

## AP Literature and Composition Summer Reading

### Grade 12 Assigned Readings:

1. *The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon (ANNOTATE the book and prepare your essay for one of the prompts provided)

2. Choose any 4 short stories from the list below and answer the questions provided for each short story.

- **An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge** by Ambrose Bierce

This famous story, set during the American Civil War, is widely regarded as a short story masterpiece. The story of Peyton Farquhar is about a man about to be hanged, whose love for his wife and children help him envision his escape.

- **The Story of an Hour** by Kate Chopin

This short story takes the reader on an emotional journey and was quite controversial when it was published in 1894 as *The Dream of an Hour* before being republished under this title in 1895. Most readers experience varying degrees of discomfort while reading this story, a testament to its power. This selection is an excellent entry point for a discussion about why feminist literature began to appear at this time and how people reacted.

- **The Storm** by Kate Chopin

If you have read The Story of an Hour then you probably understand that Ms. Chopin was willing to write about love and relationships in their entirety, embracing the complexities and mysteries of that realm. In this story she takes on the sensitive issue of infidelity. This is a story for more mature and advanced high school classes.

- **A Dark Brown Dog** by Stephen Crane

This is a story that works at several levels and is easily read as a sad and tragic morality tale about animal cruelty. For advanced readers, this story merits classroom discussion as a symbolic tale. Probably written in 1893, it's an interesting cross-section of literature and history that might be commenting on Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era

- **Trifles** by Susan Glaspell

Before Henrik Ibsen wrote A Doll's House, he noted in 1878 that, "A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day which is an exclusively masculine society with laws framed by men and with the judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view." Glaspell drives the point home brilliantly in this short play, which she later adapted into a short story, A Jury of Her Peers.

- **The Hanging Stranger** by Philip K. Dick

Ed had always been a practical man, when he saw something was wrong he tried to correct it. Then one day he saw it hanging in the town square.

- **Home Burial** by Robert Frost

This is a poem. Not a short story. Don't let that stop you. Frost uses about 1,010 words to teach you something about the complexity of life, death, marriage, longing, loss, and parenthood. Take note of the emotional and *physical position* of the characters in relationship to one another over the course of the poem. And please take the time to consider the historical context: Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Lincoln, McKinley, Roosevelt, Kennedy, Reagan, Bush. An incomplete list of presidents? No. That is an *incomplete* list of presidential couples that lost at least one child. This poem was not addressing a remote emotional experience when written in 1914. It was addressing a tragedy and emotional trauma that was all too common in the United States then and is still too common in many parts of the world today.

- **The Girl Who Got Rattled** by Stewart Edward White

This story was adapted in the Coen Brothers' movie, The Ballad of Buster Scruggs (2018), in the vignette titled *The Gal Who Got Rattled*.

- **The Interlopers** by H.H. Munro

In this man versus man versus nature story, two feuding neighbors venture into the woods carrying guns; one to hunt, the other to put down a trespasser. The two are fated to meet and reap the rewards of their bitter quarrel over a piece of land.

- **The Fly** by Katherine Mansfield

We now turn to New Zealander Katherine Mansfield for a short story that is multi-themed and laden with symbolism. What are the messages the author delivers in this story? What does the fly represent? Are there any ideas that reappear in the story? *The Fly* is a great candidate story for an essay or classroom discussion. The story provides the literary experience of looking at a mountain field; the longer you look, the more you see. Every student's perspective is different and so is their view of this story's field.

- **Winesburg, Ohio** by Sherwood Anderson

A delightful mosaic of stand-alone, but related stories describing the development of a young man, *George Willard*, as he comes of age. The stories mark the significant episodes and relationships that have shaped his life and formed his character. The stories build toward the moment when he will leave Winesburg and his youth behind. Each story can be enjoyed independently, revealing flawed yet endearing characters in Anderson's naturalist style.

- **Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town** by Stephen Leacock

This is a fantastically funny short story collection from the Canadian author Stephen Leacock. Though largely lost to modern readers, it was once commonly said that "more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than Canada."

- **The Open Boat** by Stephen Crane

This sublime story is based on the true-life ordeal that Crane endured in 1897 when a ship he boarded for Cuba ran aground and sank off the Florida coast. A ten-foot long dinghy is a small boat for four men in calm water, it must have been rather harrowing in rough seas. While this is another man versus nature story, it focuses more on nature's indiscriminate carelessness, and I admire this narrative's understated style.

- **Araby** by James Joyce

*Araby* is a compelling short story with valuable lessons and revelations for the adolescent reader. It deals with the hazards of romance and follows a young man that has developed a crush on his friend's sister; "I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood."

Many readers consider *Araby* to be their favorite James Joyce short story, perhaps a precursor to *Ulysses*.

- **Two Friends** by Guy de Maupassant

A story about loyalty in which Sauvage and Morissot share far more than a passion for fishing during wartime

- **Eve's Diary** by Mark Twain

In this playful and funny short story, Mark Twain makes a humorous accounting of the differences between the sexes, writing first from Eve's point of view and then following up with *Adam's* point of view. This story is a gentle reminder that it's okay to lighten up and laugh at our differences.

- **The Minister's Black Veil** by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Hawthorne's story is one of the finest in the genre of Dark Romanticism. Why will no one ask Reverend Hooper why he wears it? Read our helpful

- **The Boarded Window** by Ambrose Bierce

"There is a point at which terror may turn to madness . . ." Physically, this story is set on the American frontier -- hint coming -- but that may not be where all the action takes place!

### Assignments

1. **READ** any 4 short-stories and read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*
2. **ANNOTATE** the *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. (directions included)
3. Answer all the the questions for each of the *4 short stories of your choice*.
4. Write a (1½ - 2 page) essay for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. (choose one prompt to respond to) (*Times New Roman, 12 font, 1 inch margins, (1 ½ space between lines)*)
5. Create AP Literature **Flashcards** with *examples*.

\*These assignments will be reviewed and assessed during the first week of school. They will count for the first quarter.

### **A.) Learning How to Properly Annotate**

Annotating a text, or marking the pages with notes, is an excellent, if not essential, way to make the most out of the reading you do for college courses. Annotations make it easy to find important information quickly when you look back and review a text. They help you familiarize yourself with both the content and organization of what you read. They provide a way to begin engaging with ideas and issues directly through comments, questions, associations, or other reactions that occur to you as you read. In all these ways, annotating a text makes the reading process an active one, not just background for writing assignments, but an integral first step in the writing process.

#### **A well-annotated text will accomplish all of the following:**

- clearly identify where in the text important ideas and information are located
- express the main ideas of a text
- trace the development of ideas/arguments throughout a text
- introduce a few of the reader's thoughts and reactions

Ideally, you should read a text through once before making major annotations. You may just want to **circle unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts**. This way, you will have a clearer idea about where major ideas and important information are in the text, and your annotating will be more efficient.

#### **A brief description and discussion of four ways of annotating a text—**

- circling terms or vocabulary that you are unfamiliar with.
- highlighting/underlining
- paraphrase/summary of main ideas
- descriptive outline
- comments/responses

## ☐ CIRCLING

As you read a story, poem or excerpt you will often stumble over terms you are unfamiliar with. When annotating, it is crucial to **circle and later define the terms in the margin**. Remember those words were deliberately chosen by the author.

## ☐ HIGHLIGHTING

Using a highlighter, underline **key words and phrases or major ideas** is the most common form of annotating texts. Many people use this method to make it easier to review material, especially for exams. Highlighting is also a good way of picking out specific language within a text that you may want to cite or quote in a piece of writing. **However, over-reliance on highlighting is unwise for two reasons. First, there is a tendency to highlight more information than necessary, especially when done on a first reading. Second, highlighting is the least active form of annotating.** Instead of being a way to begin thinking and interacting with ideas in texts, highlighting can become a postponement of that process. On the other hand, highlighting is a useful way of marking parts of a text that you want to make notes about. And it's a good idea to highlight the words or phrases of a text that are referred to by your other annotations.

## ☐ PARAPHRASE/SUMMARY OF MAIN IDEAS

A series of brief notes in the margins beside important ideas gives you a handy summary right on the pages of the text itself, and if you can take the substance of a sentence or paragraph and condense it into a few words, you should have little trouble clearly demonstrating your understanding of the ideas in question in your own writing.

## ☐ DESCRIPTIVE OUTLINE

A descriptive outline shows the organization of a piece of writing, breaking it down to show where ideas are introduced and where they are developed. **A descriptive outline allows you to see not only where the main ideas are but also where the details, facts, explanations, and other kinds of support for those ideas are located. A descriptive outline will focus on the function of individual paragraphs or sections within a text**

A **Descriptive Outline** would include any of the following:

- summarizing a topic/argument/etc.
- introducing an idea
- adding explanation
- giving examples
- providing factual evidence
- expanding or limiting the idea
- considering an opposing view
- dismissing a contrary view
- creating a transition
- stating a conclusion

It's important to recognize that several of these functions may be repeated within a text, particularly ones that contain more than one major idea. Making a descriptive outline allows you to follow the construction of the writer's argument and/or the process of his/her thinking. It helps identify which parts of the text work together and how they do so.

## ☐ COMMENTS/RESPONSES

Your own thoughts and considerations should be included in the margins of an annotation. This allows you to go beyond understanding a text's meaning and organization by:

- **noting your reactions**
- **agreement/disagreement**
- **questions you may have**
- **related personal experience, connection to ideas from other texts, class discussions, etc.**

📖 This is an excellent way to begin formulating your own ideas for writing assignments based on the text or on any of the ideas it contains.

## B.) **READING RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

\* After you read 4 short stories please answer the following questions in detail: (type: Times New Roman, 12 font, double-space, 1 inch margins on all sides.

1. **Reader Response:** Be able to trace your reactions, to ask questions in class, to remind yourself when you find answers to earlier questions. This should help note the writer's effectiveness.
    - a) Describe your reactions/emotional responses (humor, surprise, sadness, anger, frustration, disappointment, tension/suspense, disgust, criticism, disagreement, confusion)
    - b) What questions or lack of understanding or doubts were you faced with? (ask "Why?")
    - c) List a few of the major revelations: when "things" become clear to you, when you make links
    - d) What did this story remind you of? Similarities to other works, events in history:
    - e) What did you consider to be a strong element in the author's writing- passages that strike you artistically/aesthetically and Why?
  
  2. **Speaker:** Think about who the writer or narrator is and how what he/she knows is communicated. This should help you decide the author's credibility.
    - a) What introductory facts were revealed to you? What is the author's background and relationship to the topic, bias, etc.
    - b) How did the author establish credibility and a character of "ethos" on the given topic?
    - c) Note words and language that indicate the author's attitude or tone and where it shifts or changes? How was it effective?
    - d) When did the narrator directly or indirectly state how he/she feels? Provide Examples.
    - e) What key lines stand out as evidence of an narrator's argument on the theme?
  
  3. **Occasion:** Think about what caused the author to write about this topic and whether or not it is a valid reason.
    - a) What is the author's reasons for writing- what is the motivation? Historical, political, social issues surrounding the topic
    - b) What is the author's personal reasons as well as the greater world/national reasons for the piece?
    - c) Describe evidence of historical/cultural views or characteristics of the time period surrounding the work.
    - d) Descriptions of class judgments, racism, gender biases, stereotypes... within the book.
  
  4. **Audience:** Think about what kind of person or people the author intended as the audience and whether the author is able to connect with that audience effectively.
    - a) Provide evidence of who (and it can be more than one) the author is trying to reach.
    - b) Provide evidence of where the author directly or indirectly addressed a specific audience.
    - c) Describe any "Call to Action" that the author is issuing to the reader.
    - d) Where has the author use "pathos" to appeal to your sense of emotion through anecdotes and figurative language?
  
  5. **Purpose:** Think about the author's purpose in writing this book and whether or not they are effective in that purpose.
    - a) What were the author's specific reasons for writing? (informing, persuading, arguing, refuting, exemplifying)- but make sure you note specifics!
    - b) Describe the author's appeal to reason. Examine how he/she effectively uses "Logos" to make the reader believe in that purpose.
  
  6. **Subject:** Think about what the book is discussing and whether or not the author shows why this subject is important.
    - a) Describe elements that are related to the problem and issues presented in the story.
    - b) How does the author develop or deepen the aspects of the problem/issue?
    - c) How does the author show the complications related to the subject and the implication of it to you, the nation, the world, etc.
  
  7. **Authorial Devices and Structures in the Argument:** Think about the author's techniques in delivery and how effective author's methods are for rhetorical purposes - the use of subtleties, patterns, style, structure, etc.
    - a) Describe any changes in point of view/emphasis.
    - b) Describe any crucial language/vocabulary- not just a word that you don't understand, but one that seemed crucial to better understanding the argument- define them here. (at least 4)
    - c) Provide evidence of any stylistic techniques: irony, satire, humor, exaggeration, repetition/patterns, possible symbols, significant metaphors and other notable literary and rhetorical devices?
    - d) How has the author's structure of the book or article influence the reader and relate to the subject, audience and purpose?
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**C. AP Literature Vocabulary- You must copy each term and definition onto the face of a flash-card and provide a memorable example on the back.**

- Study these as you will be tested on these terms this year.
1. Allegory: a tale in prose or verse in which characters, actions, or settings represent abstract ideas or moral qualities; a story that uses symbols to make a point
  2. Alliteration: the repetition of similar initial sounds, usually consonants, in a group of words
  3. Allusion: a reference to a person, a place, an event, or a literary work that a writer expects a reader to recognize
  4. Ambiguity: something uncertain as to interpretation
  5. Anachronism: something that shows up in the wrong place or the wrong time
  6. Analogy: a comparison made between two things to show the similarities between them
  7. Analysis: a method in which a work or idea is separated into its parts, and those parts given rigorous and detailed scrutiny
  8. Anaphora: a device or repetition in which a word or words are repeated at the beginning of two or more lines, phrases, clauses, or sentences
  9. Aphorism: a terse, pointed statement expressing some wise or clever observation about life
  10. Apologia: a defense or justification for some doctrine, piece of writing, cause, or action; also apology
  11. Apostrophe: a figure of speech in which an absent or dead person, an abstract quality, or something inanimate or nonhuman is addressed directly
  12. Argument(ation): the process of convincing a reader by proving either the truth or the falsity of an idea or proposition; also, the thesis or proposition itself
  13. Assumption: the act of supposing, or taking for granted that a thing is true
  14. Audience: the intended listener or listeners
  15. Characterization: the means by which a writer reveals a character's personality
  16. Circumlocution: a roundabout or evasive speech or writing, in which many words are used but a few would have served
  17. Chiasmus: a reversal in the order of words so that the second half of a statement balances the first half in inverted word order
  18. Classicism: art, literature, and music reflecting the principles of ancient Greece and Rome: tradition, reason, clarity, order, and balance
  19. Cliche: a phrase or situation overused within society
  20. Climax: the decisive point in a narrative or drama; the point of greatest intensity or interest at which plot question is answered or resolved
  21. Colloquialism: folksy speech, slang words or phrases usually used in informal conversation
  22. Comedy: originally a nondramatic literary piece of work that was marked by a happy ending; now a term to describe a ludicrous, farcical, or amusing event designed provide enjoyment or produce smiles and laughter
  23. Conflict: struggle or problem in a story causing tension
  24. Diction: the style of speaking or writing as reflected in the choice and use of words.
  25. Connotation: implicit meaning, going beyond dictionary definition
  26. Contrast: a rhetorical device by which one element (idea or object) is thrown into opposition to another for the sake of emphasis or clarity
  27. Denotation: plain dictionary definition
  28. Denouement (pronounced day-new-mahn): loose ends tied up in a story after the climax, closure, conclusion
  29. Dialect: the language of a particular district, class or group of persons; the sounds, grammar, and diction employed by people distinguished from others.
  30. Dialectics: formal debates usually over the nature of truth.
  31. Dichotomy: split or break between two opposing things.
  32. Didactic: having to do with the transmission of information; education.
  33. Dogmatic: rigid in beliefs and principles.
  34. Elegy: a mournful, melancholy poem, especially a funeral song or lament for the dead, sometimes contains general reflections on death, often with a rural or pastoral setting.
  35. Epic: a long narrative poem unified by a hero who reflects the customs, mores, and aspirations of his nation of race as he makes his way through legendary and historic exploits, usually over a long period of time (definition bordering on circumlocution).
  36. Epigram: a witty aphorism.

37. Epitaph: any brief inscription in prose or verse on a tombstone; a short formal poem of commemoration often a credo written by the person who wishes it to be on his tombstone.
38. Epithet: a short, descriptive name or phrase that may insult someone's character, characteristics
39. Euphemism: the use of an indirect, mild or vague word or expression for one thought to be coarse, offensive, or blunt.
40. Evocative (evocation): a calling forth of memories and sensations; the suggestion or production through artistry and imagination of a sense of reality.
41. Exposition: beginning of a story that sets forth facts, ideas, and/or characters, in a detailed explanation.
42. Expressionism: movement in art, literature, and music consisting of unrealistic representation of an inner idea or feeling(s).
43. Fable: a short, simple story, usually with animals as characters, designed to teach a moral truth.
44. Fallacy: from Latin word "to deceive", a false or misleading notion, belief, or argument; any kind of erroneous reasoning that makes arguments unsound.
45. Falling Action: part of the narrative or drama after the climax.
46. Farce: a boisterous comedy involving ludicrous action and dialogue.
47. Flashback: a narrative device that flashes back to prior events.
48. Figurative Language: apt and imaginative language characterized by figures of speech (such as metaphor and simile). Foil: a person or thing that, by contrast, makes another seem better or more prominent.
49. Folk Tale: story passed on by word of mouth.
50. Foreshadowing: in fiction and drama, a device to prepare the reader for the outcome of the action; "planting" to make the outcome convincing, though not to give it away.
51. Free Verse: verse without conventional metrical pattern, with irregular pattern or no rhyme.
52. Genre: a category or class of artistic endeavor having a particular form, technique, or content.
53. Gothic Tale: a style in literature characterized by gloomy settings, violent or grotesque action, and a mood of decay, degeneration, and decadence.
54. Hyperbole: an exaggerated statement often used as a figure of speech or to prove a point.
55. Imagery: figures of speech or vivid description, conveying images through any of the senses.
56. Implication: a meaning or understanding that is to be arrived at by the reader but that is not fully and explicitly stated by the author.
57. Incongruity: the deliberate joining of opposites or of elements that are not appropriate to each other.
58. Inference: a judgement or conclusion based on evidence presented; the forming of an opinion which possesses some degree of probability according to facts already available.
59. Irony: a contrast or incongruity between what is said and what is meant, or what is expected to happen and what actually happens, or what is thought to be happening and what is actually happening.
60. Interior Monologue: a form of writing which represents the inner thoughts of a character; the recording of the internal, emotional experience(s) of an individual; generally the reader is given the impression of overhearing the interior monologue.
61. Inversion: words out of order for emphasis.
62. Juxtaposition: the intentional placement of a word, phrase, sentences of paragraph to contrast with another nearby.
63. Lyric: a poem having musical form and quality; a short outburst of the author's innermost thoughts and feelings.
64. Magic(al) Realism: a genre developed in Latin America which juxtaposes the everyday with the marvelous or magical.
65. Metaphor(extended, controlling, and mixed): an analogy that compare two different things imaginatively.
66. Extended: a metaphor that is extended or developed as far as the writer wants to take it.
67. Controlling: a metaphor that runs throughout the piece of work.
68. Mixed: a metaphor that ineffectively blends two or more analogies.
69. Metonymy: literally "name changing" a device of figurative language in which the name of an attribute or associated thing is substituted for the usual name of a thing.
70. Mode of Discourse: argument (persuasion), narration, description, and exposition.
71. Modernism: literary movement characterized by stylistic experimentation, rejection of tradition, interest in symbolism and psychology
72. Monologue: an extended speech by a character in a play, short story, novel, or narrative poem.
73. Mood: the predominating atmosphere evoked by a literary piece.
74. Motif: a recurring feature (name, image, or phrase) in a piece of literature.
75. Myth: a story, often about immortals, and sometimes connected
76. Parallelism: the principle in sentence structure that states elements of equal function should have equal form.

77. Parody: an imitation of mimicking of a composition or of the style of a well-known artist.
78. Pathos: the ability in literature to call forth feelings of pity, compassion, and/or sadness.
79. Pedantry: a display of learning for its own sake. Personification: a figure of speech attributing human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract ideas.
80. Plot: a plan or scheme to accomplish a purpose.
81. Poignant: eliciting sorrow or sentiment.
82. Point of View: the attitude unifying any oral or written argumentation; in description, the physical point from which the observer views what he is describing.
83. Postmodernism: literature characterized by experimentation, irony, nontraditional forms, multiple meanings, playfulness and blurred boundary between real and imaginary.
84. Prose: the ordinary form of spoken and written language; language that does not have a regular rhyme pattern.
85. Protagonist: the central character in a work of fiction; opposes antagonist.
86. Pun: play on words; the humorous use of a word emphasizing different meanings or applications.
87. Purpose: the intended result wished by an author.
88. Realism: writing about the ordinary aspects of life in a straight-forward manner to reflect life as it actually is.
89. Refrain: a phrase or verse recurring at intervals in a poem or song; chorus.
90. Requiem: any chant, dirge, hymn, or musical service for the dead.
91. Resolution: point in a literary work at which the chief dramatic complication is worked out; denouement.
92. Restatement: idea repeated for emphasis.
93. Rhetoric: use of language, both written and verbal in order to persuade.
94. Rhetorical Question: question suggesting its own answer or not requiring an answer; used in argument or persuasion.
95. Rising Action: plot build up, caused by conflict and complications, advancement towards climax.
96. Romanticism: movement in western culture beginning in the eighteenth and peaking in the nineteenth century as a revolt against
97. Classicism; imagination was valued over reason and fact.
98. Satire: ridicules or condemns the weakness and wrong doings of individuals, groups, institutions, or humanity in general.
99. Scansion: the analysis of verse in terms of meter.
100. Setting: the time and place in which events in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem occur.
101. Simile: a figure of speech comparing two essentially unlike things through the use of a specific word of comparison.
102. Soliloquy: an extended speech, usually in a drama, delivered by a character alone on stage.
103. Spiritual: a folk song, usually on a religious theme.
104. Speaker: a narrator, the one speaking.
105. Stereotype: a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.
106. Stream of Consciousness: the style of writing that attempts to imitate the natural flow of a character's thoughts, feelings, reflections, memories, and mental images, as the character experiences them.
107. Structure: the planned framework of a literary selection; its apparent organization.
108. Style: the manner of putting thoughts into words; a characteristic way of writing or speaking.
109. Subordination: the couching of less important ideas in less important structures of language.
110. Surrealism: a style in literature and painting that stresses the subconscious or the non-rational aspects of man's existence characterized by the juxtaposition of the bizarre and the banal.
111. Suspension of Disbelief: suspend not believing in order to enjoy it.
112. Symbol: something which stands for something else, yet has a meaning of its own.
113. Synesthesia: the use of one sense to convey the experience of another sense.
114. Synecdoche: another form of name changing, in which a part stands for the whole.
115. Syntax: the arrangement and grammatical relations of words in a sentence.
116. Theme: main idea of the story; its message(s).
117. Thesis: a proposition for consideration, especially one to be discussed and proved or disproved; the main idea.
118. Tone: the devices used to create the mood and atmosphere of a literary work; the author's perceived point of view.
119. Tongue in Cheek: a type of humor in which the speaker feigns seriousness; a.k.a. "dry" or "dead pan"
120. Tragedy: in literature: any composition with a somber theme carried to a disastrous conclusion; a fatal event; protagonist usually is heroic but tragically (fatally) flawed
121. Understatement: opposite of hyperbole; saying less than you mean for emphasis
122. Vernacular: everyday speech

123. Voice: The textual features, such as diction and sentence structures, that convey a writer's or speaker's persona.  
124. Zeitgeist: the feeling of a particular era in history

#### **D. *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* Essay**

**Choose 1 of the following essay topics. Using sophisticated language to develop ideas and provide specific evidence from the novel to answer 1 of the prompts below. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE! I will GOOGLE every sentence!**

**1. How significant is it to the novel that Christopher has learning difficulties?**

Think about how significant Christopher's perspective is to how the story is and to its structure. What is Haddon able to conceal/reveal by using Christopher? What light does it shed on the other characters in the novel, and on mankind in general? Discuss how Christopher's overcoming of his particular challenges adds another layer of drama to the actual plot of the story.

**2. What is Siobhan's role in the novel?** Think about her role in how Christopher's story unfolds - it is she who encourages him to write the novel and her perspective on novel writing comes up throughout. Does her voice give us any comment on novel writing in general? What is her purpose? Would this novel exist at all without her? In a way, she is Haddon's true authorial voice poking through the facade of Christopher's narration.

**3. How far do you think Christopher's condition limits or enlightens his perspective on life?** This is a broad question and one which requires specific detail. Identify specific scenes in which Christopher behaves unusually according to generally accepted patterns of behavior, and discuss whether these incidents allow him to see more clearly or limit his understanding. The fact that he doesn't realize his mother is alive may be one example, but also address that many other characters are inveigled as well. Compare Christopher's philosophy of truth-telling to his father's.

**4. How does Haddon build tension in this novel?** Focus on technical details in terms of the structure of the novel and the writing style - what information does he hide from Christopher, so that it will be revealed to us at a more useful juncture. Also incorporate a personal response. Examples may include Christopher losing Toby on the tube tracks, or a more general level of tension throughout the novel in terms of his detective work.