

Fairfield Warde High School

Paul Cavanna
Headmaster
Caryn F. Campbell
Director, Student
Services
Kurt A. Simonsen
Fitts Housemaster
Steven L. Fekete
Townsend Housemaster
Brian T. Keating
Pequot Housemaster
Seth C. Fry
Athletic Director

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Dear 2020 – 2021 Advanced Placement Literature and Composition Students:

Welcome to AP Literature. The following is the list of summer reading, viewing, and writing assignments. These assignments are designed to prepare students for work we will do in AP Literature. They each offer overarching ideas for the course. This coming year, we will also apply various critical theories to these works in order to explore the ways such lenses affect our interpretation and understanding of texts.

Part A: Reading

Students will read/view a novel, a play, and three films. The rationale for each is articulated below the title. The theme of Advanced Placement Literature is “The Quest for Meaning” and the following works should offer much to ponder before we meet in August, as well as provide a touchstone to draw from throughout the year.

Since we could not distribute books to you at the end of 2019/20, we chose two that do not put us at risk of copyright infringement. Links to both texts are with the respective bullets. If the hyperlink does not work, just search "Gutenberg.org" and the title.

1. *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (a Renaissance play)

It is largely considered Shakespeare’s masterpiece; however, it has also been criticized by the writer and literary critic T.S. Eliot as being an ‘artistic failure.’ It is a compelling and mysterious work asking us to consider what it means “to be.” Or not be. It is deeply existential. [Hamlet online version](#)

2. Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte (a Victorian/Romantic novel).

Not to be a spoiler, but this is one of the few texts we will read/view this year that has a "happy ending." So, enjoy it. Bronte, an English woman, was one of a few sisters - all who wrote. Being a writer, as a woman, in the mid 1800s was not really "a thing." All sisters started their writing careers using male pseudonyms. This novel, for its time, was pretty radical. And surely the mother of feminist literature. [Jane Eyre online version](#)

Part B: Viewing

- 1. *Hamlet* film adaptation with David Tennant, 2011. This is a BBC production and can be found on Netflix, etc. It can also be found on Google Classroom under the topic**

“Films/Documentaries.” **WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU WATCH THE FILM BEFORE READING THE PLAY.** This is a brilliant adaptation, largely due to Tennant’s performance. It will greatly augment, with a spin, your reading of the play.

2. *Jane Eyre* film adaption, 2011. We have a new resource under Warde LC website/Class Link. "Swank." Swank has two film versions of *Jane Eyre*. Again, choose the 2011 version. I also put a link to it in Google Classroom under "Films/Documentaries." **WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU READ THE NOVEL BEFORE YOU WATCH THE FILM.**
3. *Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (2014) – film, R. This can also be found on Netflix, etc. and on Google Classroom under the topic “Films/Documentaries.” A film about an older superhero actor who tries to revive his career on Broadway as a “serious actor.” (“It is rated R for: for language throughout, some sexual content and brief violence.” However, all are fairly minimal.) If you have any reservations, please email your teacher; email addresses are below.

Part C: Writing: Exploratory Essay, Comparative Responses, and Viewing Journal

The writing assignments are designed to help you articulate your thoughts with clarity and depth. Use your own mind (not non-academic sources (i.e. SparkNotes) to arrive at an understanding of these texts. The theme of the course is “The Quest for Meaning,” and the quest to *make meaning* must be your own – through analysis, reflection, and dialogue.

Adhere to length requirements.

Adhere to what we will be expecting from your writing/thinking:

- Clarity
- Effective use of personal voice/tone (The tone of these responses may be fairly informal and personal (however, avoid superfluous use of the first person).
- Thoughtfulness, level of insight
- Quality of connections
- Effective integration of direct passages/specific examples from texts
- Cohesiveness
- Grammar, mechanics, and usage

A. Systems for your reading of *Hamlet* and *Jane Eyre*. Download a copy of each from www.gutenberg.org. Use a tool to underline/highlight/comment on both texts. Just be sure you are underlining or highlighting and well as annotating - writing INSIGHTFUL thoughts, questions, connections. Noting key quotes, plot elements, and literary devices

Please do this *while reading/just after reading scenes/chapters* of this play/novel. **(IT IS A GRADE.)**

B. Writing for *Hamlet*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Birdman*

Page Requirements are listed for each assignment. Follow these requirements for ALL WRITING:

- **SINGLE spacing**
- **12 point, Times New Roman font (or something similar in size and readability)**
- **Standard margins – one inch on ALL four sides**
- **MLA citation format**
- **You may ALWAYS write more than the "at least" amount. But no dissertations, please.**

1. Comparative Responses – *Hamlet* and film adaptation

- a. Choose at least 3 significant moments in the play – a scene within a scene (i.e. Ophelia and Hamlet in Act III sc. 1, not the whole scene. Or the Gravedigger in Act V sc. 1, not the whole funeral. They should choose scenes that contain key quotations, events, metaphors, etc.
- b. Analyze the excerpts closely – writing through the language of the play. But do so in relation to how well the film translates the language into action/acting. Find a balance between literary analysis and film criticism. How well is the play - its language and ideas - being explored through the film?

Since you are analyzing scenes within scenes, you will likely need to discuss the context for the excerpts that you choose. These should not be merely summaries, but discussions of the context that helps inform the analysis of your chosen scene.

Ultimately, the goal is to explore how these scenes serve as microcosms (the scene's meaning) of the macrocosm (the meaning of the whole play).

The goal: To help you to go deep into the ideas by going deep into the language.

Length – at least ½ page for EACH of the 3 scenes.

2. Comparative Responses – *Jane Eyre* and film adaptation

- a. The novel is, as a pre-modernist text, linear in its timeline. Meaning, it moves chronologically forward in time. This is a literary convention that began to be challenged with modernist literature. The film, the 2011 version, is not presented in a linear format.
- b. Discuss, using at least three examples of how the film "treats" the novel differently, in a way that aligns more with people living 173 years later, in a post/post-modern world, as it relates to our understanding of the ever-growing complexity of reality.
- c. **Length – at least ½ page for EACH of the 3 examples.**

3. Viewing Journal - Insights from *Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*.

Answer each of the following questions in a well-developed paragraph

1. What is the significance of the subtitle: "*Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*"?
2. What are possible meanings for the quote in the mirror? "A thing is a thing, not what is said of that thing."
3. *Birdman* is a postmodern work. More specifically, it can be categorized as "metanarrative" (meaning, literally, "above the story"). A metanarrative is aware that it is a narrative and, hence, plays with the elements of narrative conventions. Metanarrative may also layer reality and fantasy. It also layers multiple stories/realities. Find two examples, or more, of metanarrative elements. Then describe what seems to be "metanarrative" about the scenes. Example: This is a story of an actual former superhero actor, Michael Keaton, whom some classify as a "washed up" actor, and he is playing a "washed up" superhero actor. That is the most obvious example. Find two others.
4. Discuss two scenes – *write a separate paragraph for each* – that are vital to the film's meaning. Choose different scenes other than the ones you chose for #3. Be sure to discuss the scenes specifically as well as the specific meaning/s you see at work.

Length – at least 150 words per question.

4. **OPTIONAL**. If you have not already started working on your college essay, you may want to start it. We will be working on it extensively during Term 1. Most of you will be using the [Common Application questions](#). If some of you are applying to a school that has its own prompt, use that.

Dr. Faber: nettiefaber@gmail.com or jfaber@fairfieldschools.org

Mr. Frattaroli: babfrat@optonline.net or mfrattaroli@fairfieldschools.org

The TWO Comparative Responses, the Viewing Journal, and the TWO marked up texts (*Hamlet* and *Jane Eyre*) should be uploaded to Google Classroom.

Be sure to enroll in your respective sections before the end of the 2019/20 school year:

Dr. Faber: Class Code: **erymuzb**

Mr. Frattaroli: Class Code: **64WXvr4**

**Post ALL above assignments to Google Classroom by or before
midnight on Friday, August 21, 2020.**

These readings and assignments are a course prerequisite and failure to complete them will likely result in exclusion from the course. Summer reading work is worth 10% of Term 1's grade. Additionally, discussions of the film and texts over the summer are encouraged, but trading of any notes or writing assignments is considered plagiarism. Any plagiarism will be pursued in accordance with school policy.

Enjoy the summer. We look forward to working with you this coming year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeannette C. Faber
English Department
Fairfield Warde High School

Mr. Mark Frattaroli
English Department
Fairfield Warde High School