

AP/IB English Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

WELCOME!

(AND ALREADY WE GET TO WORK)

Discussed below are the three literary works and their associated assignments that you are to complete over the summer and to submit during the first week of classes in the 2011-2012 academic year. Two of these works—Siddhartha and God's Bits of Wood—fulfill an IB requirement in World Literature as well as an AP requirement. The third work, The Scarlet Letter, is your cross-disciplinary assignment that relates to prerevolutionary American history. Note that you are expected to acquire the edition cited below for each literary work; and the best way to acquire these works, with the possible exception of Siddhartha, a Barnes & Noble publication, is by order through Amazon.com or another online supplier of books. By ordering online, you receive the quickest service and the best choice in prices. The editions selected supply additional reading materials for which you will be held responsible on tests and the semester exam.

Summer assignment directions follow each listed literary work.

A. Hesse, Hermann. Siddhartha. Trans. Rika Lesser. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2007. *originally written in German* [ISBN-13: 978-1-59308-379-3]

Assignment:

1. Read the Robert A. F. Thurman introduction and the Translator's Note, as well as "The World of Hermann Hesse and Siddhartha." These 18 pages will give you the background information you need to place this novel in the context of World Literature. In addition, Google "Buddhism" and "Hinduism" and take notes. However, always remember that online sources, especially Wikipedia, must be verified via another source in order to be used in a research paper. Online sources, unless the work of a recognized scholar, can be terribly inaccurate or misleading; moreover, they should never be cited in a research paper without the approval of your teacher. (In college, citing online sources often hurts your paper's grade.)
2. Read the novel! Of course you will find many online sources to tell you the plot of the novel and to discuss the novel's meaning. While the online plot may be accurate in larger detail, the finer points of the literary work are elided [new word!]. The theme—and there may be several possible themes—lies in the close reading of plot and characters. The theme is what you are to ultimately write about in a typed paper that will be about 5 pages long, maybe a little longer.
3. The paper! Word process it in a font no smaller than 11-point, no larger than 12-point. Double space your paper throughout. If your processing program inserts an extra space at the end of each paragraph by default, then change that default setting to delete the extra space. Make your margins 1 inch top, bottom, right, and left. Do not use full justification: justify the left margin, run a "ragged" right. Go

online to see how the first page of your essay should look with its header in the upper-left-hand corner and the title according to Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines. You must learn proper MLA style this year. You can use it for your Extended Essay during your senior year, and you will use it in college. Of course, there are other such styles for presentation, depending on field of study, but MLA is the style for English study accepted at the college level. **You will write between 5 and 7 pages—no less than 5, no more than 7.**

- In a separate well-developed paragraph for each, define the main characters and the minor characters; and make sure you identify who the protagonist and antagonist are. **[Figure on writing 2 typed pages.]**
- List as bulleted items but in complete sentences the major plot events. The plot is the sequence of the action, in which the minor characters are often a writer's transitions from one plot event to another. Because characters drive the plot—are vehicles for the plot—you will probably find that your plot analysis provides you with more information about the characters that you need to include in #1. **[Figure on writing 1 typed page.]**
- Also in a bulleted list written in complete sentences note the following items: author's use of metaphor, simile, imagery, and word choice for figurative language. These items provide you with the finer points you need for making an argument for what you think is the theme of the work. You must defend your claim—your statement of what you think the theme is—by using direct and indirect quotation and documenting this evidence according the MLA guidelines for parenthetical documentation. (Go online to make sure you are using MLA guidelines correctly because you will be using these guidelines throughout the year in writing essays for this class.) **[Figure on writing 1-to-2 typed pages.]**

4. The last thing you are to do for this literary work to complete your Summer Reading assignment is to write a 3-to-5 paragraph argument for what you have concluded is the main theme of the work. Remember: The main theme of a literary work is akin to a thesis statement. It's an arguably governing idea for the work, and it is to be expressed in several sentences in order for the idea to be fully developed. [Later you will learn that in a research paper a thesis statement can be developed over several paragraphs. **Statement doesn't mean "sentence."** For example, we wouldn't say that "Little Red Riding Hood" is about "justice," but we could argue as part of our thesis statement that this story is, among other things, about the idea that those who practice deceit and manipulation end badly and receive their just reward. **[Figure on writing 2 typed pages.]**

B. Ousmane, Sembène. *God's Bits of Wood*. New Jersey: Longman (Pearson), 1960. *originally written in French* [ISBN-13: 978-04359-09598]

Assignment:

1. Google the Senegalese writer Sembène Ousmane (1923-2007) and read about him. Allow yourself to be curious and to follow up on things you read about him that you do not understand by doing more

Google searches. You must, for example, Google the 1947 Dakar-Niger railway strike that is the immediate background for the novel's plot. [**Niger** is pronounced Knee-zhair (the "g" in "Niger" is pronounced like the "s" in "measure"), although you will hear it pronounced Nigh-jur.] **Then, read the novel.**

2. **Now follow #s 2, 3, and 4 above in A**, but make sure you include something about the 1947 railway strike in #3.

C. Hawthorne, Nathaniel. The Scarlet Letter and Other Writings. Ed. Leland S. Person. New York: Norton, 2004. [Make sure you purchase THE NORTON CRITICAL EDITION of the novel.] *originally in English* [ISBN-13: 978-03939-79534]

1. Google Nathaniel Hawthorne, read the biographical background, and notice that Hawthorne proves the critical point that we should not read a one-to-one correspondence between an author's life and his fictional or poetic work. Notably, Hawthorne was not a Puritan although he descended from Puritans. He himself had no particular religion that he followed, but he was very impressed in a most positive way with the Catholic notion of confession and loved living in Rome. As it happens, his wife, Sophia Peabody Hawthorne, one of the famous Peabody sisters, was a practicing Episcopalian. His youngest and favorite child, Rose, converted to Catholicism, became a nun and founded an order of Dominican nuns devoted to the care of the poor suffering from cancer. The order is called The Hawthorne Dominicans. And so we pay particular attention to Hawthorne's uses of the notion of "confession" in The Scarlet Letter. However, although we can speculate with some evidence from the novel about Hawthorne's ethical commitments, we cannot say anything about Hawthorne's religious beliefs and strict one-to-one correspondence with any part of the novel.

2. Slowly read The Scarlet Letter and mark in pencil in the margins of the text, with "X's" or little notes to yourself, the figurative language that jumps out at you that contributes to what you discover is a possible theme for the novel. Write your statement of that theme on the inside front cover of your text to see whether you change your mind after class discussions of the novel.

3. Prepare for class discussions by reading the critical commentaries in the Norton Critical Edition as your fancy takes you. Again, with pencil, mark the things that jump out at you in these commentaries. Remember: You are, in effect, reading this novel for two courses, English and History.

4. Read "The Custom House" and word process a 3-page summary, following MLA guidelines mentioned above. In your summary, be sure to speculate on how you think this work relates to The Scarlet Letter. **This summary you will submit.**

And so you have your Summer Reading work cut out for you.

Look forward to a great school year.