

SUMMER READING, A.P. ENGLISH LIT 12 /R.I.C. ENG 118

South Kingstown High School, 2015-2016

Students in A.P. English 12 are required to obtain their own copies of both *Moby-Dick* and *Candide* in one of the approved editions listed on the back of this sheet. You may also obtain your own copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* (in any edition) or sign out a copy from the school. Students are also required to obtain their own copy of *How to Not Write Bad* by Ben Yagoda (Penguin, 2013). Any student for whom this expense is a financial hardship should speak to her or his instructor or guidance counselor for information about sources of financial assistance.

I don't know what your physical summer travel plans are, but you will be taking three literary journeys for this class. Here's the itinerary (listed in the order in which I recommend you read them):

1. ***Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville:** To say that *Moby-Dick* is about a whale hunt is like saying *The Odyssey* is about sailing, or *Paradise Lost* is about gardening. There's not much that this novel *isn't* about. It's epic, it's tragic, it's allegorical, it's parodic, it's sublime, it's weird. Oh, yes – it's also *not* easy to read. Though revered by countless authors and critics as the novel with the strongest claim to the title "The Great American Novel," it's also (let's face it) loathed by legions of high school students who think it's about three or four times longer than it needs to be. But if you let your mind be open to it, it will more than amply reward your effort.

Keep a journal in which, for every couple of chapters, you record three or four *very brief* observations you have about the reading (important or at least interesting aspects of plot, theme, characterization, style, etc., that you think might warrant further discussion in class). In particular, see if you can discern any kind of coherent philosophy of life expressed through the novel. In your journal, do not merely summarize the plot (I know it already); *your responses* are what we want to learn more about. Think of your journal entries as your personal annotations on the novel, not as full-fledged essays.

2. ***The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck:** Steinbeck's most ambitious work is a sweeping, impassioned novel recounting the hardships of one Oklahoma farm family (and, by extension, all the victims of the Great Depression), who, forced out of their home by economic desperation, journey to California in search of a better life. Yes, you are to keep a journal of your responses to this novel as well. It would be helpful if you try to compare and contrast it to *Moby-Dick* wherever such comparisons seem relevant. Keep your eyes open for this novel's philosophical viewpoint as well.

3. ***Candide* by Voltaire:** A French philosophical novella that satirizes the optimistic Enlightenment creed of the German philosopher Leibnitz: "All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." (Alexander Pope said much the same thing in his *Essay on Man*.) Don't let the "philosophical" tag scare you: it's also outrageously, uproariously irreverent and sometimes even laugh-out-loud funny.

Your journals, which are due the second day this class meets in the fall, will be used as the basis for your first major assignment of the quarter, and will be graded (40 points for *Moby-Dick*, 40 points for *The Grapes of Wrath*, and 20 points for *Candide*). Late journals will be accepted for half credit. Any type of journal book is acceptable: spiral notebook, marbled composition book – as long as it's at least 5" x 8". (If you use loose-leaf paper, you **must** bind the pages with some kind of cover before handing it in.) Credit will be based on insight and engagement with the texts, **not** on plot summary or mere sincerity (so writing "I just couldn't get into this book" will not cut it).

Please keep in mind that the purpose of these journals is to give you the chance to keep track of some of your more thoughtful reactions to the readings; they are *not* intended to make the readings doubly burdensome. If you find yourself spending more time writing in your journal than reading the books, **you're writing too much!** Give us both a break and try to keep your journal entries concise.

IMPORTANT: Make sure your name appears prominently on the outside front cover. Do **not** write in pencil. Do **not** use glitter pens, or luminescent ink, or really small print. Do **not** write on both sides of the page (unless your journal has thick paper). Your journals do not have to be carefully proofread (content matters more than style with these), but they **must** be legible.

Bon voyage,

Mr. Alper

You are *strongly* urged to get one of the editions listed below. If you can't get one of these, make sure that at least you read a *modern* edition (i.e., published since 1980 or so), preferably one that is annotated — both novels are rich in historical and literary allusions that even well-read contemporary readers are likely to miss.

Moby-Dick

Moby-Dick, Second Edition (Norton Critical Editions). Edited by Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford. W. W. Norton & Company; 2nd edition, 2001. ISBN: 978-0-393-97283-2. \$20.00

Moby-Dick (Barnes & Noble Classics Series). Introduction and notes by Carl F. Hovde. Barnes & Noble, 2003. ISBN: 978-1-593-08018-1. \$10.95.

Moby-Dick (Ignatius Critical Edition). Edited by Mary R. Reichardt. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-1586174163. \$11.95.

Candide

Candide, Second Edition (Norton Critical Editions). Translated and edited by Robert M. Adams. W. W. Norton & Company; 2nd edition, 1991. ISBN: 978-0-393-96058-7. \$17.50.

Candide (Barnes & Noble Classics Series). Translated by Henry Morley; introduction and notes by Gita May. Barnes & Noble, 2003. ISBN: 978-1-593-08028-0. \$6.95.

Candide (Viking Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition). Translated by Theo Cuffe. Viking Penguin, 2005. ISBN: 978-0-143-03942-6. \$15.00.

In addition to the three summer reading texts, I require you to obtain your own copy of the following book (an e-reader version is acceptable):

How to Not Write Bad by Ben Yagoda. Riverhead Books, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-59448-848-1.

While this is not assigned as summer reading, I encourage you to start perusing this text whenever you have the chance, so you can start the school year by submitting written assignments that reflect the kind of polish and clarity of expression I consider standard for this course