

May 23, 2011

Dear 2011 - 2012 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 be doing in AP Literature throughout the school year. We will use these works to discuss the relationship between a text, its author, and its audience. We will also apply various critical approaches to these works in order to explore the ways such lenses affect our interpretation and understanding of literature.

There are a few commonalities and differences between Dr. Faber and Ms. Fenn's courses. Please note which class you are enrolled in as you read this letter.

Part A: Reading

All students will read two major texts plus one of your choice from the FWHS Summer Reading book list. The rationale for each is articulated below each 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* 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. García Márquez 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 (Columbia), 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 look for textual evidence related to each:

- The notion of an Edenic state and archetypal images associated with that state.
- 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.

ONE book from the FWHS Summer Reading Book Chat list. When we return to school, you will participate in the “Book Chat” for this title. All AP Literature students are expected to participate in a book chat.

Ms. Fenn’s class:

You are also expected to read Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. Things to consider while reading this novel: What happens when any certain meaning crumbles under examination and analysis? This mysterious and inscrutable text presents us with an unreliable narrator and a story that transcends definition, just as its ghosts transcend the physical world. *Wuthering Heights* is one of the most intense, disturbing, and famous love stories in all of English literature. It is Emily Brontë’s only novel – and a work of incomparable genius.

We will use *Wuthering Heights* to consider how both texts and readers are situated socially, culturally, and politically – and how these “situations” affect interpretation and, ultimately, meaning.

Dr. Faber’s class:

You are also expected to read *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Brontë said, “Conventionality is not morality.” Some consider the Victorian novel *Jane Eyre* a feminist text and Jane a character who breaks ‘convention.’ Even though *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, before the modern feminist movements (the suffragist movement and the women’s movement of the 1970s), does it still ‘break with convention’? Or, does the text reify conventions about femininity and masculinity? Is it paradoxical that Jane seeks her freedom (*or her concept of freedom*) while Bertha is a prisoner? You may want to do a bit of research and find yourself a credible, working definition of feminism. There is also a website with rich information about the Victorian Age: www.victorianweb.org

Part B: Viewing

Dr. Faber's students are required to watch:

The Mission (film - R) It is rated R for violent images; however, this is an historical film so the violence is not gratuitous. Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture in 1987, this film accounts the experience of Jesuit priests who try to protect a South American Indian tribe from the imperialist and pro-slavery rule of the Portuguese. Again, if you have reservations about this film, please email Dr. Faber. When we convene in for school year, we will discuss this film using postcolonial theory; in the meantime, you may want to do a bit of research and find yourself a credible, working definition of that theory.

Ms. Fenn's students are required to watch:

The Devil's Backbone (El Espinazo del Diablo), by Guillermo del Toro (film - R). This film is set in a bleak rural Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Writer/Director del Toro creates a suspenseful psychic landscape in this film, rich in symbolic implications. Critical viewing of this film will help establish meaningful connections among the summer reading novels and our first thematic unit. NOTE: This film is rated R for violence, language, and some sexuality. Contact Ms. Fenn if you have reservations about this film.

Part C: Writing

The writing assignments are designed to help you articulate your thoughts with clarity and depth. They will also prepare you to articulate ideas for this seminar-centered 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. Although these are not all formal writing assignments but rather response journals, they should still offer crafted writing with attention to grammar and usage. Please adhere to the page limits; be concise; 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

There are several common writing assignments between the classes. They are:

An introductory letter: In approximately 2-3 pages, introduce yourself. Explain why you want to take this class, what some of your strengths and weaknesses are as a reader and writer, and what your experience has been like in previous English classes. Any other pertinent information about you as a student (favorite books, favorite authors, etc.) can also be outlined in this piece of writing. Please ensure that the letter is engaging.

Informal response/running record for *One Hundred Years of Solitude* [for all AP students] *Wuthering Heights* (for Ms. Fenn's class), and *Jane Eyre* (for Dr. Faber's class):

This is what we would like for you to do while reading the novels:

- 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 in your mind.
- In the first week of classes, we will have class seminars that focus on some of the issues/themes/motifs that are present in the novel. See the novel descriptions above for ideas to consider and to anticipate what you will be expected to write about in class during the first few weeks of school.

So, if you are in Ms. Fenn's class, you will have Post-Its/a running record for *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Wuthering Heights*; if you are in Dr. Faber's class, you will have Post-Its/a running record for *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Jane Eyre*. **All** students will write the introductory letter.

Different writing assignments by class:

Ms. Fenn's class:

Keep a scene log of significant moments from *The Devil's Backbone*. For your response to this film, simply keep a log of 8 to 10 scenes which offer provocative ideas. Analyze the scene and then in 100 - 150 words, offer the idea you think is at work, and elaborate on these ideas. Entries that are mere plot summary will receive a failing grade.

After completing the viewing and reading assignments, you should undertake the final essay. Given your understanding of these texts, I want you to explore the question, **What is a ghost?**

In *The Devil's Backbone*, Professor Casares, asks:

What is a ghost? A tragedy condemned to repeat itself time and again? An instant of pain, perhaps. Something dead which still seems to be alive. An emotion suspended in time. Like a blurred photograph. Like an insect trapped in amber.

Based on your reading and viewing of *Wuthering Heights*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and *The Devil's Backbone*, try to answer Professor Casares's question: What is a ghost? You do not need to come to any formal conclusion, and do NOT write a traditional, thesis-driven essay. Instead, EXPLORE the ways in which Brontë, García Márquez, and del Torro use supernatural elements to portray the "ever-present but enigmatic nature of the past." Please DO use direct passages and quotations from the texts. (Properly cite these.) Please DO use your personal voice. Please DO create an exploratory narrative that is incisive, engaging, and thoughtful. They should show that you have read/viewed and thought about the texts. For this essay, employ a narrative style in which you, in essence, "think out loud." Write until you have exhausted the question. This response should be 3-4 double spaced pages in Times New Roman font (not including your Works Cited page).

Dr. Faber's class:

Keep a scene log of significant moments from *The Mission*. For your response to this film, simply keep a log of 8 to 10 scenes which offer provocative ideas. Analyze the scene and then in 100 - 150 words, offer the idea you think is at work. Entries that are mere plot summary will receive a failing grade.

For Dr. Faber's class, after completing the viewing and reading assignments, you should undertake the final essay exploring the connections among *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Mission* and *Jane Eyre*. Craft a lingering/essential question inspired by the two novels and the film. It can be a more universal question, not specific to the novels or film, but, again it should be inspired by the texts. An example of a lingering question is: "If what we call a "convention" is actually a socially constructed paradigm, how do we go about liberating ourselves from possible constraints?"

Then write an exploratory essay which *explores* that question through the three texts *but also* through other ways we experience the world like: our own life experiences, other texts, culture, history, popular culture, etc. Again your response should largely focus on all three texts, but it is also necessary to make other connections. 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/idea. The style should be akin to the other summer writing - more personal. Employ a narrative style in which you, in

essence, “think out loud.” Write until you have exhausted the question. The response should be 3-4 double spaced pages in Times New Roman font.

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 are also available in local libraries. If there are financial constraints or if you have any issues or questions, **please email Jeannette Faber or Eileen Fenn at jeannettefaber@hotmail.com or eileen.fenn@gmail.com by or before mid August.**

The readings and their respective assignments are due on the first day of class. If summer reading assignments are not with you on the first day, they will not be accepted. These assignments are a pre-requisite, and failure to do or have 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 films and texts are encouraged, but trading of any notes or writing assignments is considered plagiarism.

Enjoy the summer, and we look forward to working with you this coming year.

Sincerely,

Jeannette C. Faber
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