

summer reading information
Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition 2011-2012
Lisa Boyd, instructor

Course Information

AP English Literature and Composition will be a demanding college-level course, and I will expect you to function at a higher level than you ever have before. I will guide, support, and coach you, but I count on you to be independent thinkers and workers in many ways. You are among the best and the brightest of Salem's students; this course is your opportunity to affirm that fact.

To acquaint yourself with the general description and expectations for the AP English Literature and Composition course, I recommend that you visit the College Board Advanced Placement Program web site <<http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/students/index.html>> and then read specifically about the AP English Literature course <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub_englit.html?englit>. There you will also find study skills, reading tips, sample questions, and other information about the exam and the course. Before you begin reading this summer, I would suggest attempting some of the sample questions provided on the web site. This practice will help prepare you to read and examine the literature with an eye for what is expected of you as a reader and writer in this course.

According to the College Board, "[t]he AP English Literature and Composition course is designed to engage students in the careful reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature." As a result, we will begin "the careful reading and critical analysis" of two works of "recognized literary merit" during June and July.

Works for Summer Reading

You must read two works this summer, novels that explore the harsh realities hidden beneath humanity's façade. Together, we will examine a complex family transported to a foreign environment in **Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible***. Then, you have a choice for your second novel: **Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale***, a dystopia about a religiously zealous society from the point of view of a woman who has utterly lost the self she once was, or **Yann Martel's *Life of Pi***, a pseudo non-fiction text about a spiritual young Indian man's struggle to survive—physically and psychologically—while lost at sea for almost eight months. In *Life of Pi*, you must read the "Author's Note" at the beginning to facilitate your understanding; in *The Handmaid's Tale*, it is imperative that you read the "Historical Note" at the novel's end.

Summer Assignments

You need to be prepared for intense discussion activities during the first weeks of school, which may include identification, quotations, discussion, and analysis. To prepare for this assessment, I advise that you have a writing utensil in hand at all times while you read. Writing down your ideas and questions and observations while you read is critical; exemplary readers interact with the text and create their own conversation. In addition to the first-week assessment, you will also complete some analysis activities of the summer reading texts. Type (if at all possible), organize, and proofread your assignment before submitting it to me at the end of the first week of class (specific date to be announced).

1. For *The Poisonwood Bible*, you will analyze Kingsolver's use of Biblical allusion as a structuring tool for the novel to develop character and plot. For each of Books 1-6 of the novel—those that rely on Biblical allusion—compose two detailed and organized paragraphs:
 - (1) Explain how the Biblical original informs the events of the plot during that particular book. Pay close attention to the bolded words in the descriptions of each book in attached notes as well as the subtitles of each book. Incorporate a minimum of one quotation (with parenthetical citations) into your paragraph.
 - (2) Focus on how the four daughters grow, change, and develop as a result of their physical and psychological journey and pivotal experiences. Incorporate a minimum of three quotations (with parenthetical citations) into your paragraph.
2. For the novel of your choice, you must choose two quotations that you believe best illustrate of each of the **Five Essential Elements of Fiction Analysis** (notes attached): *characterization*, *point of view*, *setting*, *conflict*, and *theme* (ten quotations total). For each of your choices, (1) quote a passage (which may include multiple sentences) that conveys a complete idea and parenthetically cite the appropriate page number. Then, (2) explain in a detailed and organized paragraph how the quotation illustrates the literary element—
 - using precise literary terminology,
 - referring directly to the quotation in your analysis, and
 - showing a connection to the work's meaning and/or related scenes from the novel.

Contact Information

Enjoy your summer, and *revel* in your reading! All the information about the summer reading assignments is available at my website (<http://shsboyd.pbworks.com/AP+English+Literature+and+Composition>). If you need assistance with any of the literary texts or analysis activities, contact me via e-mail (lboyd@rockdale.k12.ga.us) or phone (404-291-1359).

***The Poisonwood Bible* background information**

Importance of Allusions

In her "Author's Note," Barbara Kingsolver says that she "couldn't have written the book at all without two remarkable sources of literary inspiration" (ix); one of these, she states, is the King James Bible. Because Kingsolver herself recognizes the importance of the Bible as a source for her work, you need to understand her reliance on the Bible, especially the King James version, as a textual source. Through her use of Biblical allusions, Kingsolver adds a layer to her novel that is created by a completely different text. You must recognize the people and events to which she alludes in order to comprehend this significant layer of the novel.

Book Titles containing Biblical Allusions

1. *Genesis*

Literally, the **beginning**, it is the first book of the Torah (Old Testament) and recounts the **origins** of the earth and all its inhabitants as well as **original sin** and **humanity's banishment** from the Garden of Eden.

2. *Revelation*

The final book of the New Testament, it contains **epiphanies** and provides vivid imagery involving numbers and strange beasts (reminiscent of Daniel's prophetic symbolism) to describe the Apocalypse—the final **battle between good and evil** at the **end of the world**.

3. *Judges*

An Old Testament book that recounts the **intense and prolonged struggle** of the Israelites to **conquer** Palestine, *Judges* focuses on **battles** and their **heroes**.

4. *Bel and the Serpent*

This Apocryphal text includes two stories about **wonders** and a **dead god**. In the first, Daniel exposes **a false god** by revealing that the priests of Bel (or Baal) are actually eating the food intended as offering to the patron deity of Babylon. Serving as a detective, he uses ashes to record the priests' footprints, thus belittling Bel. In the second story, Daniel, being **punished** for killing a dragon honored and revered by the Babylonian people, is thrown into the den of lions but **survives the peril unharmed**.

5. *Exodus*

From the Greek *exodus*, meaning "marching out," this second book of the Torah (Old Testament) focuses on **journey**. It tells of the **enslavement** of the Israelites in Egypt and their **escape** through the Red Sea and into the Sinai desert (where they wander for forty years) with Moses as their leader.

6. *Song of the Three Children*

A linguistic alteration of the Apocryphal text, *The Song of the Three Young Men*, this section of the novel reveals the perspectives of the surviving daughters after they have escaped from the Congo and from their father's overpowering influence. *The Song of the Three Young Men* is a story of both **hope and despair**, ultimately a **song of praise and** thanksgiving sung by the three who survived being placed in the fiery furnace for **refusing to worship an idol** during the persecution of Jews in Babylon.

Book Subtitles containing Literary Allusions

1. *The Things We Carried*, subtitle for *Genesis*
2. *The Things We Learned*, subtitle for *Revelation*
3. *The Things We Didn't Know*, subtitle for *Judges*
4. *What We Lost*, subtitle for *Bel and the Serpent*
5. *What We Carried Out*, subtitle for *Exodus*

In addition to using the King James Bible as a structuring device, Kingsolver relies on her erudite audience's recognition of her references to Tim O'Brien's short-story cycle, ***The Things They Carried*** (1990). The interrelated stories told and retold by multiple voices explore the inadequate preparation for the Vietnam War and its overwhelming effect on a group of young soldiers. The things that the soldiers carry are not only material necessities for battle; despite their differing perspectives, the soldiers must also carry memories of home, guilt for their role in the war, and an anguish created by their newly discovered understanding that truth and reality are not the same.

Characters with Biblical Names

- **Rachel**, oldest daughter in the Price family
The daughter of Laban, she was the second and darling wife of Jacob. She was so beautiful that Jacob, after being tricked by Laban to marry his eldest daughter Leah, worked in servitude for seven extra years to earn her hand in marriage. She fathered his two favorite sons, Joseph and Benjamin, and died in childbirth with the latter. Never fond of hard work, Rachel was known for her contemplative nature.
- **Leah**, the first-born Price twin
The oldest daughter of Laban, she was given to Jacob in marriage after he completed seven years of labor for her father. Jacob had assumed that the woman under the veil was Leah's sister Rachel, his beloved, and was shocked and disappointed in discovering her identity. Despite her husband's luke-warm initial reception, Leah proved a faithful and productive wife.
- **Adah**, the second-born Price twin who suffers from Hemiplegia (a rare neurological disorder affecting one side of the body)
A rather insignificant matriarch in the book of Genesis, she is the wife of Lamech—one of Cain's descendants dwelling east of Eden. Adah becomes the mother of nomadic peoples, those who dwell in tents and herd cattle. Lamech warns Adah that he and Cain shall be avenged. Another Adah appears later in Genesis, this one the wife of Esau, Jacob's brother from whom he stole the birthright.
- **Ruth (May)**, the youngest and most innocent of the Price girls
The Biblical epitome of loyalty and devotion, Ruth as a young widow tells her mother-in-law Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee; whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:15).
- **Nathan**, the leader of the Price family who is plagued by guilt for what he perceives as his desertion of his unit during World War II
A prophet and the main advisor to King David, Nathan rebuked and chastised David for his seduction of Bathsheba and killing of her husband Uriah. He delivered to David the news that God would punish him with the death of Bathsheba's first-born child.

Other Significant Allusions

- **Apocrypha**
A collection of books, part of the Greek version of the Old Testament, that were not included in the Hebrew Bible. The collection, in which Daniel plays a major role, sheds light on the time period leading to the beginning of the New Testament and includes *The Song of the Three Young Men*, *Susanna*, and *Bel and the Serpent*.
- **Bethlehem**
The hometown of Joseph, descendent of King David, and birthplace of Jesus.
- **Ham**
One of Noah's sons, he saw his father lying drunk and naked in his tent. For the offense of witnessing his father in this state, Ham was cursed. Noah decreed that Ham's descendants would be slaves to those of his brother Shem, who covered Noah's nakedness without looking at him. Shem's progeny became the Semites; Ham's descendants are their enemies the Hamites, who populated northern Africa from Morocco to Ethiopia.
- **Methuselah**
Noah's grandfather who is said to have lived for 969 years and whose name has thus become synonymous with longevity and life experience.
- **Patrice Lumumba**
The first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (which received its independence from Belgium in June 1960) who held office for less than three months and was murdered by opponents four months after being ousted from office. Revered as a martyr by some and considered a national hero for his courage and ambition, Lumumba demanded change for his people, especially in terms of educational opportunities, and his assassination is rumored to have involved the American CIA as well as the Belgian government (who formally apologized to his family in 2002).
- **Stuart Little**
A two-inch-tall mouse-like son born to average human parents, he is the hero of an adventure tale by author E. B. White.

The *Five* Essential Elements of Fiction Analysis

One

A character is a person presented in a fictional work, one fitting a type and fulfilling a function.

- Types of characters: A **static character** does not change throughout the work, and the reader's knowledge of that character does not grow, whereas a **dynamic character** undergoes some kind of change because of the action in the plot. A **flat character** embodies one or two qualities, ideas, or traits that can be readily described in a brief summary. They are not psychologically complex characters and therefore are readily accessible to readers. Some flat characters are recognized as **stock characters**; they embody stereotypes such as the "dumb blonde" or the "mean stepfather." They become types rather than individuals. **Round characters** are more complex than flat or stock characters, and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most real people. They are more fully developed, and therefore are harder to summarize.
- Functions of characters: A hero or heroine, often called the **protagonist**, is the central character who engages the reader's interest and empathy. The **antagonist** is the character, force, or collection of forces that stands directly opposed to the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story. A **first-person narrator** may be either a major or minor character. A **foil** is a character who through contrast underscores the distinctive characteristics of another. Usually a minor character serves as a foil for a major character. A **confidant/confidante** is a character who is not integral to the action but who receives the intimate thoughts of the protagonist without the use of an omniscient narrator. A **mentor** is a character who serves as a guide for the protagonist.

Two

The point of view is the perspective from which the action of a novel is presented, whether the action is presented by one character or from different vantage points over the course of the novel. These are common narrative positions:

- **The omniscient narrator** is a third-person narrator who sees, like God, into each character's mind and understands all the action going on.
- **The limited omniscient narrator** is a third-person narrator who generally reports only what one character (often the protagonist) sees and who only reports the thoughts of that one privileged character.
- **The objective, or camera-eye, narrator** is a third-person narrator who only reports what would be visible to a camera. The objective narrator does not know what the character is thinking unless the character speaks of it.
- **The first-person narrator**, who is a major or minor character in the story, tells the tale from his or her point of view. When the first person narrator is insane, a liar, very young, or for some reason not entirely credible, the narrator is **unreliable**. Some first-person narratives include multiple narrators.
- **The stream of consciousness technique** is like first-person narration, but instead of the character telling the story, the author places the reader inside the main character's head and makes the reader privy to all of the character's thoughts as they scroll through his or her consciousness.

Characterization, an effect of point of view and narrative perspective, is the process by which a writer reveals the personality of a character, making that character seem real to the reader. Authors have two major methods of presenting characters: telling (**direct characterization**) and showing (**indirect characterization**). In **direct characterization**, the author intervenes to describe and sometimes evaluate the character for the reader. For example, the narrator may tell the reader directly what the character's personality is like: humble, ambitious, vain, gullible, etc. **Indirect characterization** allows the author to present a character talking and acting and lets the reader infer what kind of person the character is. There are five different ways that a writer may provide indirect characterization:

1. by describing how the character looks and dresses,
2. by allowing the reader to hear the character speak,
3. by revealing the character's private thoughts and feelings,
4. by portraying the character's effect on other individuals—showing how other characters feel or behave toward the character, and
5. by presenting the character's actions.

Characters can be convincing whether they are presented by showing or by telling, as long as their actions are motivated. Motivated action by the characters occurs when the reader or audience is offered reasons for how the characters behave, what they say, and the decisions they make. Plausible action is action by a character in a story that seems reasonable, given the motivations presented.

Three

The setting is the physical and social context in which the action of a story occurs. The major elements of setting are the time, the place, and the social environment that frames the characters. Setting can be used to evoke a mood or atmosphere that will prepare the reader for what is to come. Specific elements of the setting include:

- the geographical location (its topography, scenery, and physical arrangements),
- the occupations and daily manner of living of the characters,
- the time period in which the action takes place (epoch in history or season of the year), and
- the general environment of the characters (social, religious, cultural, moral, and emotional conditions and attitudes).

Four

The conflict in a work of fiction is the struggle within the plot between opposing forces—the issue to be resolved in the story. The protagonist engages in the conflict with the antagonist, which may take the form of a character, society, nature, or an aspect of the protagonist's personality. Thus, conflict may be **external**, a struggle against some outside force, another character, society as a whole, or some natural force; or **internal**, a conflict between forces or emotions within one character.

Five

Theme is the central meaning or dominant idea in a literary work. A theme provides a unifying point around which the plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other elements of a work are organized. It is important not to mistake the theme for the topic of the work; the theme expresses an opinion about an abstract concept (i.e. *freedom, jealousy, guilt, unrequited love, self-pity*). Theme should be written in a complex statement: **The [genre] [title] by [author] is about [topic/abstract concept] and reveals that [opinion].**