

English 5AP--Literature of the United States Summer Reading Assignment

Welcome to English 5AP and your junior year. We will engage in a survey of 19th and 20th century American writing. You'll be exposed to all genres--novels, stories, plays, essays and poems by some of our country's best authors. We will also be preparing for the AP English Language and Composition test in May. This is optional, but you will be required to do all the preparatory work for the test, regardless of your taking it or not.

We will start off with an American classic that focuses on a dynamic female protagonist—Hester Prynne, then move on to a satirical look at war and the modern era, in *Catch-22*. To get started, please obtain a copy of *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller. Read both books this summer. You may want to read the Customs House and the introduction in the beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*, or you may overlook now and read later. In the former the author gives some background on the book and some history on writing it.

When you return to school, you'll have a quote test, and quotes will not be recognizable from reading Sparks Notes or Cliff's Notes! You will be at a severe disadvantage if you do not work closely with the books themselves. Expect to show comprehension of plot, character, and themes. You are welcome to buy annotated or critical editions of the two novels, as essays and notes really help in the absence of an instructor.

These books are not short, quick reads; if you wait until the last week of the summer to start reading, you will struggle to get the work done. You can avoid this by pacing yourself. Summer should be a time for fun, so plan ahead and read at a leisurely and consistent pace. We will continue our work on the novels in the fall. Have a great summer!

Novel One: *The Scarlet Letter*

You may want to take careful notes on the major characters in the novel. Think about the following:

1. **major relationships and conflicts**
2. **external/internal descriptions**--how each character's physical appearance changes throughout the novel. What is the relationship between physical changes and the character's social status or inner psyche? How does the external character mirror, parallel, contradict, or contrast with the internal? How do the external changes echo internal changes
3. **coping with sin**--how each of the following copes with the burden of guilt and immorality: Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth. What is at stake for each? How do they each judge themselves at the beginning and at the end? How do the other two judge each at the beginning and at the end?

Novel Two: *Catch-22*

Remember concepts about social satire you've learned and apply them to this novel.

Look for the absurd, the ironic, and the satiric tone. Although the novel discusses a dark topic, it is funny; if you don't laugh while reading this, read it again! You missed the point. As we are now at war in two countries, this book raises very topical issues about our world and your lives. There's no better time than now to read this book. Among other issues, think about companies that profit from the current war, like Milo Minderbinder's does in the novel.

Assignment:

As you read the book, **create a chart** listing the numerous characters, their **names**, their **traits** and **foibles** (or oddities), their ultimate **fates**, and their **thematic purpose** in the book (what types of people or ideas do they represent?). Use the bolded requirements as the chart's column headings. Including page numbers will be VERY helpful; it's difficult to find details in this book without them.

Enjoy both books and your summer break. Look forward to a challenging, enlightening, and enjoyable junior year.