

Westview High School AP English Literature Summer Reading Assignment for 2021-2022

Teacher:

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I don't know about you, but I can't wait to see you all **in person** this coming August. I am truly looking forward to sitting together and discussing great literature in real time, face to face. So first things first. AP English Literature is a class engaged in the deep study of literature. Consider what Francis Bacon, a 16th Century philosopher and statesman, had to say about reading books in his classic essay "Of Studies":

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

Your summer reading assignment is to read a book that is worthy of being "read wholly, and with diligence and attention." You'll be glad to know it's also fun to read.

REQUIRED SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

I. Read and "digest" *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Read the book. It's good. We will begin the year with a unit studying the literary elements of the books, so you need to read the book over the summer. I want you to know the story (the plot) and to have considered what the book means to you before we begin our study. This is important.

You may be aware that a movie adaptation of this novel was released a few years ago—one directed by Baz Luhrmann. There is also a much older version of the movie (from the 1970's) starring Mia Farrow and Robert Redford for those of you who prefer a more traditional production. I encourage you to watch a version of the movie, which can certainly help you visualize the story. Don't, however, mistakenly think watching the movie will replace reading the book. As I said above, this novel is a work worthy "to be **read** wholly, and with diligence and attention."

So, back to the title of this section: **Read and "digest" the book** (watching the movie is optional). I highly recommend that you purchase a copy of the book so that you can write in your book, directly on the pages, as you read. You can order a used copy for \$4.19 at Thriftbooks.com. You can also find free digital books online because the book is now in the public domain.

[Note: *If at this point you're worried about having to read a book over the summer, STOP. The book is relatively short and relatively easy to read. It shouldn't take more than a few days (or a week, tops) to get this read. No stress, and no pressure.*]

II. Questions for Study

Think about these questions as you read and use whatever annotation or notetaking system that works for you to keep track of your ideas. I do NOT expect you to have answers to all of these

questions on the first day of class, and I will not be collecting your notes. I simply want you to be prepared to discuss some of these literary aspects of the novel when we return to school.

a. *Structure, Technique and Plot*

- Who is the narrator? Is the narrator reliable?
- What do you notice about the role of time in the novel?

b. *Character and Conflict*

- What are the major character traits of Gatsby, Nick, Daisy, and Tom? What moments in the novel best reveal those traits?
- What is the central conflict that drives the plot?
- What is the climax of the novel? How does this climax resolve the central conflict?
- Why does Nick alternately admire and disapprove of Gatsby and the life he has led?

c. *Themes and Motifs*

- In what sense is Gatsby great?
- What does the novel suggest about the American dream?

III. **Be prepared to write your baseline essay on *The Great Gatsby*.**

Please know that we will begin discussing the novel at the end of the first week of school. If you wait to read the book until after the first day of class, I will not apologize for spoiling the end. 😊 I'll have you write your baseline essay on *Gatsby* in the second week of school.

Additional Preparation

If you're looking for some other good to read this summer, here is a list of academically challenging texts usually taught in Advanced Sophomore English and AP English Language (in a normal year) I often refer to in AP Lit. Add one or two to your reading this summer if you have the time!

- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
- *Allegory of the Cave* by Plato
- *Self-Reliance* by Ralph Waldo Emerson

I'm looking forward to a great year!

Mrs. Miller