Summer Assignment 2020

“The role of a writer is not to say what we can all say, but what we are unable to say.”
-- Anais Nin

Introduction
Your summer assignment is a chance for you to read a variety of texts, explore ideas, and write in response to what you are reading and thinking. The assignment asks you to read and take notes. All work is due the first week of school.

We have linked to all the texts that are available free online, but in some cases you may need to go to your local library, ask friends, or look online to get a copy of a novel. In many cases, we have included extra links if you are fascinated by what you read and are interested in exploring more. As the summer goes on we hope to add links to the summer AP itslearning page.

As Voltaire said, “Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too.” Enjoy the privilege of reading great texts. Enjoy the writing process. In short, have a great summer!

Assignment -- Read any novel on our short list. This list is curated by CNHS’s AP Lit teachers. We love these novels and we hope you will find something you love as well. You will find short summaries and a little explanation of why we like the novel. Pick the novel that is interesting to you and that you can get. We ask that you choose a novel you haven’t yet read.

Then create three pages of notes about your book. How you organize those three pages is up to you. We know that this is vague and undefined, but look at it another way. We are empowering you to do what you feel is right. You have the freedom to do what you want. You can create whatever you want. All we’re asking you to do is create three interesting pages of notes about your reading experience. When there are little to no rules, the possibilities are endless. It is up to you to make it awesome!

Why it is important -- A mature thinker chooses and develops his or her own criteria in order to evaluate the quality of texts. We respect your ability to make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, and personal experiences and when you have control over how you do that, you often exceed our expectations. Your notes will be useful in our first week of class as we assess summer reading. This assessment will ask you to demonstrate, not only an understanding of the novel itself, but also how the themes of the novel are developed. So do it. We know you will blow us away!

- Ms. Chaplin, Mrs. Culp, Mrs. Finney, Mr. Spencer

The List

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini is “the unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father’s servant. The Kite Runner is a beautifully crafted novel set in a country—Afghanistan—that is in the process of being destroyed. It is about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.” This novel has been an AP Lit student favorite several years. It contains a beautiful, yet at times heartbreaking, exploration of love, jealousy, guilt, redemption, and resiliency of the human spirit. Recommended by Ms. Chaplin, Mrs. Culp, Mrs. Finney, and Mr. Spencer. Warnings: trauma related to war, violence, abuse, and rape. Background information here.
The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James is an 1881 Victorian novel of psychological realism that explores a young, headstrong woman’s entrance into the world of high society, afternoon tea times, and the importance of being earnest and agreeable. “When Isabel Archer, a beautiful, spirited American, is brought to Europe by her wealthy Aunt Touchett, it is expected that she will soon marry.” Mr. Spencer recommends this book for serious students of literature who want to travel the world, reflect deeply on their own motivations and desires, and sink their teeth into the psychology of the mind. The Portrait of a Lady Full Text PDF/Kindle

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens is a masterful exploration of both intimate and societal relationships on the cusp of the French Revolution. Just like the plentiful cast of characters, multiple plot lines weave through the story before coming together in a satisfying, climatic finish, and even the novel’s first line continues to resonate: “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” Mrs. Finney recommends this novel for students who embrace a literary challenge, enjoy historical fiction, desire to explore social inequality, and find intrigue in the multi-layered meaning of the phrase “recalled to life.” A Tale of Two Cities Full Text

Emma by Jane Austen is a classic novel with a witty female protagonist who is overly concerned with matchmaking others not understanding the upheaval she is causing. A heroine you love to hate draws you in until you realize you want her to be happy too. A deep dive into Victorian life in all its “glory”. Mrs. Culp recommends this read to people who enjoy witty banter, characters who come to life, and want to be taken to another time and place in both circumstance and language. Emma Full Text PDF

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens is a contemporary novel that is “an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.” Mrs. Culp recommends this read to people who like a little mystery with fantastic characters, a place that we may not know, and a chance to experience life we haven’t lived. Warnings: moderate strong language in a few places, some sexual content, attempted rape, extreme loneliness and abandonment. Available at any book seller, library, e-book retailer, borrow from a friend.

The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway is a literary masterpiece about Americans who travel from Paris, France to the Festival of San Fermin in Pamplona, Spain to watch the running of the bulls and the bullfights. Originally titled Fiesta and published in 1926 by the author of 1953’s The Old Man and the Sea, this was the young Hemingway’s first novel, introducing the world to his spare, minimalist style. It features a semi-autobiographical account of a young American man named Jake Barnes who has relocated to Paris, France to work as a journalist in the 1920s after participating and being injured (similar to the real-life Hemingway) in World War I. Mr. Spencer recommends this book to people who want to live in the moment, transplant to another exotic country, and search for meaning in life underneath all the noise and roar of the 1920s or the 2020s. Warnings: implied sexuality, minor use of vulgar language, anti-semitism, and heavy use of alcohol. The Sun Also Rises Full Text PDF/Kindle
**The Scarlet Letter** by Nathaniel Hawthorne is the story of Hester Prynne, a Puritan woman who commits a sin of love and passion; as a result, she suffers public punishments of humiliation and isolation. The story follows Hester’s journey toward redemption as she faces the challenges of single parenting and guarding others’ secrets. “Masterful in its symbolism and compelling in its character studies, Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale of punishment and reconciliation examines the concepts of sin, guilt, and pride.” Ms. Chaplin recommends this novel for students who enjoy complex character development and strong female characters who challenge societal expectations. [The Scarlet Letter Full Text]

**In the Time of the Butterflies** by Julia Alvarez is the fictionalized account of the four Mirabal sisters who struggled against Rafael Leonidas Trujillo’s long, cruel dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. Beyond its strong historical ties, the novel also draws upon the experiences of the author’s family who fled the Dominican Republic after her father’s participation in the resistance placed him and his family in danger of Trujillo’s retaliation. This story begins after the sisters’ heroic efforts and then traces their story from the beginning, alternating among the sisters to allow each voice to shine. Mrs. Finney recommends this novel for students who enjoy explorations of sisterhood and rebellion along with unique storytelling devices.