

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION

PRE-COURSE READING: 2023-2024

Why Pre-Course Reading? The North Cobb High School English Department knows that pre-course reading helps you expand your vocabulary, spelling, and writing skills and gain new perspectives on life situations. Research is clear: The more reading you do, the more information you gain, and your reading skills will improve. Reading is also an effective means of preparing for standardized tests such as the SAT, ACT, and AP exams.

What do I read? [College Board](#) asks AP Lit kiddos to “choose a novel or play of literary merit...” and analyze, argue, explain, etc., but how does one know what qualifies as **literary merit**? In general, the work of literature:

1. Entertains the reader and is interesting to read.
2. Does not merely conform to the expectations of a single genre or formula.
3. Has been judged to have artistic quality by the literary community (teachers, students, librarians, critics, other writers, the reading public).
4. Has stood the test of time in some way, regardless of the date of publication.
5. Shows thematic depth: The themes merit revisiting and study because they are complex and nuanced.
6. Demonstrates innovation in style, voice, structure, characterization, plot and/or description.
7. May have a social, political or ideological impact on society during the lifetime of the author or afterward.
8. Does not fall into the traps of “pulp” fiction such as clichéd or derivative descriptions and plot devices, or sentimentality rather than “earned” emotion.
9. Is intended by the author to communicate in an artistic manner.
10. Is universal in its appeal (i.e., the themes and insights are not only accessible to one culture or time period).

- A. Select **TWO novels of literary merit that you have not read before**.
- a. One novel should be written pre-20th-century (prior to the 1900s. It will be used to write a process paper.
 - b. The second novel will represent 20th-century/contemporary literature (the 1900s and beyond). It will be used to write a process paper.





Important Note for Parents/Guardians: Please research accordingly before your student selects his/her books. You may wish to use resources such as [Good Reads Reviews](#), [Library Thing](#), and [Common Sense Media](#) to ensure that you and your student are comfortable with the material in the books chosen.

B. Annotate your selections. If you own your book, annotate it. If you do not own your book, sticky notes are fine. (See [hyperlinks here](#) for help in annotating.) Annotating means underlining, commenting, questioning, bracketing, joining with arrows, and numbering. It is NOT highlighting randomly and moving on. By interacting with the text, chances are you will more closely *read* the text, and since you will use these two novels to complete assignments for the course, the information you “save” in annotations save you time in the project. Research shows that it doesn’t matter exactly what, how, or how much you annotate but *that* you annotate. The [AP English Literature & Composition Course and Exam Description](#) showcases EKs (course Essential knowledge), skills, and enduring understandings which you will focus on as you mark your texts and read to prove your understanding. The skill sets you should be on the lookout for are

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| a. character | d. narrator or speaker |
| b. setting | e. diction, imagery, and symbols |
| c. plot and structure | f. comparison |

C. **Additionally**, you must read “cheat” sources (Shmoop, Pink Monkey, Cliff’s Notes, Spark Notes,). If you can’t find anything for your contemporary choice, then read two professional (not customer) reviews. **Notice: “*additionally*” - NOT “*instead of*”!** If your book has also been made into a film, watch it! Remember that you will cite from the NOVEL, not the film or the internet.

For help making decisions about which novels to read, feel free to visit any or all of the sources below for guidance, but should you still feel unsure, please email Cathie.Lawson@cobbk12.org, Rebecca.Zavala@cobbk12.org, or Alexandra.Yeganegi@cobbk12.org No single source below is perfect, but each may help guide you.

 <p>previously used titles</p>	 <p>frequently used titles</p>	 <p>literary merit definition</p>	 <p>literary merit “formula”</p>
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D. **E N J O Y** the reading.