

AP Literature and Composition Summer 2018 Assignment

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The AP Literature and Composition course will be challenging, yet rewarding, and we look forward to being on this adventure with you. This summer we want you to continue to engage in literary rigor as you prepare to enter your final year of high school and advanced language arts. By now, you know well the importance of annotation when studying literature. Literary scholars should always take note of plot level questions, vocabulary queries, their personal reactions, the author's style and form, motifs, themes, etc., in the works that they are studying. **Please complete the following summer reading assignment by the first day of school and be prepared for assessments related to the reading the very first week we return.**

Summer Assignment:

1. Obtain a copy of *The Namesake*, by Jhumpa Lahiri. It is preferable that you purchase a copy to annotate
2. Before you read the book, carefully read the attached explanations of the concept of "the Other" in literature and the concept of "Bildungsroman"
3. Please read and annotate the short story "The Overcoat", by Nikolai Gogol:
<http://fullreads.com/literature/the-overcoat/>
4. Read and annotate *The Namesake* for the following motifs- i.e., distinctive features or dominant ideas in a literary composition- in addition to annotating for the "usual suspects" you have learned to look out for in the literature you are studying:
 - The Immigrant Experience/Assimilation/Acculturation
 - Traditions and Rituals
 - The Family as a Force - Positive and Negative
 - Coming of Age- Bildungsroman
 - The Naming Process/Tradition and Identity
 - The Nature of Love and the Concept/Practice of Marriage
 - Trains (as symbol)
 - References to Books/Literature, including the short story "The Overcoat"
 - Graves and Graveyards (as symbol)
 - The Other

Reading 1: The Other as a Literary Concept:

The Other is an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way. Any stranger becomes the Other. The group sees itself as the norm and judges those who do not meet that norm (that is, who are different in any way) as the Other. Perceived as lacking essential characteristics possessed by the group, the Other is almost always seen as a lesser or inferior being and is treated accordingly. The Other in a society may have few or no legal rights, may be characterized as less intelligent or as immoral, and may even be regarded as sub-human.

Otherness takes many forms. The Other may be someone who is of...

- a different race (White vs. non-White),
- a different nationality (Anglo Saxon vs. Italian),
- a different religion (Protestant vs. Catholic or Christian vs. Jew),
- a different social class (aristocrat vs. serf),
- a different political ideology (capitalism vs. communism),
- a different sexual orientation (heterosexual vs. homosexual),
- a different origin (native born vs. immigrant).

The Other is not necessarily a numerical minority. In a country defeated by an imperial power, the far more numerous natives become the Other, for example, the British rule in India where Indians outnumbered the British 4,000

to 1. Similarly, women are defined and judged by men, the dominant group, in relationship to themselves, so that they become the Other. Hence Aristotle says: "The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities; we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness."

The group which is defining the Other may be an entire society, a social class or a community within a society, a family, or even a high school clique or a neighborhood gang. . . . The Other . . . is perceived as different in kind, as lacking in some essential trait or traits that the group has; offspring will inherit the same deficient nature and be the Other also. Therefore the Other and the offspring of the Other may be doomed forever to remain separate, never to become part of the group--in other words, to be the Other forever.

The Other is a common figure in literature . . . you may recognize this concept in a tragedy like *Medea*. *Medea* as Other is doubly dangerous. For the Greeks, any non-Greek was the Other or a "barbarian," and *Medea* is a barbarian. She is also the Other in being female; woman, as Other, is often perceived as inherently dangerous. *Medea* justifies these views of the Other in the terrible vengeance she wreaks on Jason because he betrayed her and abandoned her and their sons.

"The Other." *The Other*, 4 Feb. 2009, <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/other.html>. Accessed 18 May 2018.

Reading 2: The Genre of Bildungsroman

Considered a German literary genre, Bildungsroman is a class of novel that deals with the maturation process, with how and why the protagonist develops as he does, both morally and psychologically. The German word *Bildungsroman* means "novel of education" or "novel of formation." The bildungsroman, a type of novel about upbringing and education, seems to have its beginnings in Goethe's work, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796), which is about the processes by which a sensitive soul discovers its identity and its role in the big world. A story of the emergence of a personality and a talent, with its implicit motifs of struggle, conflict, suffering, and success, has an inevitable appeal for the novelist; many first novels are autobiographical and attempt to generalize the author's own adolescent experiences into a kind of universal symbol of the growing and learning processes. Charles Dickens embodies a whole bildungsroman in works like *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861), but allows the emerged ego of the hero to be absorbed into the adult world, so that he is the character that is least remembered. H.G. Wells, influenced by Dickens but vitally concerned with education because of his commitment to socialist or utopian programs, looks at the agonies of the growing process from the viewpoint of an achieved utopia in *The Dream* (1924) and, in *Joan and Peter* (1918), concentrates on the search for the right modes of apprenticeship to the complexities of modern life.

The school story established itself in England as a form capable of popularization in children's magazines, chiefly because of the glamour of elite systems of education as first shown in Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857), which is set at Rugby. In France, *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913) of Alain-Fournier is the great exemplar of the school novel. The studies of struggling youth presented by Hermann Hesse became, after his death in 1962, part of an American campus cult indicating the desire of the serious young to find literary symbols for their own growing problems.

Samuel Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, which was written by 1885 but not published until 1903, remains one of the greatest examples of the modern bildungsroman; philosophical and polemic as well as moving and comic, it presents the struggle of a growing soul to further, all unconsciously, the aims of evolution, and is a devastating indictment of Victorian paternal tyranny. But probably James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), which portrays the struggle of the nascent artistic temperament to overcome the repressions of family, state, and church, is the unsurpassable model of the form in the 20th century. That the learning novel may go beyond what is narrowly regarded as education is shown in two remarkable works of the 1950s—William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1955), which deals with the discovery of evil by a group of shipwrecked middle-class boys brought up in the liberal tradition, and J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), which concerns the attempts of an adolescent American to come to terms with the adult world in a series of brief encounters, ending with his failure and his ensuing mental illness.

Burgess, Anthony. "Types of Novels: Apprenticeship." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/novel/Types-of-novel#ref51004>. Accessed 18 May 2018.