

Summer Reading Assignment for AP English Literature

Overview: This assignment will prepare you to read critically and analytically in our AP English Literature course. It will also keep your mind agile over the summer months. You will read two books: *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* and the play *Fences* by August Wilson. The first book will, as the title suggests, help you analyze complex pieces of literature. *Fences* chronicles the family dynamics of an African American family living in Pittsburgh in the 1950s.

Due date: Your AP teacher will collect your summer reading work on the 10th day of class, which marks the last day students can drop the class.

Warning: DO NOT CHEAT ON THIS ASSIGNMENT. Cheating includes using the Internet or other sources to research answers or asking your peers and parents for answers. I'm pretty good at detecting cheating, and you don't want my first impression of you to be that of a dishonest and lazy student. Also, if you are found cheating, you will receive an automatic zero for this assignment AND will be written up for the offense.

Assignment:

1. Find copies of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* (the revised edition) by Thomas C. Foster and *Fences* by August Wilson. You can find both books at the library, but I would recommend buying both texts. A PDF version of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* can be found online, and you can print this out, though it is 154 pages.
2. Read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* first. Annotate (make notes) while you read. This book will help you understand the complex themes, structure, and literary elements in *Fences*.
3. After you have read *How to Read Literature*, read *Fences*. As you read *Fences*, consider how *How to Read Literature* applies to Wilson's play. Annotate your ideas in *Fences*.
4. Pick seven chapters from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* that seem particularly relevant to understanding *Fences*.
5. For each chapter that you choose, explain how Foster's book illuminated your reading of *Fences*. In your explanation, give textual evidence from Foster's book AND Wilson's play. I would expect at least a paragraph for each chapter.
6. MLA format.
7. Double spaced.
8. At least 3 pages.

Annotating:

Annotating is a way of interacting with what you are reading. Annotations are a proven way to deepen your comprehension of what you read. Please remember, annotating is done with a pencil. HIGHLIGHTING IS NOT ANNOTATING. Annotating is active; highlighting is passive.

1. Have a purpose. Why are you reading this? What are you looking for? You might have multiple purposes and they may change as you read, but having a purpose will help you pay attention and be critical of what you read. For example,

- You might notice something about the author's style and mark every time you see an example of certain usage, sentence structure, motifs, allusions or other style elements.
- You might have a hypothesis on a symbol or metaphor, so you underline and comment anywhere you see the symbol mentioned or areas that would support your argument.
- You might track a certain theme and its development throughout the piece of writing.
- You might think about prevalent literary elements you might analyze and find words and passages that create these elements.
- You might do several or all of these by the time you reach the end of the book (they're long ones).

2. Read everything – You will have a lot independent work in this course and you will need a positive work ethic. If you're already skipping out on the reading, this may not be the right course for you.

3. Mark it! – Underline, write in the margins, etc.

- Circle, underline, or use a sticky note for important ideas and quotes.
- Mark repetitions. Mark repetitions. (Writers choose words for a living, if they choose the same word, phrase, imagery, description, etc. twice, it's for a reason)
- Circle confusing words or phrases. Look up the words.
- Note passages that generate a strong response.
- Write summaries of important or difficult passages.
- Make connections – to things you've learned in other courses, to personal experience, to other works of literature, etc.

4. Confused? Write questions. Why does he keep talking about eyes? Why does he keep calling the elevator a metal box? Why such a preoccupation with people's socks? Why is Bob so concerned about an injured bird? Why is Suzie never in the room at the same time as Bob?

Grading:

The grading for this assignment is very simple. The assignment asks you to select seven chapters from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* and apply those chapters to *Fences*. Therefore, each paragraph that you write will be worth 14 points. Your 14 points will be earned from the following 4 components:

1. Thoroughness – Did you complete this assignment? Is your essay full of specific details and examples? **(4 points)**

2. Thoughtfulness – Does your essay contain unique insight into *Fences* and *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*? I'm not asking you to produce groundbreaking ideas that no one else has thought of before, but I am asking that you go beyond surface-level, obvious interpretations. **(4 points)**

3. Accuracy – Is your reading of these two books correct? Did you cite lines from the books correctly? **(4 points)**

4. Quality of Writing – Your essays should be largely error-free. Edit your paper for grammar, punctuation, capitalization. Edit it again for clarity and conciseness. Edit it again to eliminate clichés and informal writing. **(2 points)**

Timeline:

If you want to work at a leisurely pace, give yourself three weeks to complete this assignment.

How to Read Literature Like a Professor is an easy read; most of the chapters are about 9 pages long. If you want to read slowly, give yourself about a week to finish it. However, the book can easily be read in 2 days. *Fences* is short and the vocabulary isn't too advanced, but the themes are complex. Give yourself about a week to read and understand *Fences*. Allow yourself about a week to complete the written assignment.

Alternative Assignment:

If you are uncomfortable reading some of the chapters in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, such as the chapter entitled “It’s all about sex,” then you may complete this alternative assignment. However, I must stress that reading *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* is a valuable text that will prepare you to read critically in our AP English class. **Don’t select this alternative assignment just because you have a vague feeling that it will be easier. This assignment is only for those students who have true, valid objections to reading *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*.**

1. Find copies of *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *Fences* by August Wilson. You can find both books at the library.
2. Read and annotate *Beloved* and *Fences*.
3. Write an essay responding to this prompt: **Choose an implausible or strikingly unrealistic incident or character in *Beloved* and *Fences*. Write an essay that first explains how the incident or character is related to the more realistic of plausible elements in the rest of the work. Then, analyze the significance of both unrealistic incidents or characters that you chose. Avoid plot summary.**
4. MLA format.
5. Double spaced.
6. At least 3 pages.

Grading for the Alternative Assignment:

9-8 95-100	Essay is well focused and persuasive analysis is given that perfectly supports the prompt. Using apt and specific textual support these essays show how the examples shape the entire work. These essays may not be perfect, but they make a strong case for their interpretation and discussion of the literary work with significant insight and understanding. Nines reveal a more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than an 8.
7-6 7-95 6 93-94	These essays show insight and understanding but their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, or less specific in supporting detail. 7 essays have a better developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than a 6 essay.
5 85-90	Fives make an attempt. However, these essays do not show that they completely understand the prompt or the essay lacks depth. The essay may be too simplistic and there are problems with the organization or development of the essay compared to the 7 or the 6.
4-3 4-84-79 3-79-70	These essays fail to offer an adequate analysis and do not support the prompt. They may summarize the work, but do not completely address the prompt.
2-1 2-69-60 1-59-50	These essays are of poor quality and are not reflective of the expectations of 12 th grade writing or AP writing.
0 49 or less	These essays are way off topic or do not attempt to be long enough to be considered an academic AP essay.

