

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2020 SUMMER READING

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Literary study is at the heart of this course, focusing on the close examination of fictional literary texts throughout many literary periods (from the early modern/Renaissance, Victorian, Modern, Postmodern and many others).

Essentially, we're looking at how literature reflects *and* shapes culture, both intentionally and unintentionally, and reveals truths about *us, humans*, that we sometimes don't mean to express or realize.

PURPOSE

To this end, your summer reading is to focus on a variety of "lenses" in which you will experiment with during the year-long AP Literature course. Each lens is a theory that can be applied to any text. However, each lens is based on its own agenda and/or assumptions about society/humanity and will emphasize some details of a text while ignoring or minimizing others. These lenses fit within a broad area of study, called **Literary Theory** or **Critical Theory**. Your assignment will be to research a small list of these lenses, in preparation for the course.

REQUIREMENTS

NOTES OVER EACH ASSIGNED LENS, HAND-WRITTEN IN COMPOSITION NOTEBOOK

How you organize your notes is your choice, but they must be hand-written. The composition notebook that you write your notes in will be used all year long.

LIST OF QUESTIONS/CONFUSIONS ABOUT EACH LENS, HAND-WRITTEN ON NOTEBOOK PAPER

These questions and concerns are turned in with your notes, and they help start and/or guide class discussion as we clarify the lenses.

THE ASSIGNMENT

- Biographical
 - Historical
 - Psychological - Freud
 - Archetypal - Jung
 - Feminist
 - Marxist
 - Postcolonial Theory
 - One Wild Card
(one lens of personal choice)
1. the purpose of the lens (beyond "to analyze the text" ...to what end?)
What is its "agenda"? What ideas/concepts (beyond the obvious) is the lens exploring and what is the end goal of that exploration?
What is the lens trying to prove? disprove? explain? illustrate?
 2. the type of details the lens focuses on to achieve its objective
To focus on a set issue/concept within humanity or society, a lens has a limited scope. So what details does the lens need you to stay focused on? This may be large ideas/concepts, symbolic structures, absence of something (fill in the blank)...don't be obtuse just to get some notes down. You're responsible for learning these lenses and developing a deepening understanding...so dig! :)
 3. the type of questions that you might use while trying to apply the lens

LITERARY THEORY

AKA. CRITICAL THEORY; AKA. CRITICAL LENSES

An Introduction (taken from [Purdue OWL \(Links to an external site.\)](#))

A very basic way of thinking about literary theory is that these ideas act as different lenses critics use to view and talk about art, literature, and even culture. These different lenses allow critics to consider works of art based on certain assumptions within that school of theory. The different lenses also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important.

For example, if a critic is working with certain Marxist theories, s/he might focus on how the characters in a story interact based on their economic situation. If a critic is working with post-colonial theories, s/he might consider the same story but look at how characters from colonial powers (Britain, France, and even America) treat characters from, say, Africa or the Caribbean. Hopefully, after reading through and working with the resources in this area of the OWL, literary theory will become a little easier to understand and use.

Teacher's Note: The assigned lenses are those that will be discussed, explored, and applied in our AP Literature course. However, there are many more lenses available to study and I highly encourage you to explore them.

RESOURCES

I will have a plethora of resources posted on my staff homepage and/or Canvas, active for your convenience in May. It will include documents and videos from reliable resources that present the lenses in a variety of ways, so you can find the explanations that work for you.

You are, of course, welcome to find your own sources, but verify their credibility.

If you are impatient and want to get started on your research before the resources are released on my homepage, here are a few excellent places to start:

- Refer to the Purdue OWL link (above) to view introductory information about these lenses and others that you might be interested in, such as Queer Theory, Ecocriticism, etc.)
 - <https://owl.purdue.edu/> or
 - Google: Introduction to Literary Theory Purdue Writing Lab
- Introduction to Modern Literary Theory (<http://www.kristisiegel.com/theory.htm>)
- Yale University has released recordings of their entire "Introduction to Theory of Literature" course, taught by the well-respected Dr. Paul Fry. He's wordy but goood. This is for the student that finds a lens they are *really* interested in or they *really* need a lot of explanation. I dig it...but it's my jam! (Again, wordy. This means long videos.)
 - YouTube: [Introduction to Theory of Literature with Paul H. Fry](#) (full playlist, skip around)
- Documents to look up:
 - Literary Criticism Primer
 - Literary Theories: A Sampling of Critical Lenses
 - Critical Cheat Sheet, by Donald Hall
 - Literary Perspective Toolkit

Note: These are all resources that will be posted on my homepage. This is a short sampling of what I will share, but will get you started, if you are feeling motivated and impatient.