

Summer Preparation for AP12: The Journey from Innocence to Experience

“I suggest that the only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little farther down our particular path than we have yet gone ourselves.”

“Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon.” **E M Forster**

Greetings AP 12 students! These quotes serve as both an invitation and caution as we prepare to explore great literature together in the fall. As you begin your summer preparation, please understand that AP 12 is an amazing course that will be magnanimous in its offerings and will also require equal generosity and resolve on the part of its participants. You are no doubt aware of the fundamentals of good writing and perceptive reading. AP 12 will serve as a course that will push you even more as a thinker, reader, and writer than you’ve been pushed previously. You need to come to this course with Beginner’s Mind. This is a Zen concept and as the name suggests, it refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, just as a beginner in that subject would. Remember that this is a college-level course. What this means is that you will be asked to independently read and analyze challenging, provocative, dense, and sometimes controversial material. In terms of thinking, discussion, and analysis, you will be asked to go well beyond what E M Forster above categorizes as spoon-feeding. You will be expected to be a committed, eager, self-reliant, and self-motivated learner. I expect you to bring your own spoons to class each and every day and be ready to bravely forge them into textual porridge.

Step 1: Every day, when the sunshine peeks through your window and the birds begin to sing, repeat these four phrases quietly to yourself:

FLUENCY---INSIGHT---EVIDENCE---PURPOSE

Step 2: Buy a copy of Barbara Kingsolver’s The Poisonwood Bible. Thoroughly read this text. ENJOY IT. Write copious notes and vocabulary definitions in the margins. In this course you will be asked to write and reflect on coaching notes: these are notes that you write in the margins of the texts that serve as reflections on what you have underlined. Attached you will find the dialectical journal writing assignment associated with this text. Write your journal entries as you are reading. You don’t have to type these entries but they must be thorough.

Step 3: You need to purchase a copy of a handbook of literary terms. Literary devices are the essential tools and lenses by which we examine literature. You must not only have a thorough understanding of these devices but you must also be ready to say why a writer has utilized them. “For what purpose?” must become a mantra that you repeat to yourself again and again and answer again and again in your dialectical journal. You need to begin thinking of literature on a symbolic level. I recommend purchasing:

Murfin and Ray’s The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms. There are many of these literary term books available. Any book devoted to literary terms will be just fine. I have attached a list of prominent literary terms the College Board expects you to understand and apply in your text analysis this year. Examine the list attached and read about why writers use these elements. Be on the lookout for these elements in Kingsolver’s novel. We’ll spend a heavy chunk of the year examining devices and contemplating the author’s purpose for employing them.

For The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver you will be completing a journal assignment. This is one of the few major assignments that does not need to be typed because of the nature of the assignment and because I want you to be able to work on this wherever you go (plane, train, automobile, espresso stand). Please write legibly, my eyes are less sharp than they used to be. Points will not be deducted for pizza stains. If you are someone who prefers to type your assignments, that is certainly acceptable. This is due on the first day of class when you return from your summer wanderings. This assignment is designed to encourage good reading habits – something that we will be working on the entire year. Because this is a journal assignment, less emphasis is placed on whether your responses are “right” or “wrong,” and more emphasis is placed on how much you authentically engage with the text.

The procedure is as follows:

Complete an entry after every 30 pages or so. You will have a total of 20 entries for the novel when you have finished. **Each entry should be comprised of three (3)** of the following options and should be labeled according to page numbers:

1. Comment on the author’s style, referring to particular words, phrases, and passages. What do you notice about Kingsolver’s writing that sets her apart?
2. Pick a passage that contains striking imagery and make a comment as to the effect that the imagery has on the passage as a whole.
3. Comment on a character. What traits does he/she have that are getting in the way or contributing to his/her success? Does this character remind you of someone you know? Yourself, perhaps? Talk about more than their hat size, please.
4. Comment on your reaction to the story itself. How do you respond to the action? If you are not enjoying it, why not? If you are, why?
5. Write about how you fit into the story. Can you relate to some of the struggles? Do you see yourself in the story or how people are reacting? How is your journey similar?
6. Write and answer four interpretive (between the lines) questions.
7. Select a quote that either seems important, or just strikes you as interesting. Comment on your selection.
8. Describe the tone (attitude the speaker or sometimes the author has towards her/his subject) of the section by listing 10-12 words from the section and then discuss their overall effect on the mood.
9. Note allusions in the text, particularly Ada’s references to the poets Emily Dickinson and William Carlos Williams. Find poems by these poets and read them. How are they connected to the text/for what purpose has Kingsolver included them?
10. Talk to a character. Ask the character a question, scold them, advise them, yell at them, beg them to change...whatever. Pretend like the character is someone who will listen to you.

You will need to vary your selections for each entry, although you will of course use some of the options more than once. Remember **that effort will be recognized**, as will last minute weekend products. Take your time. Start early--work on reading slowly and attentively. Plan on reading about 10 pages a day and writing responses every 3 days. This will keep you on track and give you the mental space you need to begin making more indepth, powerful connections.