LCMR AP Literature Summer Reading Essay Choices (Summer 2010)

As the dog days of summer slowly wind down and we awaken to the first cool morning, I have to direct you to the near future, the start of your senior year. I changed plans a bit to allow a more gradual transition back to school. This essay will now be due on Friday, September 10, 2010. However we will hit the ground running, so you will have other homework to open the school year. Get started now. Each book will have one or two essay below it. If there are two you need only choose one. Remember, I am expecting AP level essays that use the book as a reference. Since this is the first paper, you may treat it as a timed writing and not specifically cite, but reference the book specifically enough that I know you not only read it, but understood enough to process and synthesize. Please, dazzle me with your brilliance. But keep the responses pithy.

The Things They Carried

2004. Critic Roland Barthes has said, "Literature is the question minus the answer." Choose a novel, or play, and, considering Barthes' observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers answers. Explain how the author's treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

2004, Form B. The most important themes in literature are sometimes developed in scenes in which a death or deaths take place. Choose a novel or play and write a well-organized essay in which you show how a specific death scene helps to illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Invisible Man

2007. In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present activities, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

2008. In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of a minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil for the main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

The Handmaid's Tale

2003. According to critic Northrop Frye, "Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them,

great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divisive lightning." Select a novel or play in which a tragic figure functions as an instrument of the suffering of others. Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.
2003, Form B. Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures -- national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional. Such collisions can call a character's sense of identity into question. Select a novel or play in which a character responds to such a cultural collision. Then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response and explain its relevance to the work as a whole.

To the Lighthouse

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Their Eyes were Watching God

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Atonement

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Kafka on the Shore

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main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of a minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil for the main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

The Namesake

2009.A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself.
In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning.
Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work
and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Love Medicine

1995. Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. Choose a novel or a play in which such a character plays a significant role and show how that character's alienation reveals the surrounding society's assumptions or moral values.

A Prayer for Owen Meany

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2010. Palestinian American literary theorist and cultural critic Edward Said has written that “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.” Yet Said has also said that exile can become “a potent, even enriching” experience. Select a novel, play, or epic in which a character experiences such a rift and becomes cut off from “home,” whether that home is the character’s birthplace, family, homeland, or other special place. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the character’s experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

What is the What?

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2006. Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole.

Wuthering Heights

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