

Dear AP English Literature students,

Congratulations on your choice of the senior AP course in Literature (AP English 4) for your senior year. I am looking forward to embarking with you on what is sure to be the beginning of a challenging but rewarding year together.

The summer reading assignment for this year will be *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. Interest in this novel has risen recently given the current political climate, and the book has been thrust further into the spotlight with Hulu's April release of a mini-series based on the work, so it seems like an apt choice.

You will also read excerpts (EXCERPTS, NOT THE WHOLE BOOK) from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: Revised Edition* by Thomas C. Foster. These excerpts outline tasks you will complete in relation to *The Handmaid's Tale*.

If you get stuck, please do not hesitate to text (preferred) or call me for clarification. My cell phone # is (713)501-5150.

YOU ARE NOT BOTHERING ME WHEN YOU CONTACT ME ABOUT SCHOOL WORK. I will be glad to help if I can. I would much rather hear from you over the summer than hear on the first day of school that you were unable to complete your assignments and will no longer be enrolled in our class.

Remember, all work is due on the first day of school, August 28. Failure to complete the entire assignment will result in automatic removal from the class. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Have a wonderful summer. I look forward to learning with you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Laura Nix

A foreword about academic integrity

I expect you to utilize the utmost academic integrity when it comes to this and ALL assignments for AP English 4.

Academic integrity is honesty and responsibility in scholarship.

Every assignment you do in school is meant to measure your knowledge of something or your ability to do something. The grade you receive on the assignment should reflect that knowledge or ability. But an assignment cannot truly measure your knowledge or ability if you have not done your own work.

The summer reading assignment should be the product solely of your thoughts, effort, and ideas. Sites like Shmoop and SparkNotes serve a purpose, but using them for an assignment like this one is dishonest. Furthermore, I am not interested in what SparkNotes or Shmoop say. Indeed, I can (and have) already visited them with regards to each and every work I assign my AP and Pre-AP students. I am interested in **your** ideas, interpretations, and arguments. I want to know what **you** think. Your ideas are far more interesting than the ones regurgitated again and again on the internet, and referring to those websites as a substitute for reading the assigned literature yourself will color your thinking and prevent you from developing your own ideas.

Although there will doubtless be collaborative assignments throughout the school year, **this is not one of them.** Please do your own work. **You may not in any way work with someone else on this assignment.**

If your work shows any evidence of your having copied from a website, a classmate, or any other source, you will receive a zero.

The coursework for AP English 4 starts with this assignment. Please note that some AP readings/literature throughout the year may contain mature language and subject matter.

Required reading

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood (ISBN: 0-385-49081-X)

Excerpts from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: Revised Edition* by Thomas C. Foster (ISBN: 978-0-06-230167-3)

Summary of Assignments

Read and annotate *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. I do not have copies of this novel so you will need to purchase one on your own. Any version will do as long as it is a complete text. You will be applying some concepts from Foster's book to this novel (see the prompts below). There are no other assignments associated with this work besides reading it, taking notes, and being prepared to work with it the first week of school. There will also be a test over the novel during the first week of school.

I have included a link to a Google Slides presentation that might be helpful in your understanding of *The Handmaid's Tale* if you wish to check it out. If you are logged in to your NISD Google account, you should be able to gain access to the link given below. If you have trouble, text me and I can help.

https://docs.google.com/a/needvilleisd.com/presentation/d/17_wnU1aPJqMAhPXFUJ_Mtr7Iaz-TJvDEHDFfsy4HQnQ/edit?usp=sharing

Read the assigned excerpts of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: Revised Edition* by Thomas C. Foster and complete the writing and annotation assignments below. (Make sure the copy you purchase is a revised edition.) Your responses should all be typed and ready for submission to turnitin.com (you will receive the class I. D. and password on the first day of school). You will turn in a **hard copy** of your writing assignments and bring a **digital copy to class on Monday, August 28, 2017.** Failure to do so will result in immediate dismissal from the class.

Writing Assignment

Note to students: These short writing assignments will let you practice your literary analysis. Each response should be double-spaced, and please include questions and Foster's chapter titles with your responses. **Please note that your responses should be written in complete sentences, but they should be paragraphs -- not pages!**

Chapter 3: Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires

What are the essentials of the vampire story? Apply these ideas to *The Handmaid's Tale* by providing examples.

Chapter 4: Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?

Apply intertextuality to the character of Serena Joy from *The Handmaid's Tale*. How is Margaret Atwood referencing 1980s figures Tammy Faye Bakker and Phyllis Schlafly (do a little research)? What is her intended effect?

Chapter 6: (When in Doubt, It's From Shakespeare) ...Or the Bible

Cite and discuss a Biblical allusion from *The Handmaid's Tale*. How does it develop thematic ideas?

Chapter 10: Never Stand Next to the Hero: What type of character is Moira in *The Handmaid's Tale*? What is her function in the novel? Explain thoroughly.

Chapter 11: ...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence

Based on Foster's definition of the two kinds of violence found in literature, discuss Particution or Salvagings in *The Handmaid's Tale*. What is the purpose or effect?

Chapter 12: Is That a Symbol?

Use the process described on pages 113-114 to investigate the significance of flower symbolism in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Cite and analyze a passage.

Chapter 13: It's All Political

Foster writes "that most works must engage with their own specific period in ways that can be called political" (122). Using criteria from page 122, discuss how *The Handmaid's Tale* is a political novel.

Chapter 16: It's All About Sex...

Chapter 17: ...Except the Sex

The key idea from these chapters is that "scenes in which sex is coded rather than explicit can work at multiple levels and sometimes be more intense than literal depictions" (149). In other words, sex is often suggested with much more art and effort than it is described, and it can help develop theme or character. Discuss the significance of Offred's private "affair" with The Commander in *The Handmaid's Tale* versus the description of The Ceremony.

Chapter 26: Is He Serious? And Other Ironies

Discuss irony found in *Historical Notes on The Handmaid's Tale* found in the back of the novel. What is Atwood's purpose?