
RATIONALE FOR ENGLISH HONORS INDEPENDENT READING PROJECT

There are three main purposes for this paper:

1. Students will read and become thoroughly familiar with a classic or contemporary work of literature that otherwise would not be possible to include in the curriculum. They are able to select a work they may have always wanted to read but for which they have not had time.
2. Students will think and work independently of the classroom teacher and other students as they analyze a text. They will learn to shape a thesis independently and through a specific critical lens, and they will be encouraged to think of themselves as literary critics in their own right. They will need to plan their time carefully and sustain their effort over an extended period in order to complete this assignment successfully.
3. Students will strive to demonstrate mastery of the logic, format, and structure of an extended analytical essay and continue to hone their critical thinking and close reading skills. This assignment teaches students to aspire to the highest levels of complex thinking and writing.

General Guidelines

Your task for this independent reading project is to select one of the works from the list provided that you have not read before and carry out a thorough study of it. Your main goal is to choose a book you will enjoy and to which you will eagerly devote so much time and energy! After analyzing the work on your own and considering applicable critical lenses that open up the text to various interpretations, you will write a paper of about 2,000-2,500 words in which you present an original thesis and closely read text in order to construct, support, and develop your argument. Your paper should reveal that your chosen critical lens thoroughly informs your interpretation of the text. In order to meet these expectations effectively, you must complete the following steps (see next section for more detailed tips and reminders):

T, March 2 (Green) Th, March 4 (Tan)	Finalize IRP novel choice.
M, March 29 (Green) W, March 31 (Tan)	Come to class having completed your IRP novel. Read carefully, actively, and mindfully, taking note of significant passages, motifs, and thematic ideas.
M, April 5 (Green) Th, April 8 (Tan)	Do your own independent thinking and brainstorming about the important questions/topics raised by your text. Solidify your stance on this topic and determine the angle/critical lens you will take in analyzing your text. Then, craft a working thesis statement and a paper proposal and submit to me.
M, May 3 (Green) Th, May 6 (Tan)	Revise your thesis as necessary, and create a detailed outline of your paper that evinces the most effective structure for your argument. For each body paragraph in your outline, craft topic sentences and in bullet-point form, flesh out the connection between these topic sentences and your evidence (which is your analysis)
M, May 17 (Green) Th, May 20 (Tan)	Come to class with a complete first draft available for peer review.
M, May 24 (Green) Th, May 27 (Tan)	Revise, proofread, and polish your paper. Submit a final draft of your work that abides by the requirements outlined on page 3 below. Hand in the paper on time for Honors credit. Save all your notes, drafts, etc. to have available to me if I ask for them. No late papers will be accepted.

Process Steps and Submission Guidelines:

1. Before you read any outside material (optional), craft a **paper proposal** that includes, in narrative form, a focused summary of your text, a provisional thesis, the critical lens(es) you intend to use, and a rough outline. Remember, your **thesis** must contain a form/function/so- what argument that is not too obvious or too plot based; it must adapt a critical stance and explore larger implications through a specific angle).
2. **If** you choose to research because you feel that reading literary criticism may help you tweak—or perhaps even change—your thesis, you **must credit** in your **Annotated Bibliography** each critic from whom you received an idea. For this paper, you will not include direct quotations or even paraphrased ideas from literary critics. Failure to give credit to any outside source is considered cheating and will result in a zero for this assignment.
3. Remember that your **goal is to become an expert about your selected work**. To do this you should carry out at least one but perhaps two careful readings of the work. To accomplish the goal, you should pace yourself and take thorough notes on the literary devices/forms you notice, how they function in the text, and the larger commentary suggested.
4. Your next step is to create a **detailed outline** of your paper that evinces the most effective structure for your argument and revise your thesis as necessary. For each body paragraph in your outline, craft a topic sentence and in bullet-point form, flesh out the connection between the topic sentence and your evidence. Your outline should be so thorough in terms of organization and argumentation that you will be able to use this document to easily write your **first draft**.
5. Be certain to provide a **title page** with an original, interesting title that indicates the subject of your paper. Center the title on the page (halfway down), and include your name, the date, my name, and your class. Do not number the title page. The paper should be _____-spaced, using 12 pt. Times font. Number your pages electronically.
6. Have an “**Acknowledgments**” page after your title page in which you thank all the people who provided help to you on the assignment, including writing lab teachers, proofreaders, etc.
7. If you’ve consulted any outside sources, provide an **Annotated Bibliography** as the final page of your paper in which you **list all of the works that influenced your essay**. You should include any work you consulted during the process even though you will not reference the criticism directly in your paper. Follow the MLA guidelines for the format of this page. An annotated bibliography includes citation information for each source, a short paragraph summary of the critic’s argument, and a brief explanation of the article’s influence on your own thinking/ argument.
8. **Proofread** your paper carefully before you hand it in.
9. Upload your paper to **turnitin.com** by the due date. Remember, honest scholarship is expected—do not plagiarize! Do not consult online study aids/ shortcuts at any point during the IRP process as they undermine your own integrity. Any kind of academic dishonesty will result in forfeiture of honor’s credit for the year.

Below is a summary of what you need to submit:

I. IRP Project

- A. The Paper (typed, properly spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman, with word count at the end)
 1. Title Page (title, name, teacher's name, course, due date)
 2. Acknowledgments page
 3. If applicable, Annotated Bibliography (See MLA format)
- B. The Prep Work
 1. Proposal and any notes from your conference with your teacher
 2. Outline
 3. First Draft

Criteria for grading the Independent Reading Project:

Remember that the grade on this paper is not an evaluation of you as a person or of your mind, or even of how hard you worked, but rather **an evaluation of this particular piece of work**. You will receive a double mark: a Content grade and a Structure/Mechanics grade.

Content consists (roughly) of the quality of your ideas, the analytical insights you provide into your novel, the depth and breadth of your understanding of it, the support you provide for your ideas through selection of textual evidence from the primary source, close analysis of this evidence, the eloquence of your written expression, and the thoroughness with which you treat your subject. **Structure/Mechanics** consists (roughly) of the organizational skills you show, coherence and precision in written expression, grammar and mechanics (including the correct form for quotations and the works consulted page and title page), and the carefulness with which you present your ideas.

****There is no clear line between content and form; obviously, they interconnect. It is very difficult to distinguish what you say from the way in which you say it.**

Grading Rubric:

A work is highest honors work that delves deeply into the novel. It is elegant, masterful, and perceptive. Clearly insightful, creative, thorough, and adventuresome, it goes beyond the requirements of the assignment and is marked by excellence in approach and achievement. There is something in it that makes it stand out—perhaps a fresh connection or implication, an original insight, a startling close passage analysis, or a new way of putting something. The writing is clear, compelling, and concise—perhaps even eloquent. It is the kind of work that indicates nuanced engagement with the assignment and shows passion and excitement about ideas. It is a scholarly and sophisticated piece of writing of the highest order. (It is also possible to achieve; many students have received A's on this assignment over the course of the years.) **A-work** is very good work that transcends competence and is marked by original thinking and analysis, clear mastery of the process and content, and a rigorous and thorough approach to the assignment.

- The paper illustrates excellent scholarship; the student has read widely and deeply in the literature.
- The introduction is original, captures the reader's interest, and builds smoothly to a thesis.
- The thesis is insightful, substantial, and well-expressed; it takes a critical stance and proposes a clear angle (critical lens+form) through which to explore larger implications (function+so what).
- The organization is completely smooth and logical with topic sentences of paragraphs tying

explicitly into the thesis and preparing the reader for the paragraph.

- Unity is strongly evident, with no wandering from the main idea.
- The developmental (body) paragraphs are logical and coherent, filled with specific supporting examples and close analysis. They end with a “clincher” sentence that ties the paragraph together.
- The conclusion is not a mere summary but synthesizes the paper and closes the essay effectively, providing “a sense of an ending.”
- Transitions between ideas, at the sentence and paragraph level, are meaningful and logical.
- The quotations are incorporated correctly and smoothly. There is an appropriate balance between incorporated text and the writer’s own analysis.
- The analysis of the novel is sophisticated and insightful, and intelligently supports the thesis. The writer carries out compelling close readings which dig into the language of the text.
- The vocabulary is rich, well-chosen, and natural; the writer varies the sentence structure, showing a clear and precise command of the language.
- A distinctive personal voice and style emerges.
- No grammatical errors or few are made.

A **B+ paper** is above average work that is solid and competent, enhanced by a particularly successful struggle with difficult skills, topics, and issues. **B work** is a clearly expressed piece of writing that meets all the criteria of the assignment and which reveals solid understanding of the novel. It successfully avoids plot summary and provides thoughtful analysis. It is marked by serious and successful engagement with the assignment and shows mastery of skills, process, and content and general solidity of achievement. It is crafted well; there is nothing wrong with a B paper. **B- work** is competent work that is essentially solid in most respects but is somehow hindered by problems of logic, content, procedure, or execution.

- The paper illustrates good scholarship; the student has read fairly widely and deeply in the literature, going beyond the minimum.
- The introduction is appropriate and sets up the purpose of the essay.
- The thesis is clear and focused although not necessarily deeply sophisticated; it takes a critical stance and proposes a clear angle (critical lens+form) through which to explore larger implications (function+so what).
- The paper is fairly well organized, with the topic sentences of paragraphs mostly tying into the thesis.
- There is little or no digression from the main idea.
- The developmental (body) paragraphs are unified and logical and consistently offer specific supporting examples and close analysis. They may reveal weaknesses in coherence or flow, occasionally need additional evidence or closer analysis, or be missing “clincher” sentences that tie the paragraph together.
- Although it may be mostly summary, the conclusion closes the essay effectively, providing “a sense of an ending.”
- Transitions between sentences and paragraphs are present but may not be consistently smooth.
- The quotations are incorporated correctly but not necessarily smoothly. There may be a bit of an imbalance between quotations and the writer’s own analysis.
- The analysis of the novel is insightful and intelligently supports the thesis. It may lack the sophistication or nuance of “A” work. The writer carries out close readings but may need to dig deeper into the language of the text or may miss a few opportunities.
- The vocabulary is appropriate, but not as rich, well-chosen, or natural as in “A” work; the writer varies the sentence structure, showing solid command of the language.
- Some grammatical errors may be made, but no serious one.

A **C paper** is passing work and constitutes acceptable achievement but only approaches the

standards for the assignment. It is limited by important weaknesses or deficiencies of logic, procedure, or execution. It shows evidence that the work has been done, but with shortcomings in either clarity of expression or understanding or both. It is not done with sufficient thoroughness or depth; it meets the minimum requirements, but shows little effort to go beyond the minimum.

- The introduction is present but may not be effective in setting up the thesis.
- The thesis is merely functional. It may lack a critical stance, an angle, larger implications, or overall clarity.
- The organization is weak. Ideas may be only minimally connected.
- There may be significant digression from the main idea.
- The developmental (body) paragraphs may lack unity, focus, or coherence. They may lack specific supporting examples and close analysis. Support for ideas may consist of lists or repetitions from previous statements.
- The conclusion might not be present, or it may lack a “sense of an ending.”
- Transitions between sentences and paragraphs may be missing or ineffective.
- The quotations may be incorporated incorrectly or awkwardly. There may be an imbalance between quotations and the writer’s own analysis. The scholarship may be inexact or sloppy.
- The paper may lack analysis of the novel and be mostly plot summary. Analysis may be illogical, tautological, or discursive (in that it does not support the thesis). Analysis may lack sophistication and depth, containing few or no close readings.
- The vocabulary may be limited; words may be used incorrectly or awkwardly. There may be little variety in sentence structure.
- Serious grammatical errors may be made, including errors in sentence constructions, pronoun agreement, spelling, etc.

D work does not meet the standards and requirements of the assignment and indicates that the writer has not understood the selected novel.

An **F paper** shows serious neglect. A 0% will be given to a paper which has been plagiarized or turned in late.