

English II Honors Summer Reading Notes Assignment

In studying literature, this course moves from genre to genre, applying a set of literary terms to better understand the function of each, from narrative fiction, to poetry, drama, and prose. Below you will find several main literary terms to consider that will fuel many of our discussions this year. As you read the pair of summer reading novels, please take handwritten notes on the following components of each story in a **hardbound composition book (no multi-subject spirals)**, which you will use throughout the year in English II Honors. These notes will be assessed on the first day of class.

Narration: Who is narrating the novel? If it is one of the characters, what tone of voice and nature of character infuses the telling? If it is an outside (3rd person) narrator, to whom is that narrator limited (what character do we “stick to” through the story)? Does the narrator have his /her own voice or views that come through the narrative?

Setting: Setting is both the place and time in which the story takes place. The place can be identified geographically but also in simpler, real terms that are evident in the description of setting that occurs in narrative fiction. Describe the significant places from the novel. Does the action of the novel occur in one place or several different places? How does the author’s choice of place influence the plot?

Describe the historical context of each story, but also the age and stage of development of each important character, especially the main character(s).

Narrative Structure: The novelist sets a frame for his or her story that has a starting and ending point and a means of getting from one to the other. What is the structure of the story? Does it jump between subplots, different times, or different viewpoints? Why is the frame of time significant to the protagonist? Why are some parts of that time emphasized or viewed in more detail than others?

Characters: Novels use main characters who typically develop over the time frame of the story, and minor characters who do not, but who rather offer a character strength or weakness that highlights through contrast the main character. These contrasting characters are called foils. Make a list of the main characters and minor characters. For the main characters, explain in one sentence how he or she develops throughout the novel. For the minor characters, provide one strength or weakness that he or she exhibits which contrasts with the main character (Note: Do not list every minor character present in the novel, rather list approximately five of them that the protagonist encounters most frequently.)

Conflict: Novels offer the reader a vicarious experience in which we live through the conflicts of the main character. There are five basic forms of conflict: person versus person, person versus self, person versus nature, person versus society, and person versus God. Identify four to five main conflicts in the story, noting who the conflicts occur within or between. What are the outcomes of the conflicts and how do they advance the plot?

Motif, Symbol and Theme: Motifs and symbols are parts of the narrative that connect the literal level to the level of ideas. A motif is simply a literal element, from a color to an expression to a thing or event, that gathers meaning as it recurs. A symbol can be understood as more immediately meaningful. The meaning we attribute to any literal aspects is the theme.

Motifs: Consider any aspects of the plot that repeat or recur. What ideas does the author develop by making us consider this element repeatedly?

Symbols: Are there any events or things that have notable meaning in their occurrence in the narrative? How does this meaning tie into the central idea of the book?

Theme: How would you define the main ideas of the book in four or five abstract nouns? (NOTE: We are not looking for a “moral to the story.”)

A Note on Evaluation of Summer Reading: A combination of assignments will be given over the first two weeks of the course in which students will demonstrate their comprehension of the readings and will apply some of the above analytical terms in writing assignments.