



AP ENGLISH LITERATURE – SUMMER 2010 (11th grade) LITERARY ANALYSIS OF A CONTEMPORARY NOVEL

This assignment is in addition to the summer reading required for all upper school classes.

Assignment: Read one of the following contemporary novels and answer the questions that follow. Answers are due on the first day of class in September.

Contemporary Novels

Dorris, Michael. *Yellow Raft on Blue Water*

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Gutterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*

Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible*

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried* or *Going After Cacciato*

Proulx, Annie. *The Shipping News*

Please write a lengthy paragraph or two on **each** of the following questions. It is acceptable not to answer all of the questions in each section, but you should be able to use this paper as a guide for an AP question on this novel. At the top of the paper, please state the TITLE and AUTHOR of the novel you have chosen. The total report should not exceed four double-spaced typed pages.

- 1. THE AUTHOR AND HIS/HER TIMES:** Born/died; biographical background important to understanding the novel; important family, community, national and world events that influenced author and novel; other artistic or literary influences; critical response and literary standing during lifetime and posthumously. (Check reviews, Wikipedia, etc.) This can be brief.
- 2. FORM, STRUCTURE, AND PLOT:** How is the novel organized? Length? Chapters? Discuss techniques such as flashbacks or dream sequences, stream of consciousness, chronological order of event, foreshadowing, parallel events, multiple complex, or simple plot. How much time is covered? Compare and contrast beginning and ending.
- 3. POINT OF VIEW (Narrative Perspective):** Is the novel written from the first person ("I"), second person ("you," very rare), or third person (he/she)? Is it a reminiscence or recent perspective, written in the present tense or the past tense? If in the first person, is he/she the protagonist or an observer? If in the third, is he/she omniscient (knowing everything), limited omniscient (knowing one character most often) or objective (no subjective commentary by the narrator, but limited omniscient)?

4. CHARACTERS: General comments: Are the characters flat or round? Static or dynamic? Believable? How are they revealed? How complex? How many? Who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist? What is the role of minor characters? Describe 2-4 central characters: name, age, three descriptive adjectives, appearance, personality, function in novel, significance of name, a quote that reveals the character with an explanation of what the quote reveals.

5. SETTING: Where and when does this novel occur? How is the environment described? Are there any symbolic meanings in the settings? How does the author use setting? What atmosphere is created by the setting and how important is the setting to the novel?

6. TONE: What is the author's attitude toward subject, characters, and reader? Is it playful, serious, angry, ironic, formal, somber, satiric, or something else? Discuss the author's tone and observe how the author creates it through plot, diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative devices. Use direct quotations from text to support observations.

7. THEME: The theme refers to the book's controlling idea or central insight. Identify the book's central theme. Express as a statement with subject and predicate, not as a word or phrase (i.e. Wrong: "loyalty", or "loyalty to country"; Right: "Envy is futile.") Discuss author's intention.

8. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Did you enjoy the novel? Strength, weaknesses, lingering questions? Does it relate to other books you have read?

