

"What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid squares of paper unfold world after world after world, worlds that sing to you, comfort and quiet or excite you. Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die."

— Anne Lamott

ASSIGNMENT: Choose ONE of the topics and ONE of the novels from TWO (total) of the choices; please read over summer. On the second day and third days of class, you will be expected to answer, in class, the prompts that correspond with your books. You should annotate, make and mark notes, and read with this prompt in mind. You may use your books during the in-class writing time. Remember: choose one book from two options (2 books total).

*the more books from the AP list you read, the more exposure you will have to literature of merit for the AP test. I would recommend that if you are taking AP, read an extra book from this list if you have time.

OPTION I: exile and alienation

Select a novel, play, or epic in which a character experiences such a rift and becomes cut off from "home," whether that home is the character's birthplace, family, homeland, or other special place. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the character's experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

- *The Poisonwood Bible (Kingsolver)*
- *The Road (McCarthy)*

OPTION II: cruelty

In literary works, cruelty often functions as a crucial motivation or a major social or political factor. Select a novel in which acts of cruelty are important to the theme. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing how cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or victim. Do not merely summarize the plot.

- *Beloved (Morrison)*
- *The Scarlet Letter (Hawthorne)*
- *The Color Purple (Walker)*

OPTION III: deception

Many works of literature contain a character who intentionally deceives others. This character's dishonesty may be intended either to help or hurt. Such a character, for example, may choose

to mislead others for personal safety, to spare someone's feelings, or to carry out a crime. Choose a novel or a play in which a character deceives others. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the motives for that character's deception and discuss how the deception contributes to the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

- *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (Tan)
- *Invisible Man* (Ellison)
- *In the Lake of the Woods* (O'Brien)
- *Atonement* (McEwan)
- *Beloved* (Morrison)
- *The Color Purple* (Walker)
- *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen)

OptionV: gift

Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. The gift may be an object, or it may be a quality such as uncommon beauty, significant social position, great mental or imaginative faculties, or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is often also a burden or a handicap. Select a character from a novel, epic, or play who has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing the complex nature of the gift and how the gift contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

- *Kindred* (Butler)
- *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe)
- *All the Light We Cannot See* (Doerr)
- *Crime and Punishment* (Dostoevsky)