

June 2020

Dear AP Literature & Composition students,

In order to prepare for the rigorous demands of AP Literature and Composition it is necessary that you begin looking at language and meaning in a deeper, more critical way. When you enter the AP Literature classroom, you will continue your study of poetry and fiction, but you will be asked to deepen your understanding through analysis using various classical and modern critical approaches. In other words, you will engage in the study of how writers create meaning through an in-depth study of the elements of fiction, literary devices, and the various contexts at work in a piece of literature. You will be asked to evaluate each text both on its own merits and on its contribution to and place in literary history.

The dialectic was the method Socrates used to teach his students how to be actively engaged in the struggle to derive meaning from unfamiliar and challenging works. Socrates and his students engaged in discussion or shared inquiry in order to “investigate” truth. In the AP Literature classroom, seminar-style discussions will be a major method of analyzing and constructing meaning from the texts we will study. These discussions require diligent and thoughtful preparation that includes close reading and noting of significant ideas and language usage.

One way to prepare for our seminars is to keep a dialectical journal (**required**). The purpose of a dialectical journal is to identify significant pieces of text and explain their significance. It is another form of highlighting/annotating text and should be used to think about, digest, summarize, question, clarify, critique, and remember what is read. It is a way to take notes on what is read, using the actual text, so that when asked to write an essay, take a test, or participate in a Socratic Seminar, you do not have to reread the entire piece. Instead, you can search notes for direct quotes to use as supporting evidence for your opinions. For each work selected, you should create at least five (5) entries. You will need your journal on the first day of class in August.

Prior to the first day of class, please read *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and **at least one** (unmarked) novel that **you have NOT read before** from the top 34 AP Literature Exam Texts list (by September 21st). While reading the novels, consider using post-it notes or flags to identify significant portions of the text related to the elements of fiction (plot, setting, and character) and literary devices (symbolism, motif, theme, point of view, metonymy, and other figurative language). The more thoroughly you annotate in this manner, the more prepared you will be to both participate in our seminars and complete your first writing assignments. I also **recommend** that you obtain a copy of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* and read chapters 6-10 plus the interlude before chapter 11.

Your summer reading assignment will help you begin to give voice to your understanding of how the various elements of fiction writing create meaning and give you an understanding of the rigors and expectations of this course. Dialectical journals (for TFA) are due on the first day of class and will be counted as your first grade in the course.

Please join my Google Classroom (**code: f4hhuju**) for additional updates and assignments.

Things Fall Apart is available for pick up at school, or you may purchase the novel on your own. You will be responsible for procuring the second novel you choose from the reading list. Many are available as e-texts for free on the internet. I look forward to seeing you in August.

Sincerely,
Mr. Conaway