

A.P. Literature and Composition  
Summer Engagement

Welcome to A.P. Lit! I'm excited to be able to work with you next year! I've spent quite a bit of time thinking about how summer "homework" could be more engaging, different, and, honestly, fun, while still giving me some baseline information about you. Last year, the students in A.P. Lit were the first to pilot the new format, and they loved it! So, we're going to do it again! I follow a teacher from Georgia, Susan Barber, whose thinking aligns quite a bit with mine, and I have "borrowed" heavily from her approach to summer work. Much of what you see here follows her framework and ideas (gotta give credit where credit is due!).

**Part 1--**

Choose **one** book from the following list to read over the course of this summer.

*East of Eden* - John Steinbeck

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* – Khaled Hosseini

*The Scarlet Letter* - Nathaniel Hawthorne

*Parable of the Sower* – Octavia Butler

*Exit West* – Mohsin Hamid

*The Orchardist*-Amanda Coplin (This novel contains references, while not graphic, to child abuse, which some readers may find challenging.)

*Mink River* - Brian Doyle

*Little Bee* – Chris Cleave

*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* – Junot Diaz

*Midnight's Children* – Salman Rushdie

Anything by Toni Morrison

Please tell me what you read and what you think about it in your **introduction letter**. Which leads me to...

**Part 2—**

**Write a Letter to Me**

Read the attached letter from me to you, then write a letter to me in response. You'll deliver it to me the first week of school. Directions are in my letter (below).

**Part 3—**

**Summer Journal**

Reading and writing are rooted in experience. Having a broad range of experiences is important to understanding the many ideas explored in the works we read. In addition, a large part of this class is about helping you find your writing voice. Finding your voice takes time.

In preparation, I would like for you to spend some time experiencing new things, reflecting, and writing. You should be prepared to submit your journal no later than the end of the first two weeks of school. Be yourself when you write. Don't try to be too serious or academic. Be funny. Be sarcastic. Be vulnerable. Be real. Be you.

**Requirements:**

- 15 journal entries reflecting on your day or a portion of your day. Hopefully your journal will be much more (and a little less) than a diary. I am not interested in your daily routine or what you had for lunch. If, on the other hand, you wish to record your dreams last night or a rough draft of a poem or an interesting quote from a friend, please utilize your journal. Each entry should be about a page in length.

- A minimum five entries (but not limited to) of the entries should be based on the following activities. **Please label these according to the activity number.**

### Activity list

1. Attend a summer festival. There are lots in the Portland area! Maybe the Waterfront Blues Festival in July, the Chamber Music Northwest Summer Festival on the lawn of Reed College, or the Dahlia Festival in August on Swan Island. And don't forget the Newberg Old Fashioned Days!
2. Go to a museum or a historic attraction. Have you ever actually been into the Hoover-Minthorn House Museum on River Street? I haven't! But that's an option. There is also OMSI, or The Japanese Garden (so peaceful!), among other options in the area.
3. Spend a day without electronics (no cell phones, ipods, TVs, etc). **I would love for everyone to try this.** I'm going to!!!
4. Explore a neighborhood in Portland, or explore a small neighboring town. Maybe have a meal on Hawthorne, or take a walk through Mt. Tabor. Spend some time on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in McMinnville, or go antiquing in Aurora.
5. Go for a hike. We have Champoeg close by, but you might consider the Banks-Vernonia Trail, anything out on the Gorge, or maybe reserve a guided tour through the Columbia Hills State Park in Washington to see the She Who Watches petroglyph, which is an amazing experience.
6. Talk with a grandparent or older adult about life in their younger years. Count this as two entries if you record it on StoryCorps. <https://storycorps.org>
7. Go tent camping.
8. Attend the theatre (not the movie theater) to see a live production.
9. Eat a meal from a foreign culture.
10. Spend some time exploring Powell's Books. Consider attending an author event.
11. Volunteer to work at a shelter, or an organization preparing or delivering food.
12. Prepare a meal for your family and then enjoy it with them.
13. Buy some fruit at a local farmer's market then bake a cake or cobbler.
14. Attend a service or interview a person of a different religion.
15. Repair or build something or do some kind of maintenance (e.g.: changing oil, refinishing furniture).
16. Plan a trip – map out the route, find places to stay, and points of interest to visit, budget.
17. Spend an evening playing board games or cards with your family or friends.
18. Visit a cemetery and read the headstones. Consider the history of family, community, state, and nation embodied in these headstones. Reflect on your experiences. Creepy, but fun.
19. Visit a quiet spot on a beach, in the high desert, by a stream, or by a lake. Spend an hour in thought and record your thoughts in a journal or notebook.
20. Do something you don't normally do; the point is to try new things in order to experience the world through a different lens. Be safe, be smart, have fun.

### Will I read your journal?

I will only read with your permission. I will, of course, want to read a page or so about each of your summer activities and readings, but you are free to photocopy or transcribe these or designate sections of your journals as personal.

The journal does not have to be something fancy. You can use regular pieces of paper and just staple them if you'd like, but I'd love to encourage you to think about continuing your journaling throughout this year of school, to make it a habit. It can only help you. So maybe you want a special journal.

Writing more in your journal will benefit YOU. Being diligent in your journaling efforts offers a reward – being more in tune with your writing style and voice. Consistent writing improves your writing skills. Happy journaling!

In summary:

You'll hand in two things in September: the letter you've written to me, and a journal.

Hello, and welcome to A.P. Lit!

This year is significant as you start your transition to life after high school, and I count it a privilege to share this time with you. My hope is that this class will go far beyond the standards required by the College Board and the state of Oregon, and instead become a place where we support each other to grapple and learn in order to make the most of your year, especially if you're a senior!

We will spend a lot of time in this class reading a variety of texts - old, new, poetry, prose - and writing about these texts. The reading and writing are secondary to the most important work that we will be doing all year - learning how to become better thinkers and considering new thoughts and ideas that will help us grow. I use first person pronouns here because I, like you, will be growing and learning alongside you and often from you. By opening our hearts to poetry and prose, and our minds to new ideas found in them or other classmates' thoughts about them, we will finish the year with a sense of transformation. This is the real goal of learning.

We continue to live and go to school in interesting times. I am always rethinking my practices, opening myself to new ideas, and growing as a person. I'm specifically reconsidering my grading practices, the value of a class beyond the assignments, and the use of technology. I would ask that you open your mind to new ideas as well and think about how you best learn and stay engaged; we will discuss these topics the first week of school.

What should you know about me? I'm a reflective and hopeful person, a problem-solver, and a lover of the written word. I am passionate about teaching and the kids with whom I work. This is my 26<sup>th</sup> year at Newberg High School, my alma mater. I'm an avid and active reader, and a prolific journaler (I currently keep a bullet journal, a creative writing journal, a dream journal, a book and film journal, and a regular ol' journal journal). On weekends, I hang out with my dogs, Crispin and Bibi, my daughter, Celeste, and my family. Mostly, I'm a homebody; it's where I recharge.

Now it's your turn. I would like for you to write a letter to me telling me about yourself, and reflecting on your summer reading. In addition to that I'd like you to read three of my favorite poems: "In A Dark Time", by Theodore Roethke, "Small Kindnesses", by Danusha Lameris, and "What Do Poems *Do*?", by Brian Doyle. (They're all online) Read and think about these poems deeply, and then, when you write your letter, include your thoughts on ONE of these poems. I'm interested in your thinking.

In the first week of school, we'll turn in both the letter and the journals. I am so looking forward to learning with you this year!

Rooting for you!  
Gail Grobey

