

Independent Reading Project

A.P. English Literature & Composition

Mr. Rose

Overview

In addition to the course-assigned reading during the fourth quarter, you will be completing an independent reading project (IRP) on a select A.P.-level novel or Shakespeare play of your choice. The IRP 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 will be accepted!

Choosing your novel or play

On **March 12/13**, 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 for this project.

Your chosen novel (or Shakespeare play) should meet the following criteria:

1. The novel must be written by an English, Scottish, Welsh, or Irish author (with a few European and American 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?)
5. Alternative to a novel: You may choose one of the Shakespeare plays listed below instead of a novel.

This is your opportunity to study a book or play 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 the 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

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

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
 When We Were Orphans 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 Priest 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
 The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins
 The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins
 Mutiny on the Bounty by John Barrow
 The Forsythe 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
 Darkness at Noon by Arthur Koestler
 Of Human Bondage by W. Somerset Maugham

***(Non-British) novels I'll approve**

Crime and Punishment by Fyodr Dostoevsky
 The Betrothed by Alessandro Manzoni
 Doctor Zhivago by Boris Pasternak
 Germinal by Emile Zola
 Ivan Denisovich by A. Solzhenitsyn
 The Trial by Franz Kafka
 Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
 Moby Dick by Herman Melville
 Catch 22 by Joseph Heller

Shakespeare plays

Othello
 Hamlet
 The Tempest
 Julius Caesar
 Much Ado About Nothing
 Richard III
 The Merchant of Venice
 As You Like It
 Taming of the Shrew
 Twelfth Night
 Winter's Tale
 King Lear
 Titus Andronicus
 Antony and Cleopatra

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 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.

You should 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 that will be run through a plagiarism detector. And, of course, do not plagiarize!