Independent Reading Project
(Alternative Semester Exam Assessment)

A.P. English Literature & Composition
Mr. Rose

Overview
In addition to the course-assigned reading this quarter, you will be completing an independent reading project (IRP) on an A.P.-level novel of your choice. The IRP is the equivalent of the semester exam. It has five required components:

1. An Experience, Interpretation, and Evaluation Essay (approx. 3 pages) – 100 points
2. A SIFT worksheet – 50 points
3. Passage Analysis Essay (passage + approx. 2 pages) – 100 points
4. An A.P. style exam (you’ll be making this, not taking this) – 100 points
5. An Analytical Essay (approx. 5-7 pages) – 400 points

All five components are due at the same time on May 6. No late submissions!

Choosing your novel
On March 18, you will be submitting to me your top three proposed choices for the independent reading project. I will assign you one of your choices. All students in the same class will be reading different books; in other words, one person per book. At risk of sounding redundant: No two students in the same class will be studying the same book.

Your chosen novel should meet the following criteria:

1. The novel must be written by an English, Scottish, Welsh, or Irish author (with a few exceptions as noted below*).
2. The novel must be on the A.P.-level of literature. For example, it will be a novel that is commonly taught in college literature courses and commonly appears on the AP exam.
3. The novel must be a minimum of 220 pages, although most acceptable novels will be much longer. Do not choose a book because of its length – or lack of it.
4. The novel must be approved by me and cannot be a novel that another student is reading for this project. (Do you think I’ve made this clear yet?)
5. The novel must have your parents’ approval.

This is your opportunity to study a book of your own choosing. Do some research and find one that you believe you will enjoy reading, studying, and analyzing.

Here is a list of acceptable AP-level novels for this project.

Bleak House by Charles Dickens
David Copperfield by Charles Dickens
Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens
most other books by Dickens
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
Emma by Jane Austen
most other books by Austen
Portrait of the Artist... by James Joyce
A Passage to India by E. M. Forster
Jude the Obscure by Thomas Hardy
The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy
tess of the D’Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy
most other books by Hardy
Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad
Vanity Fair by William Makepeace Thackeray
Gulliver’s Travels by Jonathan Swift
Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf
To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf
A Room of One’s Own by Virginia Woolf
Rebecca by Daphne DuMaurier
House on the Strand by Daphne DuMaurier
Jamaica Inn by Daphne DuMaurier
Adam Bede by George Eliot
Middlemarch by George Eliot
Silas Marner by George Eliot
most other books by Eliot
Atonement by Ian McEwan
The Sea, the Sea by Iris Murdoch
Brideshead Revisted by Evelyn Waugh
The Loved One by Evelyn Waugh
Decline and Fall by Evelyn Waugh
most other books by Waugh
Brighton Rock by Graham Greene
The Power and the Glory by Graham Greene
Our Man in Havana by Graham Greene
Heart of the Matter by Graham Greene
End of the Affair by Graham Greene
Joseph Andrews by Henry Fielding
Tom Jones by Henry Fielding
Lord of the Flies by William Golding
The Moor’s Last Sigh by Salman Rushdie
Midnight’s Children by Salman Rushdie
Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro
The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro
Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro
The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde
The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie by Muriel Spark
Diary of a Country by Georges Bernanos
Saint Joan by George Bernard Shaw
The Warden by Anthony Trollope
Barchester Towers by Anthony Trollope
The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole
The Mysteries of Udolpho by Ann Radcliffe
Waverly by Walter Scott
Varney the Vampire by John William Polidori
The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins
The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins
Mutiny on the Bounty by John Barrow
The Forsyte Saga by John Galsworthy
The Scarlet Pimpernel by Erskine Childers
The Riddle of the Sands by Erskine Childers
The Man Who Was Thursday by G.K. Chesterton
Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis
The Comforters by Muriel Spark
The Ballad of Peckham Rye by Muriel Spark
Empire of the Sun by J.G. Ballard
The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndam
The Midwich Cuckoos by John Wyndam
A Man for All Seasons by Robert Bolt
Darkness at Noon by Arthur Koestler
Of Human Bondage by W. Somerset Maugham

*(Non-British) European novels I’ll approve
Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky
Doctor Zhivago by Boris Pasternak
Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes
Germinal by Emile Zola
Ivan Denisovich by A. Solzhenitsyn
The Trial by Franz Kafka

Part I – The Experience, Interpretation, and Evaluation Essay
The first part of your project is to complete an “Experience-Interpretation-Evaluation” essay, approximately three double-spaced pages in MLA format. Your essay will include three titled sections, as follows:

A. Experience
Our experience of fiction concerns our feelings about the characters, our sense of involvement in the story’s developing action, our pleasure or confusion in its language, and our joy or sorrow of its outcome. Did your feelings about any of the characters change during the course of your reading or afterward? In short, how did the story affect you -- and why? It is important to remember that readers respond to stories in different ways.

B. Interpretation
When we interpret a story we explain it to ourselves and try to make sense of it. An interpretation is an argument about the story’s meaning as we understand it. It’s our way of stating and supporting, with arguments based on analysis, what the story means, what it says or suggests. In short, what is the overall meaning of your novel, according to your reading of it -- and why?
C. Evaluation
An evaluation is essentially a judgment, an opinion about a work. Consider the values the novel endorses—or refutes. (Remember: You may support or reject the models of behavior illustrated in the novel.) What we should strive for in evaluating fiction is to understand the different kinds of values it presents, and to clarify our own attitudes, dispositions, and values in responding to them. Reflect on that in this part of your essay.

Part II -- SIFT worksheet
Download a SIFT worksheet and complete it using your novel as the subject. This will be very similar to the SIFT you completed for your short story and for the various Canterbury tales we read/are reading. This must be printed out and turned in.

Part III – Passage Analysis Essay
Having already completed your SIFT and the “experience, interpretation, and evaluation” essay should help you complete this next part. So far, you’ve focused on the novel in its entirety. Now you will focus on one significant passage from that story.

STEP ONE: Carefully choose the passage
First choose one passage that you find key to a specific meaning or message of the overall novel, or choose several short passages that are significant for understanding a key symbol, image, character, or theme from the novel. It may be a passage that seems to raise a question, or seems intentionally ambiguous and open to interpretation. Your SIFT should give you a pretty good idea of which passages will work best.

Be sure to choose a passage (or a symbol, an image, or a motif that might be mentioned in a few passages) that you think is rich in meaning, important to the overall story, and that you understand and can discuss clearly in 2 to 3 pages.

A rule of thumb is to try to focus in on just one significant passage (a paragraph, a page, or a single dialogue), or two or three short, key references to the image or character you will discuss. For each sentence of text that you quote, you should be able to discuss it for at least a paragraph of your own writing.

STEP TWO: Write out the passage, citing the page number
Before you begin your passage analysis, write out the passage you’re choosing. This should be no longer than half a page double-spaced.

STEP THREE: Your passage analysis should focus on “interpretation”
Your discussion should interpret the text, whether your analysis is focusing on an image, a motif, a character, the language, or the meaning. To interpret you need to jump off the track of chronological sequence (plot synopsis) — one thing after another—and consider the meaning of particular events or images, etc.

N.B. Please see the sample passage analysis from Frankenstein, available at the website in the “How To” section

Rules of Thumb for Passage Analysis
- Do not summarize, repeat, or paraphrase what the passage is about.
- Let the text be your guide, your marker, to which your discussion should return again and again. When in doubt, go back to the text.
- In your discussion of the passage or passages, spell out each step in your thinking process that caused you to come up with the interpretation you offer. Many students make a common
mistake of jumping too quickly to conclusions without demonstrating what caused them to make such a conclusion. We cannot and will not guess what you are thinking or assume you meant to say something unless you spell it all out. What might seem evident and obvious to you might not seem obvious to your reader. Don’t neglect to write down exactly why the specific words and phrases from the text led you to think about it as you do. Make all the connections in your own thinking clear. Be clear and complete.

- Refer back to the specific parts of the passage as you discuss or analyze each element of it (quote that part again) and show how each part (or even specific words) leads you to a new level or insight in your own understanding and discussion of it.
- One way to check if your analysis is on track is to compare it to the overall work and its other themes, images, and overall message that you uncovered through your SIFT. If much other evidence supports your interpretation, and what you propose it means is consistent with many other aspects of the text, then it is most likely a reasonable, persuasive interpretation.
- You don’t have to come up with the same interpretation as an expert; you just have to make sure that you have LOTS of persuasive support for whatever interpretation you offer.

Part IV – A.P. style exam (you’ll be making this, not taking this)
For the fourth part of this project you will be creating an A.P.-style unit exam over your chosen novel. Your exam must include, at minimum:

1. **Six A.P.-style writing prompts** that will be used for short answer questions. You must consult the A.P. writing prompts 1970-2012 download, available on the website, and adapt six of these to your novel. You may also come up with your own prompts, as long as they are thematically “rich” enough to be used on an A.P.-level exam.
2. **Ten quotation identification questions**: You choose ten of the most important quotations of the novel, and the test-taker will be tasked with 1) identifying the speaker, and 2) explaining the context and significance of the quotation.
3. **Two passage analysis prompts**, each with six multiple choice questions about the passage. Your chosen passages may not be the same as the passage you chose for your passage analysis essay.
4. **An answer key** that provides the answers/responses to all of your questions. The answers to the 12 multiple choice questions must include an explanation of why each answer is correct.

N.B. Consult the sample A.P.-style exam posted on the website under the “How-to” section. You should use this as a guide for completing your exam!

Part V – The Analytical Essay
You will be writing an extensive analytical essay on an appropriate literary topic pertaining to your independent reading. Your finished paper will be a presentation of your own thinking. In order to complete this properly, you are expected to read two articles on composition that will be available on the website in PDF:

> “Invention: The Discovery of Arguments” by Scott Crider
> “Organization: The Desire for Design” by Scot Crider

These two essays are available in Crider’s book, *The Office of Assertion: An Art of Rhetoric for the Academic Essay* (just in case you might want to order your own copy from Amazon.com).

You should also re-read:

> How to Write a Literary Essay – available on the class website in the “How-To’s” section.
Requirements

The final paper is expected to be between 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages (approximately 350 words per page) following the MLA format. In order to successfully complete this essay, begin with formulating a working thesis to guide your essay. This essay assignment is open-ended, which means you are not responding to a prompt. The subject of your essay is up to you, but make sure that you are writing an analytical essay. Start with these three steps:

Step One: Use a Guiding Question
Once you have read your novel and completed your E-I-E essay and completed a SIFT worksheet, you should identify a guiding question in order to develop a working thesis for your analytical essay.

Step Two: Formulate a Thesis Statement
Your thesis should be formulated as an answer to your guiding question. A thesis statement is a strong, clear claim that will be supported by your observations, analysis, and the novel itself. A thesis statement has many purposes and functions, including:

- telling the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion
- providing a road map for the paper; in other words, telling the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper
- indicating an interpretation of a question or subject; a thesis must offer a way to understand the subject

A thesis statement is usually a single sentence near the end of your introductory paragraphs that explicitly presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper – called “the body of the essay” – gathers and organizes “evidence” that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation. That evidence will come from your analysis of evidence from the text.

Step Three: Evaluating Your Thesis
Before you move ahead with your essay, make certain you have an effective thesis statement. Be sure to ask yourself the following simple questions:

- Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose? If your thesis simply states facts that no one could disagree with, it’s possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.

- Is my thesis statement specific enough? Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument.

- Does my thesis pass the “So what?” test? If a reader’s first response is, “So what?” then your thesis statement is too obvious. You need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.

- Does my thesis pass the “How and why?” test? If a reader’s first response is “how?” or “why?” your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader.

If your answer to each of these simple questions is “yes” then you likely have a successful working thesis statement, which means you are ready to move on.

Reminder: All five parts of this project are due on May 6. Print out and staple each individual part and then use a bull clip to bind them all together. You will also be supply an electronic copy.