

**Oakland Catholic High School**  
**AP English Literature and Composition**  
**Summer Reading 2022**

Dear AP Literature students,

This summer, I hope that you will do lots of reading for pleasure, experimenting with different genres, from nonfiction to graphic novels, from memoir to poetry. Mostly, I want you to read every single day. To prepare for my class, you should do some thoughtful reading of and note-taking on AP-level texts, including two novels—one that I choose, and one that you choose.

First, some notes about notes:

I want you to keep a paper notebook for my class, that you will add to during class discussions. Please choose a notebook that will be your dedicated AP Lit notebook for the year. You can choose a simple composition-style notebook, or something fancier—but make sure that it is something with plenty of space that you will enjoy using every day. When we come back to school in August, I will ask you to show me at least 3 pages of notes about *each* of your novels (that's 6 pages total). This is a very open-ended assignment, so I hope you will feel empowered to create something that will represent your ideas and insights about your reading. Of course, your notes should be more sophisticated than just summaries of the novels. Think in terms of

- Quotes
- Questions
- Characters
- Big ideas

Second, please read the following books:

1. *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë. Any edition is fine. Please read thoughtfully and take notes. When we return to school, we will discuss the big ideas. You will write an in-class essay on this novel to begin to get familiar with the kind of writing that is expected of you on the exam.

2. **At least one** of the ten novels listed on the next pages. All of these titles have appeared on the most recent AP Lit exams (2019, 2021, or 2022). I have curated the list to highlight women writers, from the nineteenth century through the modern day. Any of them will give you some strong background as you prepare for AP Literature. And you are welcome to read several!

Content note: Please be advised that, as readings for a college-level literature course, several of these novels deal with mature themes. The College Board has indicated they are applicable to the goals and reading level of the AP Literature course. Before committing to your choice, however, I suggest you browse a couple of reviews or summaries to make sure you will feel comfortable with and prepared for your novel. When you return in the fall, I hope we can have meaningful discussions about how literature helps us make sense of both the beauty and the pain of human experience.

For both novels, please note that you should read a paper copy (not an e-book!), that you should annotate as you read, and that you should take notes.

AP Lit Choice Novels - Listed chronologically. Summaries are from [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com).

*Northanger Abbey*, by Jane Austen (1817)

The novel's unlikely heroine is Catherine Morland, a remarkably innocent seventeen-year-old woman from a country parsonage. While spending a few weeks in Bath with a family friend, Catherine meets and falls in love with Henry Tilney, who invites her to visit his family estate, Northanger Abbey. Once there, Catherine, a great reader of Gothic thrillers, lets the shadowy atmosphere of the old mansion fill her mind with terrible suspicions. Catherine finds dreadful portents in the most prosaic events, until Henry persuades her to see the peril in confusing life with art.

*Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë (1847)

From the moment of his adoption by the Earnshaws, the foundling boy Heathcliff devotes himself to their young daughter Catherine. Growing up together, the two share a love that blossoms into romance, until Catherine's hurtful betrayal. But Heathcliff's emotions know no bounds and acknowledge no limits—not even death. Determined to secure the family estate of Wuthering Heights as his own, the tyrannical Heathcliff vents his bitterness on his and Catherine's heirs, manipulating lives and shaping destinies under the influence of a passion that has curdled into obsession.

*The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot (née Mary Ann Evans) (1860)

Raised in the idyllic setting of Dorlcote Mill, the wild and willful Maggie Tulliver adores her elder brother Tom and is forever trying to gain the approbation of her parents. Yet, as she grows older and the family struggle under the weight of severe pecuniary difficulties, she becomes increasingly caught between the divergent expectations of the four men in her life: a doting father, an obdurate and vengeful brother, a good-looking and frivolous suitor and an earnest old playmate who happens to be the son of her father and brother's sworn enemy.

*Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf (1925)

Clarissa Dalloway, elegant and vivacious, is preparing for a party and remembering those she once loved. In another part of London, Septimus Warren Smith is suffering from shell-shock and on the brink of madness. Smith's day interweaves with that of Clarissa and her friends, their lives converging as the party reaches its glittering climax. Virginia Woolf's masterly novel, in which she perfected the interior monologue, brings past, present and future together on one momentous day in June 1923.

*Passing*, by Nella Larsen (1929)

Irene Redfield, married to a successful physician, enjoys a comfortable life in Harlem, New York. Reluctantly, she renews her friendship with old school friend Clare Kendry. Clare, who like Irene is light skinned, "passes" as white and is married to a racist white man who has no idea about Clare's racial heritage. Clare is very persuasive and Irene, despite misgivings, can't resist letting her back into her world. As tensions mount between friends and between couples, this taut and mesmerizing narrative spins towards an unexpected end.

*Sula*, by Toni Morrison (1973)

Nel and Sula's devotion is fierce enough to withstand bullies and the burden of a dreadful secret. It endures even after Nel has grown up to be a pillar of the black community and Sula has become a pariah. But their friendship ends in an unforgivable betrayal—or does it end? Terrifying, comic, ribald and tragic, *Sula* is a work that overflows with life.

*The House of the Spirits*, by Isabel Allende (1982)

*The House of the Spirits* brings to life the triumphs and tragedies of three generations of the Trueba family. The patriarch Esteban is a volatile, proud man whose voracious pursuit of political power is tempered only by his love for his delicate wife Clara, a woman with a mystical connection to the spirit world. When their daughter Blanca embarks on a forbidden love affair in defiance of her implacable father, the result is an unexpected gift to Esteban: his adored granddaughter Alba, a beautiful and strong-willed child who will lead her family and her country into a revolutionary future.

*The Round House*, by Louise Erdrich (2012)

One Sunday in the spring of 1988, a woman living on a reservation in North Dakota is attacked. The details of the crime are slow to surface because Geraldine Coutts is traumatized and reluctant to relive or reveal what happened, either to the police or to her husband, Bazil, and thirteen-year-old son, Joe. While his father, a tribal judge, endeavors to wrest justice from a situation that defies his efforts, Joe becomes frustrated with the official investigation and sets out with his trusted friends, Cappy, Zack, and Angus, to get some answers of his own. Their quest takes them first to the Round House, a sacred space and place of worship for the Ojibwe. And this is only the beginning.

*Homegoing*, by Yaa Gyasi (2016)

Ghana, eighteenth century: two half sisters are born into different villages, each unaware of the other. One will marry an Englishman and lead a life of comfort in the palatial rooms of the Cape Coast Castle. The other will be captured in a raid on her village, imprisoned in the very same castle, and sold into slavery. Yaa Gyasi's extraordinary novel illuminates slavery's troubled legacy both for those who were taken and those who stayed—and shows how the memory of captivity has been inscribed on the soul of our nation.

*Sing, Unburied, Sing*, by Jesmyn Ward (2017)

Jojo is thirteen years old and trying to understand what it means to be a man. He doesn't lack in fathers to study, chief among them his Black grandfather, Pop. But there are other men who complicate his understanding. When his absent White father is released from prison, his mother Leonie packs her kids and a friend into her car and drives north to the heart of Mississippi and Parchman Farm, the State Penitentiary. At Parchman, there is another thirteen-year-old boy, the ghost of a dead inmate who carries all of the ugly history of the South with him in his wandering. He too has something to teach Jojo about fathers and sons, about legacies, about violence, about love.