

SUMMER READING JOURNAL, 2009-2010

Senior AP English Literature and Composition 1 (Asmussen)

(Thanks to Kathryn Hutchinson of Buffalo Grove High School, Buffalo Grove, IL)

INTRODUCTION: THE WELCOME, THE ASSIGNMENT, AND THE PROCESS OF METACOGNITION

Welcome to “AP English Literature and Composition” and your first assignment...

Over the summer, I would like you to keep a “Summer Reading Journal” in conjunction with your reading of *How to Read Literature Like A Professor* by Thomas C. Foster and *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne¹. This will NOT BE a personal response journal, in which you simply write down random thoughts about how you are feeling about the reading. It is much more than that. This journal is designed to help you further develop your *critical thinking and reading skills*, become aware of your growth in these skill areas, and ultimately improve your ability to discover and articulate legitimate readings of a text through the process of *metacognition*.

Metacognition is defined as the act of thinking about one’s own thinking; in other words, the self-conscious cognition in which we engage when we try to understand why we think the way we do in certain situations and environments. As you read this book, I would like you to *chart the progress of your thinking*, just as if you were an onboard ship’s captain charting navigational routes or the quality of the weather.

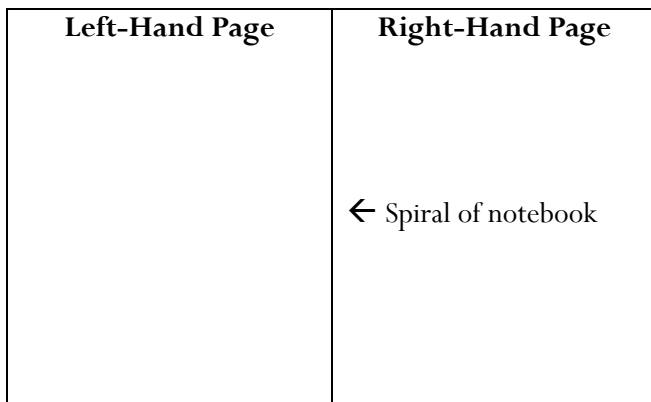
STEP ONE: THE NEW NOTEBOOK

You will need to purchase a **new notebook** designated as your journal. No exceptions to this. Psychologically speaking, this will be helpful to you. Please put your *name, the course, and the class hour* (if you know it) on the front cover in a clear hand. **Neatness in this journal is absolutely essential** and will count as credit: It is the evidence of a clear, concentrated mind. Therefore, your journal should be free of drawings and doodles, with good titles, and clear demarcations.

You will first do the reading and complete journaling for *How to Read Literature...* and then skip a page or two and do the reading and journaling for *The Scarlet Letter*. In other words, investigate both texts in **the same notebook**.

STEP TWO: FLIP THE PAGE

Flip the first page of the notebook and you will, of course, see two blank pages, side by side:



¹ You don’t have to read “Introduction: The Customs House” located at the beginning of the novel, nor do you have to read the criticism. Begin your reading/journaling with “Chapter I: The Prison-Door.”

STUDENT QUESTION: “HOW DO I ORGANIZE MY JOURNAL?”

On the left-hand pages, you will be taking notes about each text. (I’ll address specifics later on in this handout.) On the right-hand pages, you will be writing down your metacognition work (more on this later, as well).

STEP THREE: WHAT TO NOTE ON THE LEFT-HAND JOURNAL PAGES FOR *HOW TO READ LITERATURE LIKE A PROFESSOR*:

This is the page on which you will take your copious notes concerning *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. Analyze the data presented to you, chapter by chapter, and write down all of the main ideas, either as you read, or after you have read. Do not use bullet points or fragmented language. **Please write everything down in complete sentences, with strict attention to grammar and syntax.** Points will be taken off for sloppy English. Organize your journal by chapters, for example:

“Chapter 9: It’s Greek to Me”

In addition to the notes, I would like you to answer the following chapter questions² (don’t worry if you use up more than one page on these; that’s actually good – you’re investigating with purpose):

Introduction: How'd He Do That? – “Discuss a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbol or pattern.”

Chapter 1 -- Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not) – “Apply the five aspects of the “Quest” to something you have read (or viewed).”

Chapter 6 -- When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare... – “Discuss a work that you are familiar with that alludes to or reflects Shakespeare. Show how the author uses this connection thematically.”

Chapter 8 -- Hansel and Gretel – “Think of a work of literature that reflects a fairy tale. Discuss the parallels. Does it create irony or deepen appreciation?”

Chapter 10 -- It's More Than Just Rain or Snow – “Discuss the importance of weather in a specific literary work, not in terms of plot.”

Interlude -- Does He Mean That – “Reflect deeply on the issue of an author’s intentions. What do you think of what Foster says? Why?”

Chapter 11 --...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence – “Present examples of the two kinds of violence found in literature. Show how the effects are different.”

Chapter 12 -- Is That a Symbol? – “Use the process described in the chapter and investigate the symbolism of the fence in “Araby.” (Mangan's sister stands behind it.)”

Chapter 19 -- Geography Matters... – “Discuss at least three different aspects of a specific literary work that Foster would classify under ‘geography.’”

Chapter 20 -- ...So Does Season – “Think of a story or novel that mentions a specific season. Then discuss how the writer uses the season in a meaningful, traditional, or unusual way.”

² Ideas and questions from this section are from Effinger, Anglin, and Nelson, with edits by Asmussen.

Chapter 21 -- Marked for Greatness – “Figure out Harry Potter's scar. If you aren't familiar with Harry Potter, select another character with a physical imperfection and analyze its implications for characterization.”

Chapter 26 -- Is He Serious? And Other Ironies – “Select an ironic literary work and explain the multi-dimensional nature of the irony in the work.”

Chapter 27 -- A Test Case – “Read ‘The Garden Party’ by Katherine Mansfield, the short story. Complete the exercise, following the directions exactly. Then compare your writing with the three examples. How did you do? What does the essay that follows comparing Laura with Persephone add to your appreciation of Mansfield's story?”

These questions are designed to allow you to practice immediately the kind of textual analysis you will perform in the course. Whenever I ask for a “work” I am asking for an example from a short story, a novel, a play, or a film. You may use the personal pronoun “I” in your responses, but I would advise you to steer clear of it. Instead of saying, “I believe that Captain Ahab is a cruel man,” simply say, “Captain Ahab is a cruel man.” It’s actually very easy to drop the “I” with a little practice. Regarding length, think at least one paragraph of 4-6 sentences for every question.

STEP FOUR: WHAT TO NOTE ON THE LEFT-HAND JOURNAL PAGES FOR *THE SCARLET LETTER*...

For the left-hand journal pages devoted to Hawthorne’s novel, **let Professor Foster’s ideas be your guide** while you analyze in-depth. Much of the point of asking you to read/journal *The Scarlet Letter* right after reading his book is to give you **the practice of applying his teaching to an actual text**. Here is where you will do your best to put the following, organized appropriately, for each chapter:

- Chapter Summaries: *Brief but meaningful* summary of the *plot*
- Character Breakdowns: *Detailed* descriptions and investigations of the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and motivations of the *characters*
- Setting Analysis: *Detailed* descriptions and investigations into what functions the *setting* serves
- Symbol Analysis: *Detailed* investigations into the many *symbols* of the novel
- Theme Analysis: *Detailed* investigations into the many *themes* of the novel

STEP FIVE: WHAT TO NOTE ON THE RIGHT-HAND PAGE FOR BOTH TEXTS:

Here is where the *metacognition* part comes in. You will write about the following in close, specific detail as it happens to you:

1. Times when you note changes in the text or how you are reading it. E.g., When...
 - a. You see something you didn’t see before.
 - b. You recognize an ‘idea pattern’ – i.e., the images start to overlap or reappear, some gestures or phrases reoccur, or some details seem associated with one another.
 - c. You discover that you were misreading.
 - d. The writer introduces a new context or a new perspective.
2. Times when you are surprised or puzzled. E.g., When...
 - a. Something just doesn’t fit. Explain clearly why this is so.
 - b. Things do not make sense. Pose explicitly the question you have.
3. Details that seem important and make you look again. And again.
4. Author’s style devices you notice – how do they enhance the sense of what the author says?

5. Anything else that happens to you, mentally, as you slowly read and understand.

Again, as always when writing in your journal, **use complete sentences**. This will force you to draw out your thoughts fully. Be explicit about your thoughts – cite text and page numbers.

The journal will seem less like an intrusion if you use it in a way that fits naturally with your reading. For some of you, this will mean keeping a pen in hand at all times and jotting as you read. For others, this might mean reading a chapter or a chunk of pages, and then reflecting and writing on what you read. Or it may be a combination of both methods. Keep in mind:

Good readers of good literature stop and reflect as they read!

SOME ADVICE...

1) As for the length of journal notes and entries: I respect students who take the time to do proper thinking and writing. This kind of effort is never shallow or brief. Dig deeply.

2) If you skim the books and do only so-so journaling, I will know and so, of course, your grade will suffer. More important, you'll be hobbling yourself with respect to the rest of the year, not to mention wasting your summer time. Start learning well *now* and put yourself ahead of the curve. If you do, you will thank yourself for it later, especially around the time of the AP Exam. Trust me.

3) The use of Spark Notes, Cliffs Notes, or any other “study guide” service, is prohibited... now and for the entire year. This is plagiarism. This is cheating. Any student caught cheating in any way will be guilty of academic misconduct and will be dealt with according to school policy.

4) Begin this project early in the summer. There is much thoughtful work to be done. Don't wait till summer's end. If you do, you're only making things unnecessarily hard for yourself, and continuing poor habits of mind that will severely impact your education in the years to come. Just sit down and begin working, early. Don't complain. Don't stress. Just do.

5) The journal and the reading of both texts will be due Friday, August 28, 2009. If you have registered late for the course, and cannot complete the assignment by the due date, e-mail me, and make sure your counselor e-mails me, as well. I will need *proof* of your registration time. If valid, you'll have till the end of the first quarter.

5) If you have questions or problems, please e-mail me at: ryan.asmussen@d214.org. Please keep your questions simple and to the point. I'll help you as soon as I'm able...

THANKS AND GOOD LUCK. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN AUGUST...