To: Potential AP English Literature and Composition students

From: Mrs. DiMatteo, HS117/tiffany.dimatteo@yorkprepsc.org/tndimatteo@gmail.com

Greetings!

“Summer reading” carries with it a strong burden of unpleasant hours wasted on unnecessary schoolwork. However, I hope that this summer reading is seen as…well, at least necessary. And I hope it’s not unpleasant!

To prepare for AP English, the first book you will read is *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. This non-fiction work by a professor at the University of Michigan shows how authors use plot, character, and symbol archetypes to not only create meaning, but also to connect to other famous works. It is an excellent introduction to the study and analysis of literature at a collegiate level. There are 26 chapters; 1-2 chapters a day and you should be done by the end of June. ☺

Next, you will read two well-known literary works and apply the knowledge you gained from reading Foster’s book in your analysis. *Things Fall Apart* is a fictionalized account of the colonial period in Nigeria (late 19th-early 20th centuries). The narrator throws the reader directly into the Igbo culture; this is done purposefully. Try to come to the novel with as little of your own cultural baggage as possible—in other words, withhold judgment of the characters and their culture as best you can. (This can be difficult.) The second piece is a dramatic play: *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen. Consider the overlapping and disparate literary elements that each writer uses to draw the audience into his text. AFTER reading, you may want to watch a performance as an interpretation. (There’s a good one available here, broken into ten parts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m81oiq5yvCc>)

Please be aware that for an AP level class, the reading is only half of the work. Your ability to interpret and analyze is at least as important as having read the texts. To be ready for the beginning of school and the class, you must be willing to wrestle with what the text means and how it means—and thus completing the written assignments as well as the reading. *I fully expect for all reading and assignments to be done and ready to be submitted on the first day of school.*

Now is as good a time as any to emphasize my desire to work with **you**—not CliffsNotes or Sparknotes or Book Rags or any other site that analyzes literature for you. It’s okay if you don’t understand; asking questions and making personal connections is how we learn. To read or copy from an outside source shows poor character, laziness, and disrespect for the work of your peers and me.

I really am available to answer questions or to even meet for a soda and a discussion, if you are so inclined. I want you to be successful! Let me know if I can help.

Sincerely,

Tiffany DiMatteo, MT

**REQUIRED SUMMER READING AND ASSIGNMENTS**

\*\*Even if you have the PDFs and not the books, I encourage (not require) you to print and annotate the texts. It will be a method we use frequently throughout the year and you could start practicing now!

1. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

* available at BAM, Amazon, and here: <http://www.sparkascreen.com/files/APFiles/HowToReadLiteratureLikeAProfessor.pdf>
* READ THIS FIRST! (Not this sentence, this book.)
* For chapters 1-26, write the title of the chapter and take (at least) five notes of significance. Bullet points are fine, but it must be in your own words. Write 1-2 sentences that summarize the significance of that chapter. For ch. 27, “A Test Case,” read the story “A Garden Party” and answer the two questions (p. 265 in text/p. 138 in PDF) posed by Foster—a good response will be 1-2 pages. Then read the rest of the chapter and write a paragraph response afterwards.
* TOTAL: reading + chapter summaries + “Test Case” response

2. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

* available at BAM or Amazon
* There are three parts. After each part, write a personal response of 2 pages. Incorporate at least three quotes from the text in your reflection.
* After completing the novel, choose one element/idea from *HTRLLAP* to apply to *Things Fall Apart*. Write a 2-3 page essay with quotes/specific text evidence.
* TOTAL: reading + 3 personal responses + essay

3*. A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen

* available at BAM, Amazon, and here: <http://tinyurl.com/ktvt3ku>
* There are three acts. After each part, write a personal response of 2 pages. Incorporate at least three quotes from the text in your reflection.
* After completing the novel, choose one element from *HTRLLAP* to apply to *A Doll’s House*. Write a 2-3 page essay with quotes/specific text evidence.
* TOTAL: reading + 3 personal responses + essay

Recommended summer reading:

*\*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens *\*In the Lake of the Woods* by Tim O’Brien

*\*Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

\*Okay, I’m sure that by this point on this sheet of paper you do not like me and are certainly not interested in any of my summer reading recommendations. But hear me out! If you haven’t ever read Dickens (or more than *A Christmas Carol*) you should read at least one and *Great Expectations* is a…great…choice. Seriously, though. It’s got everything.

\**In the Lake of the Woods* is one of my top five of all time. It has always been my go-to summer reading book because I love reading it in the summer and I love talking to students about it. I felt compelled to go in a different direction this year, but I would be so impressed if you walked in on August 18 and gave me your own theory on John Wade and what happens at the lake. (Are you interested yet?)

\*Finally, Ang Lee made a gorgeous film version of *Life of Pi*, but the book is even more gorgeous, with depth and power and symbolism for days.

**SIGN AND RETURN TO ME BY FRIDAY, MAY 30!**

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I have received and understand the AP summer reading assignments. I will be prepared with all work completed and ready to turn in on August 18, 2014.

PARENT SIGNATURE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT SIGNATURE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*Complete the Remind 101 signup on the reverse side! I can check in with you and you can respond to me via email at tiffany.dimatteo@yorkprepsc.org OR tndimatteo@gmail.com.

Thanks! I am looking forward to a GREAT year with you!