

May 12, 2015

Dear 2015 – 2016 Advanced Placement Literature and Composition Students:

Welcome to AP Literature. The following is the list of required summer reading, viewing, and writing assignments. These assignments are designed to prepare you for the kind of work we will do in AP Literature. They each offer over-arching ideas for the course content. This coming year, we will also apply various critical theories to these works in order to explore the ways such lenses affect our interpretation and understanding of literature.

Part A: Reading

Students will read two texts plus one of your choosing from the FWHS Summer Reading book list.

The rationale for each is articulated below the title. The theme of Advanced Placement Literature is “The Quest for Meaning” and the following works should give you much to think about before we meet in August as well as provide a touchstone to draw from throughout the year.

- *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez - (fiction)

Here is a quote about the novel:

“*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race. It takes up not long after Genesis left off and carries through to the air age, reporting on everything that happened in between with more lucidity, wit, wisdom, and poetry that is expected from 100 years of novelists, let alone one man...Mr. Garcia Marquez has done nothing less than to create in the reader a sense of all that is profound, meaningful, and meaningless in life.” **William Kennedy, *New York Times Book Review***

This is a truly unique novel. It is a novel that tries to capture not only the history of its author, but the country in which he lived (Colombia), as well as the history of humanity. It is written in the style of magical realism; it would be wise of you to conduct some research to understand this literary style. At the center of AP Literature is studying how literature is the repository of human thinking, philosophy, and experience. Essentially, the arts reflect what we have thought and believed about the world and ourselves. And history is the telling, and even the retelling, of that experience. Also, we will use this novel as a starting point for understanding the various literary theories we will be working with in the subsequent school year.

As you read this novel, consider the following and find related textual evidence:

- The notion of an Edenic state and archetypal images associated it.
- Destruction and duality.
- The power of naming.
- The weaving of the magical with history, mythology, and politics.
- The relationship among the past, present, and future.
- Linear time versus non-linear time.

- *A Little History of Philosophy* (2011) by Nigel Warburton - (non-fiction)

This gem is published by Yale University Press and is comprised of 40 chapters written by a contemporary philosopher. The chapters clearly synthesize the work of philosophers from antiquity to present. It's accessible, conversational, and even humorous. This text will offer a grounding in philosophy; this is essential as we will be looking at how literature (and all the arts) are a repository of human thinking.

- The above are the two new texts; *however*, if you have not read *The Great Gatsby*, I ask that you do. The critical theory text with which we will be working next year consistently uses this text as an example through which to explain certain theories. If you have read it, and you feel you have a firm grasp on it, then you do not have to reread it. Certainly do reread it if you like.
- **Lastly, chose ONE book from the FWHS Summer Reading Book Chat list. When we return to school, you will participate in the "Book Chat." All AP Literature students are expected to participate in a book chat.**

Part B: Viewing

Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (2014) – film, R – A film about an older superhero actor who tries to revive his career on Broadway as a “serious actor.” (“It is rated R for: for language throughout, some sexual content and brief violence.” However, all are fairly minimal.) If you have any reservations, please email your teacher; email addresses are at the end of the letter.

Part C: Writing and Journals/Reading System

The writing assignments are designed to help you articulate your thoughts with clarity and depth. They will also help you develop ideas you will be expected to share in this seminar course. Use your own mind to arrive at an understanding of these texts, not reading aids like SparkNotes. Remember, the theme of the course is “The Quest for Meaning,” and the quest to understand must be your own – through analysis, reflection, and dialogue. Although these are not formal, expository writing assignments, they should still offer crafted writing with attention to grammar and usage. Please adhere to the page limits, be concise, and avoid verbosity.

Adhere to the following when preparing your writing assignments:

The tone of these responses may be fairly informal and personal (however, avoid superfluous use of the first person). Be certain that you write clearly and cleanly. As you and I assess your responses, we will be looking at the following aspects of your writing:

- Clarity
- Effective use of personal voice/tone
- Thoughtfulness, level of insight
- Quality of connections
- Effective integration of direct passages / specific examples from texts
- Cohesiveness
- Grammar and usage

Page Requirements are listed after each assignment. Be sure to also use:

- ✓ Double spacing
- ✓ 12 point, Times New Roman font (or something similar in size and readability)
- ✓ Standard margins

✓ MLA citation format

- **Post-It and Other System for your reading of *One Hundred Years of Solitude***

This is what I would like for you to do while reading this novel (IT IS A GRADE):

- Mark significant quotes/passages with Post-Its and jot an intelligent thought/question on those Post-Its...Use lots of Post-Its.
- You may want to make a map in order to keep all of the characters, places, etc. clear.
- If, *in addition to the Post-Its*, you want to create some additional system to help you with this text, like the map suggested, then do whatever helps you with this *challenging* text.
- In the first weeks of class, we will have class seminars that focus on some of the issues/themes/motifs that are present in the novel. See the novel description above for ideas to consider and to anticipate what you will be expected to write about in class.

- **Analytical Journal of Insights from *Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*.**

Answer each of the following questions in a well-developed paragraph (at least 150 words per question).

1. What is the significance of the subtitle: “*Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*”?
2. What is the significance of the quote in the mirror? “A thing is a thing, not what is said of that thing.”
3. *Birdman* is a postmodern work. More specifically, it can be categorized as “metanarrative” (meaning, literally, above the story). A metanarrative is aware that it is a narrative and, hence, plays with the elements of traditional narrative. Metanarrative also layers reality and fantasy. It also layers multiple stories/realities. Find two examples, or more, of metanarrative elements. Then describe what seems to be “metanarrative” about the element. Example: This is a story of an actual former superhero actor, Michael Keaton, whom some classify as a “washed up” actor, and he is playing a “washed up” superhero actor. That is the most obvious example. Find two others.
4. Discuss two scenes – *write a separate paragraph for each* – that are vital to the film’s meaning. Choose different scenes other than the ones you chose for #3. Be sure to discuss the scenes specifically as well as the specific meaning/s you see at work.

- **Reading Journal for *A Little History of Philosophy***

Keep a journal with an entry for each of the 40 chapters. For each chapter have *a least 4 bulleted notes*:

1. One or more key quotes – a bullet for each
2. One or more sentences that synthesizes, in your own words, a key idea/s from the philosopher – a bullet for each idea.
3. At least one insightful question in reaction to the person’s philosophy – a bullet for each.
4. Once you finish, STAR (*) 3 – 5 chapters that you found very challenging, illuminating, disturbing, or inspiring, etc.

- **Exploratory Essay**

You will write an essay exploring the complexity of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Craft a lingering/essential question inspired by the novel. It can be a more universal question, not specific to the novel. An example of a lingering question is: “If we have created the world by naming does that fate us to a destiny, or do we have the power to keep renaming and reshaping our future? Take your question as far as possible. Ask other questions that take your controlling question even further.

You need not arrive at a definitive “answer” to your question, but you should come to a deeper understanding of the complexity of the question/s. The style should be akin to a narrative of thought – narrative but also erudite. And well written, of course. The response should be 3-4 pages, double spacing, in Times New Roman font. Include numerous details and quotes from the novel to demonstrate a close and critical reading.

We recommend you purchase all of the written texts *if possible* as we would like to be able to refer to them when you return. They will also be available in the FWHS LMC and in local libraries. If there are any issues or questions, please email your teacher *by or before the first week of August*.

Dr. Faber: jeannettefaber@hotmail.com or jfaber@fairfieldschools.org
Mr. Frattaroli: babfrat@optonline.net or mfrattaroli@fairfieldschools.org

*The Exploratory Essay, Analytical Journal and Reading Journal ALL must be submitted to turnitin.com. Be sure to enroll in your respective sections before the end of the 2015 school year:

Dr. Faber: Class ID: 9972555 Password: delve [all lowercase]

Mr. Frattaroli: Class ID: 9973322 Password: frattaroli [all lowercase]

Post by or before midnight on Tuesday, September 1, 2015.

BRING HARD COPIES OF ALL ASSIGNMENTS ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS!!!!!!!

These readings and assignments are a course pre-requisite and failure to complete them will likely result in exclusion from the course. Summer reading work is worth 10% of Marking Period 1's grade. Additionally, discussions of the film and texts over the summer are encouraged, but trading of any notes or writing assignments is considered plagiarism. Any plagiarism will be pursued in accordance with school policy.

Enjoy the summer. We look forward to working with you this coming year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeannette Faber
English Department
Fairfield Warde High School

Mr. Mark Frattaroli
English Department
Fairfield Warde High School