



Welcome to AP English Literature. I'm looking forward to getting reacquainted with many of you and meeting others for the first time. It's going to be a great year. Below you'll find your two-part summer assignment. Read through the assignment carefully. Parts One and Two are required. Part Three is optional. All the work outlined below must be completed by day one—yes, **day one**—of class. **It's a crucial component of the course as well as a prerequisite for remaining in it.**



## Part One: Read and write about a novel of your choosing.

Choose one of the following novels to read over the summer. If there's a specific edition I'd like you to use, I've provided a hyperlink; if you see no hyperlink, you may use any edition as long as it's a hard copy. No e-books. Choose a book that sparks your interest. Go to a bookstore and take several for a spin by reading a section. Choose wisely. You want a companionable text, one that speaks to you, one with which you're willing to spend a great deal of time.

**A note about the content of the novels:** Taking cues from past AP exams and my experience teaching these texts, I believe everything on this list has great educational and moral value; however, I know every family is different when it comes to media content. If you and/or your parents need guidance about the content of a book, I recommend using [this site](#) and/or others like it. It's up to you as a young adult, in conjunction with your mom or your dad or whoever takes care of you, to make informed decisions about the appropriateness of what it is you're reading. I'm putting a variety of texts in front of you as options, respecting everyone's views on what is and is not appropriate content. If your family would prefer you didn't read a certain book, don't choose it; if you want to read it and think you're capable of considering the material in a mature and thoughtful way, choose it. Take personal responsibility. Make informed choices. [Then, by June 15, let me know which book you're reading.](#) I'm available in person to discuss your chosen text before the end of May and by e-mail throughout the summer at [mkubus@strakejesuit.org](mailto:mkubus@strakejesuit.org).

**NB:** You may NOT read a work you've already read in or outside of a previous class. Many of you I already know, and so I already know what you have and have not already read from this list; some of you I do not know, but I have ways of knowing what you have and have not already read from this list. Got it? You'll do the right thing, but if I find out you haven't, plan to redo the assignment.

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*  
 Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*  
 Ian McEwan, *Atonement*  
 Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*  
 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*  
 Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock*  
 Fyodor Dostoevsky, [Crime and Punishment](#)  
 Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*  
 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*  
 Mikhail Lermontov, [A Hero of Our Time](#)  
 Dante Alighieri, [Inferno](#)  
 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*  
 Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*

Herman Melville, [Moby-Dick](#)  
 Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*  
 Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*  
 Jane Austen, *Persuasion*  
 Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*  
 Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*  
 Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*  
 Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*  
 Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*  
 Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*  
 Naguib Mahfouz, [The Thief and the Dogs](#)  
 Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*  
 Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

Once you've chosen a book, begin reading, closely reading, and making notes, defining some element of the text, a theme perhaps, a recurring motif, a character's development, and following it through the text, keeping a list of annotated passages that you eventually categorize. Read in preparation for writing your own essay.

### Writing the essay

On day one of class you will present a typed essay of at least 1,000 words and at least five paragraphs, in [proper MLA style](#). I want a gauge of your reading, thinking, and writing skill. I'm interested in what you think and how you write. There're no right or wrong answers here. English isn't calculus or physics. English allows varied responses, even contradictory ones, to the same topic and rewards gutsy, informed [exploration](#). So be informed and learn to have confidence in your own understanding and expression. The best advice? Say what you think. Follow your ideas. Invest in them. Care about them. Believe in them.

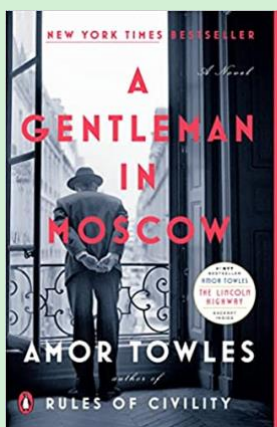
Consult no source other than the novel, a dictionary, the provided links, and [my writing center](#). **Do no Googling, and do no chat-botting.** Googling and chat-botting for knowledge or insights is a coward's crutch and puts you at risk of dishonor and [plagiarism](#). Remember, the penalty for plagiarism is severe: an F or a 0 on the assignment, depending on the severity of the offense. But the penalty for dishonor is still more severe: your own knowledge of your wrong. Conscience has sharp teeth.

Once you've chosen a topic, work through the text to find all the *best* evidence. *Study* those examples to better understand the topic through the evidence and to test your own argument. Your essay will state a [clear thesis](#); include [introductory](#) and [closing](#) paragraphs; and make the case for its thesis in developing paragraphs that follow [standard structure](#) and make [arguments](#) with quotations from the novel and your analysis of them. Cite those quotations in proper MLA style and [blend them properly](#). Make [this essay](#) your model and a benchmark of the **minimum** kind and quality of work expected.

*I'm looking for spark in your thinking and in your writing. While the obvious always matters, it doesn't always matter in obvious ways. Your essay should be lively and engaging in its thought and its style. Writing, no matter the type, is an imaginative and creative enterprise, a way to discover and understand—and therefore to enjoy. Never forget that. Enjoy yourself as you write.*

The essay will be a major-grade essay, one you will revise for another major grade once we review essay-writing basics. It is also subject to my [late penalty policy](#).

## Part Two: Read Amor Towles' novel *A Gentleman in Moscow*.



[ISBN 9780143110439](#). Use this link and/or number to purchase your book.

As you read *A Gentleman in Moscow*, follow your *emotional reactions* to each character, especially Rostov, asking *why* you respond to them as you do and then seeking to understand what in the novel—or in you—*causes* your reactions. Your reactions to them might evolve and might be emotional or intellectual. Reading isn't just about the head; it's also about the heart. Underline or highlight the passages that *show* you your responses. Comment on how they do. What is it in them? A word? An image? Some figurative language? You're looking to follow the evidence that *shows* you your response.

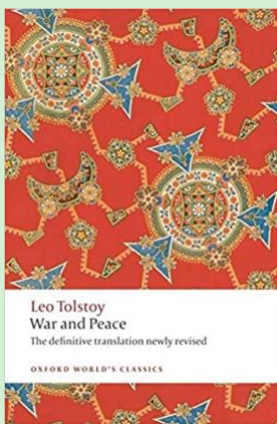
You're reading a novel of meaty and, I hope, engaging themes. So, annotate your text, always with an eye to identifying and understanding those themes. You might especially focus on the following 2 key questions:

What, if anything, makes Count Rostov heroic?

What is the role of tradition in society and in the individual, according to the novel?

We'll spend the first cycle of the semester discussing Towles' book together, reviewing basic elements of fiction, and discovering new ways to approach the reading of a novel. Know the novel well, not just the big ideas but the details that build those ideas. In August, you will demonstrate your reading in some way. Many students call that way a quiz.

## **\*\*OPTIONAL\*\*** Part Three: Read Book One of *War and Peace*, pages 3-313.



[ISBN 9780199232765](#). Use this link and/or number to purchase your book. It is important that you buy **only this translation**. In our meetings, we'll want to refer to specific passages. We need the same page numbers throughout the year. Trust me, please.

It seems even Tolstoy didn't quite know what *War and Peace* is: "It is not a novel," he said, "still less an epic poem, still less a historical chronicle. *War and Peace* is what the author wanted and was able to express, in the form in which it is expressed." And yet, it's the first title we think of when we think of some of the greatest or most famous novels ever written. Whatever *War and Peace* is, it's innovative: it plays with multiple languages, moves from battlefields to palaces to country estates, combines historical figures like Napoleon and Kutuzov with fictional characters like Bolkonsky and Rostov, folds in bloody battles to scenes of great personal strife and triumph, and changes narrators at will. That's innovation. Whatever *War and Peace* is, it's human: Tolstoy writes no archetypes, but people; no heroes, but soldiers; no villains, but sinners; no pillars of grace, but kind-hearted, flawed characters. That's human.

And whatever *War and Peace* is, it's big: With almost 600—yes, 600—named characters, more than 1300 pages, multiple shifts in narrative voice, oscillations between scenes of aristocratic drama and the history of the Napoleonic Wars and some of Tolstoy's personal philosophy, it's no wonder Henry James famously called *War and Peace* "a big, loose, baggy monster." Maybe so, but it tells an extraordinary story, and a small group of us—I sincerely hope—will read that story together this year.

## AP English Literature and Composition, Summer Assignment 2023

How, you ask? Getting a head start over the summer helps, so you'll read just Book One, pages 3-313, by the first week of class in August. Then, after we find a time that works for everyone to meet, we'll schedule time after school to begin the first meeting of the "*War and Peace* Book Club." Once a month, we'll have a meeting to discuss the next section of the novel, spending a few consecutive days after school with conversation, food, and drink. I hope it'll be something you really enjoy. If you're interested in making this commitment, opt in on the form where you indicated your chosen novel. We will need at least 10 students to opt in to make this work. If it does not fill, I'll let those students who opted in know by June 16<sup>th</sup>. Please know that if you opt in, you're committing to reading the novel, and I'm going to hold you to your commitment.

Don't let the obstacles of the novel prevent you from working through it. Look, I get it: the names are hard, and like I said, there are a lot of them. And look, I get it: Looking at the footnotes to translate the French is annoying. And look, I get it: there are some parts that are just plain dull. It's okay. Sometimes long-form fiction will be like that. But you'll do your work, anyway, like the great student and person you are. There are many reasons to set this book down and move on with your life, but there are more reasons—some you may not understand for a few years—to continue working your way through. It's a work of art filled with beautiful characters, intricately woven threads of plot, thrilling scenes, compelling relationships, people to root for and against. The natural barriers of the novel are nothing compared to the reward on the other side. You'll be just fine—better than fine, really. And you'll be reading in a community of like-minded readers with great opinions to encourage you through it.