

## AP Literature and Composition Summer Assignment

Modeled after the type of close reading and critical writing asked of students at four-year universities, the year-long assignment in AP Literature and Composition requires students to work with theory to analyze a text (novel or body of plays/poetry). In preparation for success on the assignment, it is beneficial to get some experience reading through a theoretical lens.

Before making your decision about the pairing below that you would like to work with, visit the Purdue OWL resource dedicated to literary theory and schools of criticism at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/writing\\_in\\_literature/literary\\_theory\\_and\\_schools\\_of\\_criticism/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/index.html). Do not worry if you do not completely understand all of the concepts the OWL elucidates; choose one that sounds interesting and approachable to you. Also, if you like, read a publisher's summary (no spoilers) of the novel to make sure the story interests you and that you are not reading about a subject you find discomfiting.

### The Assignment

**Choose a pairing (just one novel with its related theory) from this list:**

*Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie—Postcolonial criticism  
*The Centaur* by John Updike—Formalism  
*In Dubious Battle* by John Steinbeck—Marxist criticism  
*The Defense* by Vladimir Nabokov—Postmodern criticism  
*In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez—Feminist or Gender criticism  
*Middlemarch* by George Eliot—Feminist or Gender criticism  
*North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell—Marxist criticism  
*A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster—Postcolonial criticism  
*The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver—Formalism  
*Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi—Postcolonial criticism  
*There There* by Tommy Orange—Postcolonial criticism  
*To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf—Postmodern criticism

### **Explore the theoretical lenses:**

In explaining each of the theories, the OWL offers a set of typical questions. You will need to look at the typical questions for your choice of theory and eliminate any author-based questions (You won't be addressing the author; you'll be addressing the author's work) or questions that focus on the reader or the world outside the novel. For example, you would eliminate the questions with strikethrough applied below:

- How do the operations of repression structure or inform the work?
- Are there any oedipal dynamics—or any other family dynamics—at work here?
- How can characters' behavior, narrative events, and/or images be explained in terms of psychoanalytic concepts of any kind (for example...fear or fascination with death, sexuality—which includes love and romance as well as sexual behavior—as a primary indicator of psychological identity or the operations of ego-id-superego)?
- ~~• What does the work suggest about the psychological being of its author?~~
- ~~• What might a given interpretation of a literary work suggest about the psychological motives of the reader?~~

- Are there prominent words in the piece that could have different or hidden meanings?  
~~Could there be a subconscious reason for the author using these "problem words"?~~

### Read your novel through the lens:

As you read, keep your theoretical questions in mind (or, even better, next to you on your desk or in the grass), and prepare a set of annotated quotations in answer to the questions.

For example, if I were working with *Frankenstein* and psychoanalytic criticism (the set of questions above), one annotated quotation in answer to the first question might look like this:

Quotation (from the novel with in-text citation)

"Fear overcame me; I dared not advance, dreading a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them. I remained two days at Lausanne, in this painful state of mind. I contemplated the lake: the waters were placid; all around was calm; and the snowy mountains, 'the palaces of nature,' were not changed. By degrees the calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva" (Shelley 51).

Annotation (My own words in answer to the question based on what I see in the quotation)

Nature seems to be almost a tool to help Victor Frankenstein repress his fears. His conscious mind knows he is responsible for creating the creature who has wreaked havoc on the world around him and his family, but he doesn't want to admit his role in his own tragedy. The "nameless evils" are easy to define, but it is too painful for Victor to admit he is the catalyst for all that befalls him. Instead, he turns his attention to the lake and shifts his focus to the "placid...calm...and heavenly."

### The Basics

Type your final draft

You need a **minimum of 30** annotated quotations

Your quotations should be drawn from throughout the novel (not just the first 50 pages)

Each annotation should be brief (50-75 words), but clearly in answer to one of your theoretical questions

I know that literary theory is new to many of you, so don't worry if you don't completely understand your theory; just do your best, and look up terms like "repression" if you don't know what they mean

You should also provide an MLA-format works cited page for your novel

### Grading and due date

This is a **50-point** assignment (the equivalent of two major essay grades in the course). It is due on Friday, September 20.

If you have any questions about this assignment before you check out for the summer, see me (Ms. Colwell). If questions occur as you are working on the assignment over the summer, email me at [acolwell@psdschools.org](mailto:acolwell@psdschools.org).

I look forward to working with all of you, and I want to do everything I can to help you be successful. Have some fun with this!

Colwell