranchising and enslaving entire classes of its own citizens, a society that, by glorifying and justifying violence by law, preys upon itself. [...] dystopian society is what we would today call dysfunctional; it reveals the lack of the very qualities that traditionally justify or set the *raison d'être* for a community." (*Erika Gottlieb's Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*)
- "A dystopia is any society considered to be undesirable, for any of a number of reasons. The term was coined as a converse to a Utopia, and is most usually used to refer to a fictional (often near-future) society where current social trends are taken to nightmarish extremes. [...] Often, the difference between a Utopia and a Dystopia is in the author's point of view. [...] Dystopias are frequently written as warnings, or as satires, showing current trends extrapolated to a nightmarish conclusion. [...] A dystopia is all too closely connected to current-day society." (*Wikipedia On-line Dictionary*)

#### **COMMON CHARACTERISTICS**

- An undesirable, horrifying, or dark vision of society
  - Setting is usually a dark vision of the future, but sometimes the setting is ambiguous or suggestive of an archaic society with barbaric practices and traditions
  - Dehumanization and an oppressive environment or government
  - Questioning or criticism of society
  - Warning to readers about our own society
  - Paranoia and suspicion which creates ambiguity about good and evil
  - An attempt to achieve a utopian society which goes awry
  - An individual rebellion or resistance movement which reacts against the dystopian power structure
  - Questioning of technology, science, or an overly rational approach to solving problems of humanity
  - Extreme interpretation of laws
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## Appendix B

### *How To Read Literature Like a Professor* Chapter Titles & Summaries

- 1. Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)
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- 2. Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion
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- 3. Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires
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- 4. If It's Square, It's a Sonnet
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- 5. Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?
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- 6. When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare...
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- 7. ...Or the Bible
  -
- 8. Hanseldee and Greteldum
  -
- 9. It's Greek to Me
  -
- 10. It's More Than Just Rain or Snow
  -
- INTERLUDE Does He Mean That?
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- 11. ...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence
  -
- 12. Is That a Symbol?
  -
- 13. It's All Political
  -
- 14. Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too
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- 15. Flights of Fancy
  -
- 16. It's All About Sex...
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- 17. ...Except Sex
  -
- 18. If She Comes Up, It's Baptism
  -
- 19. Geography Matters...
  -
- 20. ...So Does Season

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- INTERLUDE One Story
  -
- 21. Marked for Greatness
  -
- 22. He's Blind for a Reason, You Know
  -
- 23. It's Never Just Heart Disease...
  -
- 24. ...And Rarely Just Illness
  -
- 25. Don't Read with Your Eyes
  -
- 26. Is He Serious? And Other Ironies
  -
- 27. A Test Case
  -

Three books that interested me while reading *How to Read* and why:

1. \_
2. \_
3. \_

**Appendix C - Thematic Quotes Log for *The Handmaid's Tale***

#	Quotation	Explanation/Analysis	Thematic Statement
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