



AP Literature and Composition Summer Reading 2025

Summer Reading Objective:

To continue to cultivate literacy, a respect and love of literature, academic curiosity, and independent, critical thinking throughout the summer months.

Overview:

- Students taking the AP Literature and Composition course in '25-'26 must read:
 - Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* **and**
 - Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*
- Ensure you buy a clean, paper copy of both books. No digital books are accepted, as you will only be allowed to use a hard copy of each text on the timed writing happening the second day of class.
- Read and annotate your books over the summer. (See the next two pages for guidance on strong annotation practices and a visual example of annotating.)
- As noted above, be ready for a timed writing on the second day of class.
 - Note: you will not have the prompt in advance, but if you've read both texts and have annotated each with intention, you will be able to demonstrate mastery and achieve success on the timed writing.

Academic Honesty:

You must read and annotate your books, in their entirety, for yourself. You can and are encouraged to discuss the books with others, but only after you've independently read the books yourself. Do not use an online study guide or any other resource (including but not limited to LLMs and AI) as a substitute for reading.

Note to Parents:

Literature calls us to attend to the human experience, the beautiful and good along with the disquieting and sorrowful. As such, literature often explores difficult topics, topics that can cause discomfort. The intention of these book selections is to advance the school's mission, and I aim to provide students a safe, structured space to explore the topics these works take up and address. To that end, I encourage you to read these texts alongside your student and communicate with him about this material. Thank you, in advance, for your partnership in this, and I look forward to a meaningful and transformative year together!

What Does It Mean to Annotate a Text?

Annotating and highlighting can be a record of a reader's experience with the text. This practice can help a serious reader keep track of patterns, contrasts, plot events, character development, and myriad other moves a text makes. It can assist a student in a Socratic Seminar, in drafting a paper, or in other instances which require the use of quotations to support claims and ideas. Students who learn and adopt this practice become active readers and recursive thinkers who notice patterns, nuances, and complexities almost effortlessly as they absorb the text.

Annotating and highlighting is similar to having an intellectual conversation with the text. This practice allows the active reader to ask questions, comment on meaning, and mark events and passages to revisit later. The reader and text are creating meaning together, especially if the reader annotates with questions and comments. And, one advantage of marking the actual text is that you will never lose your notes. Your thoughts will always be readily available to you if you write them down.

Students, then, should practice annotating and highlighting in a text. As you refine this practice, creating a meaningful system that works for you, consider how some of the following could be helpful:

- Make brief notes at the top of the page to mark important plot events.
- Circle or highlight words that are unfamiliar or unusual, considering what the words mean through the way they're used.
 - Then evaluate your guesses by discussing the words with strong readers and consulting a dictionary (the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a very strong resource).
- When new characters are introduced, highlight and note phrases the text uses to describe them.
- Highlight words, images, and details that seem to form a pattern across the text.
 - Water, light, clocks, windows, dark, flowers, fire, for example, if used in a recurring pattern can indicate a thematic idea. Highlight any related strands you notice, and observe the rest of the text closely to see if the author uses other linked words, images, or details to clarify what s/he means with the pattern.
- Highlight passages you think may be symbolic, representing or pointing to something else.
- As you mark key ideas, note briefly your reflections about them.
- Mark sentence structure that you notice, including structures that are long and short, and make note of its effect.
 - Generally speaking, the shorter the sentence, the more striking the effect.
- When you get an idea while reading the text, immediately note it in the margin.
 - ***You may never think of the idea again, so write it down.***
- If you have a question about something in the book, passage, or poem, write it on the page when it first occurs to you.
 - All questions are important, including, "What does this mean?"
- Use a system of notes and markings that works for you, including but not limited to stars, parentheses, brackets, checks, and bullets, especially for items you want to come back to later.
 - Understand, though, that simply highlighting or underlining text without accompanying commentary is meaningless.
- Above all: don't mark too much, because if you mark *everything*, nothing will stand out when you come back to it.

Visual Example: Annotated Page

setting
maybe important ideas

THE ROAD

recurring ideas?
silence and heart
crackers
sausage
cocoa

In the morning they pressed on. It was very cold. Toward the afternoon it began to snow again and they made camp early and crouched under the leanto of the tarp and watched the snow fall in the fire. By morning there was several inches of new snow on the ground but the snow had stopped and it was so quiet they could all but hear their hearts. He piled wood on the coals and fanned the fire to life and trudged out through the drifts to dig out the cart. He sorted through the cans and went back and they sat by the fire and ate the last of their crackers and a tin of sausage. In a pocket of his knapsack he'd found a last half packet of cocoa and he fixed it for the boy and then poured his own cup with hot water and sat blowing at the rim.

cold

hot

biblical meaning?

father sacrificing for son

You promised not to do that, the boy said.

What?

You know what, Papa.

He poured the hot water back into the pan and took the boy's cup and poured some of the cocoa into his own and then handed it back.

I have to watch you all the time, the boy said.

I know.

* * If you break little promises you'll break big ones. That's what you said.

I know. But I wont.

But, how do we know? . . .

do I agree with this claim?

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