

AP English Literature and Composition

Summer Assignment

For this year's summer assignment, you will be reading and analyzing three short stories. These stories introduce the important aspects of literary analysis and the ability to write effectively about that analysis; in other words, this assignment is an initial foray into the fundamental requirements of the class.

The three short stories you need to read are:

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

Ray Bradbury's "August 2002"

and Tobias Wolff's "Nightingale."

The stories will be available on our AP Lit Canvas website.

Each story will be used to explore an author's tool and how he or she uses it to develop a thematic idea, the author's purpose. Indeed, this combination forms the backbone of the AP Literature test, which consistently asks students to identify how an author utilizes a literary tool (character, setting, narration, etc.) to create meaning (big idea- theme) in the story.

So, here we go!

- 1) Read the three stories and carefully annotate them. Look for tonal words, figurative language, evocative sections of text that help you understand what is happening in the story and the point(s) the author is making. Make notes in the margins: ask questions, identify tone, mood, phrases that describe character, setting, narration techniques, plot events, figurative language). Jot down your interpretations.
- 2) Start your formal analysis with Chopin's story.
 - a. Identify four sections of text that suggest the protagonist's feelings about her life as a married woman in her era.
 - b. Explain, briefly, what these four sections of text reveal about her perspective and motives (*hint: why does she lock herself in her room?*)
 - c. Evaluate your textual evidence; which are the strongest? That is, which lead you most directly to author's purpose (the point about life Chopin is making in her story)?
 - d. Identify the plot order Chopin uses in her story; briefly summarize, focusing on cause and effect, what happens in the story. How does Chopin's plot shape the story? What point might Chopin be positing with the ending of her story?
 - e. Plot, of course, revolves around conflict. Identify the central conflict of the story. How does this conflict affect your understanding of Chopin's meaning?
 - f. Figurative language, most notably symbolism and irony, are vital tools of an author. Identify an important symbol in the story. What is it and what does it symbolize? Also note an important use of irony in the story. What is the point of the irony?

- g. Continue your analysis in a second well-written paragraph in which you examine how Chopin uses the literary elements of either character or plot, including conflict to develop the meaning of her work (a theme of the story).**
- 3) Continue your formal analysis with Bradbury's delightfully political story, turning your analytical eye to setting. A practical, but critical note: literature is not written in a void; it comes from the time and place in which the author lived. I strongly recommend you look up Bradbury; when did he live? Where did he live? What important world events might have shaped his consciousness?
- Identify four sections of text that establish the setting of the story. Because mood and setting are intimately connected, note the mood that is conveyed through the setting.
 - Explain, briefly, what these four sections of text reveal about the setting. Evaluate your textual evidence; which are the strongest? That is, which lead you most directly to author's purpose (the point about his life Bradbury is making in his story)?
 - Analyze: in what ways are the setting in time and space essential ingredients of Bradbury's story? (*Hint: note the three different times presented in the story. Is one of these perspectives more correct? Why?*)
 - In this story, setting and symbolism work hand in hand. Explore this idea. How is Bradbury using setting symbolically? How might this be connected to a bigger idea he is presenting in his story – his meaning?
 - Go beyond the setting when exploring Bradbury's use of symbolism. Could the characters also have symbolic resonance?
 - In a third in a well-written paragraph analyze how Bradbury uses the literary element of setting to posit the meaning of the work as a whole (the theme). This paragraph may venture into symbolism and mood as well.**
- 4) Conclude your formal analysis by exploring Tobias Wolff's "Nightingale," a problematic story that uses a traditional narration technique to present a befuddled protagonist. What point about societal expectations, dare I say rules, is the author's making?
- Narrators or speakers relate accounts to readers and establish a relationship between the text and the reader. Identify four sections of text that establish Wolff's chosen narration technique. What POV is he using in his story?
 - Explore the use of POV. Why do you think he chose it? In what way does it help him build his story and the meaning of the story?
 - Tone, which goes hand in hand with narration is the speaker's attitude toward the subject. Identify two sections of texts that suggest the tone of the story. Use tonal words to identify that tone. Why do you think Wolff is establishing this tone? That is, how does it ultimately help him create meaning in the story?
 - What is the central conflict of Wolff's story? How does this conflict play into societal expectations?
 - Once again symbolism is quite important to the meaning of the story. Consider the title? What is a nightingale? How does the title connect to the main

protagonist? What's up with the map? Symbolically what does it represent? Is it helpful to the protagonist?

- f. And again, setting is important. Consider, the academy. Was it ever really there? How do you know? Why is it important?
- g. **In a third well-written paragraph address the following prompt: As observed in Wolff's "Nightingale," societal expectations, though designed to help society as a whole, can be detrimental to an individual. In a well-written paragraph analyze how Wolff uses the literary tool of narration to portray the complex interaction between the needs of society versus the needs of an individual. This paragraph may venture into tone as well as narration.**

The bottom line: the questions above are meant to help you work your way through the analysis of the stories. What you will turn into me for evaluation are the **three stand alone**, well-written paragraphs. Of course, this begs the question, what is a well-written paragraph? I am looking for:

1. A claim that answers the question, focusing on the literary term and the author's meaning as conveyed in the story. (This will be your thesis statement). For this assignment, please use it as your topic sentence.
2. Offer substantial textual evidence to support your claim. Be sure to analyze your textual support, explaining, specifically and in detail, how it supports your claim. Use logical reasoning, inference, and conclusion to validate your claim. Be sure to lead me through your thoughts to your conclusions: do not expect your reader to make inferences about your claims. (*Hint: substantial evidence is not a single quote, depending on the point, it might be 3-4, short, insightful quotes*).
3. Be sure to introduce your textual evidence, to blend the evidence into your own analysis, to correctly cite the evidence, and to fully explain the evidence to your claim.
4. At the end of each paragraph, provide a strong conclusion sentences that sums up your analysis and drives home your thesis (the claim).
5. Obviously, your paragraphs should be typed, should follow standard spelling and punctuation rules, and should use a formal academic voice.