



Tuckahoe High School
65 Siwanoy Boulevard
Eastchester, New York 10707
914/337-5376

June 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Summer is here and that means the beginning of the **Tuckahoe High School's Summer Reading Program!** This program is designed to encourage students to continue to develop both their love of reading and their literacy skills. Students are provided with several book lists which are available on the library website where they can choose a book that is of interest to them. Students are expected to read a minimum of one book of their choice over the summer. Those students who are enrolled in 10th and 11th English Honors are required to select one classic book from the Classic Book List.

Using one of the student choice reading books that they have read, students will be instructed to compose an essay similar to that of the style used when applying to college. Next fall, they will also create a multimedia video using their chosen book. These assignments will be due approximately the second week in October with assistance from the classroom teacher.

Those students who are enrolled in English Honors and AP Literature and Composition are required to read additional texts as assigned by their classroom teacher. See attached for assignment descriptions.

The Summer Reading Suggested Book Lists, which include a list of classics, as well as the English Honors and AP Literature and Composition required reading and writing assignment(s) can also be found electronically on the Tuckahoe High School website under the link "Summer Reading Program ."

Should your child wish to continue his/her reading journey beyond what is required, we recommend accessing the school's Library Home Web page for further suggested reading.

Best wishes for a restful and enjoyable summer filled with reading adventures!

Sincerely,

The English Department

Suzanne D'Arco
Danielle Iverson
Kristin Vincenzi
Evelyn Johnson, Librarian

Summer Reading Assignment - Grades 10-11

Reminder: This project will be explained in further detail during the first weeks of school and will not be due until mid-October.

Directions: Choose a character from your summer reading book and imagine that the character is applying to college. Write a college essay of 300-650 words to a college of your choice from the character's perspective based on one of the following prompts. Be sure to follow the guidelines bulleted below the prompts for composing an effective college essay. Remember you want your character to be accepted! (100 points)

Since it is usually important to demonstrate that you have some knowledge/background on the college, this would be a great time to start looking at websites for specific schools that you may be interested in visiting and to include some of that specific information within your essay.

Essay Prompts:

1. Some people have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is very meaningful to them. How does this affect who you are in a positive way? What have you learned about yourself as a result in a positive way? What would you like to study as a result of your background, interest, or identity and what college are you applying to?
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience in a positive way? What would you like to study as a result of your background, interest, or identity and what college are you applying to?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome? How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience in a positive way? What and where would you like to study as a result of this experience?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could take to identify a solution. How does your opinion/experience on this affect you, and what have you learned as a

result in a positive way? Consequently, what would you like to study and what college are you applying to?

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. How did this experience affect you in a positive way? What did you learn from the experience? Consequently, what would you like to study and what college are you applying to?

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

Guidelines:

- The essay must be between 300-650 words, double spaced.
- Be sure to consider the audience - you are writing this for a college admissions counselor.
- Consider the college that he/she is applying to - how does this character's experiences make him/her an asset to this prospective college campus?
- The essay must focus on your character's motivations, experiences, positive growth, etc. For example, if there is another character that greatly impacted your applicant, make sure that you discuss how he/she impacted your character.

Mrs. Vincenzi

Summer Reading Assignment Grade 9

Students are expected to read a minimum of one book of their choice over the summer. During the first few weeks of the first quarter, students will be evaluated on their understanding of the text through various assessments. If possible, bring a version of the book to class the first few weeks of school.

9 Honors Additional Summer Reading Assignment

Required Reading: Google Class Code is **hibn5x2**

Read and annotate the following short stories by Ray Bradbury. Then complete the assignments attached and posted on google classroom.

- 1) "All Summer in a Day"
- 2) "The Day It Rained Forever"
- 3) "The Last Night of the World"
- 4) "The Million-Year Picnic"

The PDF for each story is available on the Google Classroom. It is recommended that you print out each story so that you can annotate directly on the page. If this is not possible, handwritten notes are required on separate paper. Active reading is required in some form: annotating, post-it notes, hand-written notes. It is an important habit to develop for your own deeper understanding of complex texts.

During the first few weeks of the first quarter, you will be evaluated on your understanding of these texts through various assessments. Bring copies of all texts and annotations with you on the first day of class. The written assignments can be done on google classroom or printed and handed in on the first day of class, along with your annotations.

Name _____

Date _____

Mrs. Vincenzi

Class _____

All Summer in a Day

By Ray Bradbury

Steps to answering text dependent questions:

1. Respond to each question

2. Add a quote to your response

3. Explain how that quote proves your response.

If there is a quote in the question there does not need to be a quote in the response

Answer the following text-dependent questions:

1. Discuss the setting of the story. How does the setting affect the mood of the story?
2. Explain how the students treat Margot.
3. Characterize Margot.
4. How are Margot's feelings different from those of the other children?
5. What major action is taken against Margot and why?
6. Express how the kids are behaving and feeling when they see the sun.
7. How does Bradbury use the weather to discuss how the children are feeling at the end of the story? Why would he do this?
8. Why does Bradbury end his story without a reaction from Margot?

Name _____

Date _____

Mrs. Vincenzi

English 9

The Day it Rained Forever
By Ray Bradbury

Steps to answering text dependent questions:

1. Respond to each question
 2. Add a quote to your response
 3. Explain how that quote proves your response.
- *If there is a quote in the question there does not need to be a quote in the response*

Answer the following text-dependent questions:

1. Discuss the setting of the story. How does the setting affect the mood of the story?
2. Express what "idiot sky" means on page 2.
3. Why does Mr. Smith want to leave?
4. Explain what Mr. Terle is feeling at the bottom of page 3.
5. Discuss a quote that foreshadows Miss. Hillgood never leaving the hotel.
6. Why did Miss. Hillgood leave Green City?
7. How does Miss. Hillgood intend to pay for her dinner?
8. How does Bradbury use the weather to discuss what's going on, on page 8? Why would he do this?
9. What is the "new storm" on page 9?
10. Discuss what the rain symbolizes overall?

Name _____

Mrs. Vincenzi

Date _____

Class _____

The Last Night of the World

By Ray Bradbury

Steps to answering a quote sheet:

1. In the Context column, explain what is going on in the story during the time of the quote presented in the middle column.

2. In the Significance column, discuss why the quote presented in the middle column is important.

Lines numbers are given to help you find the quotes for efficient response

Line #	<u>Context:</u> What is going on in the story at this time?	<u>Quote:</u>	<u>Significance:</u> Why is this quote important? What does it reveal about the character, setting, etc.?
7		"But just, let's say, the closing of a book."	
8-9		"Sometimes it frightens me, sometimes I'm not frightened at all but at peace."	
16		"It was the same dream?"	

24-25		<p>“It’s not a matter of deserving; it's just that things didn't work out.”</p>	
35-36		<p>"We haven't been too bad, have we?" "No, nor enormously good. I suppose that's the trouble..."</p>	
58-59		<p>"I wonder if the children know." "No, of course not."</p>	
67-68		<p>Just a moment," she said. He heard her get out of bed and go into the kitchen. A moment later, she returned. "I left the water running in the sink," she said.</p>	

Name _____

Mrs. Vincenzi

Date _____

English 9H

October 2026: The Million-Year Picnic

By Ray Bradbury

Directions: Find quotes in the story that use the literary devices simile and personification. Put a quote and page number of the quote for each example. Explain the meaning of the quote by explaining what the simile and use of personification is. What is the author trying to say about the setting, character, theme, etc... by using these literary devices during that particular time in the story. For the author's purpose, discuss a common trait/theme/meaning that all your quotes for each device have.

Simile: a stated comparison between two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*.

Example	Meaning
Quote:	
Quote:	
Quote:	

Quote:	

Author's purpose for using similes:

Personification: giving human or living qualities, characteristics, actions, and/or feelings to something that is not human (like a thing, idea, concept, or animal).

Example	Meaning
Quote:	

Quote:	
Quote:	
Quote:	

Author's purpose for using personification:

10 Honors
Summer Reading Assignment
Google Class Code: ql4rbj
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

*If possible, purchase a copy of the novel so that you can make annotations within the text as you read. We will be having a multiple choice test within the first two weeks of school, during which novels and notes may be used on the exam, so it is to your advantage to have your own copy.

ALL WORK MUST BE TURNED IN ON CLASSROOM.
IF YOU PLAN ON MAKING EDITS TO YOUR WORK, MAKE A COPY OF YOUR DOCUMENT, AS YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO UNSUBMIT THE ORIGINAL!

Fahrenheit 451
Part One: The Hearth and the Salamander

Directions: Answer each question using specific references from the text (quotes), making sure to write down the page numbers. The answer to these questions will count as your annotations, but you are encouraged to take additional notes either on a document, on paper, or in the text. You may answer the questions in note format if desired.

1. In an ancient Greek myth, Prometheus, a son of Zeus, feels sorry for human beings, who are cold and helpless. He steals fire from the gods and gives it to mankind. Symbolically, the giving of fire is the beginning of wisdom and science. Fire is also destructive: the Christian Hell is supposed to be a place where people burn eternally, and some religions predict that the world will end in fire. What aspect of fire do we see in the opening of the book?
2. How does Bradbury characterize Montag in the opening paragraphs of the book? What details does he use to accomplish this characterization?
3. Why does Montag's helmet have the number 451 on it?
4. What details does Bradbury give to establish the setting of Montag's encounter with Clarisse? Why might these be significant?
5. What kinds of words and images does Bradbury use to characterize Clarisse? How might these be symbolic?
6. What distinction does Bradbury make between electric light and candlelight? In light of Montag's conversation with Clarisse, why might this be significant?
7. What do we learn about the society in which Clarisse and Montag live? What question does Clarisse ask that upsets him?
8. Besides her complexion, what feature of Clarisse does Bradbury emphasize? Why does he do this?
9. What image associated with light does Montag think of in connection with Clarisse after he is back in his house?
10. What word does Montag think of repeatedly in connection with his bedroom and his

wife? Why are these details here?

11. What is happening in the background as Montag dials the hospital? What do these suggest?
12. What is the most prominent feature of the machine used to pump Mildred's stomach? Why is this feature significant?
13. The technician tells Montag that cases like Mildred's are extremely common. What does this indicate about the state of Montag's society?
14. Describe the conversation between Montag and Mildred. What does it indicate about their relationship?
15. Describe the play coming on the "parlor walls." What does Montag seem to think about this form of entertainment? What does Mildred think?
16. What word does Mildred use to describe the play? What does this suggest about her character?
17. Compare Montag's conversation with Clarisse to his conversation with Mildred. What images are linked to Clarisse in the passage describing her second conversation with Montag? Why might Bradbury use these images in connection with her?
18. What figure from mythology does the Mechanical Hound recall?
19. Bradbury's description of the Mechanical Hound makes it seem like a grotesque parody of a living thing. What are some details that contribute to this description?
20. Describe the relationship between Montag and Captain Beatty. What are some details that give us information about their relationship?
21. Clarisse notes that Montag's laugh sounds "more relaxed" than it did when they talked before. Trace the change in Montag from the beginning of the book until now.
22. What connection does Clarisse make between her school and the forms of entertainment that most of her peers prefer?
23. What, according to Clarisse, would prevent young people from being so violent and destructive?
24. An allegory is a story in which characters and objects have a direct symbolic function.
In his philosophical dialogue, *The Republic*, the Greek philosopher Plato includes a passage known as "The Allegory of the Cave." It imagines a group of people inside a cave, watching shadows playing on a wall. Unable to leave the cave, the people know only the shadows, and they believe that the shadows are reality. A person who escapes the cave and experiences the true reality is unable to convince the people chained in the cave of what he or she has seen. What allusion to this allegory occurs in this chapter?
25. When Montag asks Beatty about the history of fire departments, two other firemen pull out their handbooks to remind him of something he already knows. How have the firemen changed history to suit their own ideas? What point is Bradbury making by bringing up Benjamin Franklin here?
26. Explain the significance of the statement the woman in the house quotes before she is burned alive.
27. Beatty tells the woman that she has been "locked up...in a Tower of Babel." To what is he referring?
28. What language relating to heat and cold does Bradbury use in the passage about Montag returning to bed and hiding the book?
Why does Montag begin to cry when he thinks about Mildred dying?
29. What is ironic about Montag referring to the people on the parlor walls as "relatives"?

and Mildred saying, "That's my family"?

30. As Montag lies in bed thinking about what is wrong with his marriage, what episodes does he remember? Why are these significant?

31. How does Mildred treat Montag when he becomes ill?

32. How is Beatty characterized during his visit to Montag's house? What words and details contribute to this characterization?

33. How does Bradbury build suspense during the passage describing Beatty's visit?

34. What vital role do firemen play in society, according to Beatty?

35. Does Beatty really believe all of the things he tells Montag in the lecture? What evidence supports your answer?

36. What does Beatty say about pleasure and happiness?

37. During Montag's conversation with Mildred after Beatty leaves, what indication is there that she has an internal conflict?

38. What book does Montag finally settle on to read with Mildred? What is the symbolism of this book?

Part Two: The Sieve and the Sand

1. The first two books mentioned in this section are by James Boswell, an eighteenth-century lawyer and friend of the writer Samuel Johnson. Boswell is best known for his biography of Johnson and his diaries describing their travels together. Why does Montag think these books have something to do with Clarisse?

2. What connection does Montag make between books and empathy?

3. In relation to the Allegory of the Cave, who would Faber be? What does he say that indicates this is the case?

4. Describe Montag's state of mind as he rides the train to see Faber. Has he made a complete break with his old self?

5. Why does Montag, at this point, have the memory about the sieve and the sand?

6. What Bible verse is Montag trying to memorize during the train ride? Who or what is his antagonist in this scene?

7. What, according to Faber, has been done to Jesus by the television programs?

8. What does Faber mean when he says that good books have "pores"?

9. What metaphors does Faber use to describe the texture that good literature has?

What do all of these metaphors have in common, and what is Faber's larger message here?

10. Why, according to Faber, is it impossible to argue with the "parlor walls"?

11. Faber warns Montag not to look for answers in one "person, machine, or library." Where, according to Faber, do the answers lie?

12. What does Faber say about the public that echoes Beatty's lecture?

13. How does Montag force Faber to become his guide?

14. How is Faber's use of technology different from society's?

15. How is the "blind faith" that Montag has in Faber different from the blind faith that he had in the fire chief?

16. Faber reads Montag the Book of Job, about a virtuous man whose faith is tested by God.

The main question of the Book of Job is why God allows pain and suffering in the world. Why might Bradbury have chosen the Book of Job for this moment in the story?

17. What is it that the women do that drives Montag over the edge? To what does he

compare them in his mind?

18. From what the women say, what can we infer about the election?

19. The poem that Montag reads is "Dover Beach," by Matthew Arnold. The speaker of this poem stands with his lover at night, watching the waves crash on the shore and the armed boats signal with their lights. He concludes that the world is not a caring or hopeful place, and hopes that their love will be able to survive. Why does Bradbury choose to have him read this poem?

20. What does Bradbury tell us about the development of Montag's character in this section?

What allusion is suggested in the references to fire, water, and wine?

21. What is ironic about Beatty saying "the sheep returns to the fold"?

22. Sum up the two sides of the argument in Beatty's dream.

23. Why does Beatty's speech make Montag so upset?

24. What images does Bradbury use to describe Beatty and the other firemen? What ideas do these images evoke?

Part Three: Burning Bright

1. To what story is Beatty alluding when he says Montag "wanted to fly near the sun"?

2. What, according to Beatty, is the real attraction of fire?

3. What is the last thing that Montag burns?

4. What does Montag mean when he says, "We never burned right"?

5. Why does Montag run to Faber's house?

6. Who almost kills Montag? What is the significance of the motivation for this attempted murder?

7. Where does Faber advise Montag to travel? Why might this be thematically significant?

8. Why does Bradbury compare the Hound to autumn? What other mention of autumn have we seen in the book?

9. Bradbury says that Montag feels the pressure of the Hound's silence rising. How does this echo the description of Montag burning his own parlor walls?

10. What is ironic about the broadcast of the chase?

11. Why does Bradbury describe the people looking out of their homes as gray?

12. What does Montag do right before he enters the river?

13. Verse 11 of the Book of Ecclesiastes reads as follows: "There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow."

How does this fit in with Montag's realization about the sun?

14. Why does Montag want "a glass of milk, an apple, a pear"?

15. What language relating to fullness and emptiness does Bradbury use when Montag steps out of the river?

16. Montag's foot hits "something that (rings) dully"—it turns out to be the railroad track. What episode from earlier in the book does this sentence echo?

17. How is the campfire different from the other kinds of fire mentioned in the book?

18. How does Montag's approaching the fire echo the story of Prometheus?

19. What is significant about the fact that the police find a substitute for Montag to end the chase?

20. How is the death of the substitute Montag symbolic?
21. What theme of Fahrenheit 451 does the title of Granger's book hint at?
22. What Biblical references does Granger make? (You can look this up)
23. Chapter 19 of the Old Testament Book of Genesis tells the story of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the story, these cities are destroyed because of the sins of their people. One man, Lot, is righteous enough to be saved. He takes his wife and leaves the city; they are told by an angel not to look behind them. Lot's wife looks back anyway and is turned into a pillar of salt. What scene at the end of the book echoes this story?
24. What symbolic action do the men take after they recover from the bombing?
25. Granger says that the men are "going to build a mirror factory." What earlier events in the book does this wording recall?
26. Does the book seem to have a hopeful or a pessimistic conclusion?
27. A parable is a story that teaches a moral lesson. What is the lesson of Fahrenheit 451?

11 Honors Summer Assignment

Mrs. D'Arco

Google Classroom Code: wrnhvpf

Summer Reading Assignment

Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton

***We will be having a multiple choice test within the first two weeks of school during which the novel and handwritten notes may be used on the exam. Please be sure to complete Part One and Part Two before reading the actual novel.

PART ONE: Print out and carefully read and annotate the historical information/critical commentary that is attached. There must be valid notes in the margin in order to receive credit for your annotations. This article will be collected.

PART TWO: Print out and carefully read and annotate the attached article by Elizabeth Ammons, *Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome and the Question of Meaning*. There must be valid notes in the margin in order to receive credit for your annotations. This article will be collected. Additionally, use this article to answer question #6

PART THREE: Closely read and annotate **PARAGRAPH BY PARAGRAPH** each chapter of the novella and label your notes according to this format.

- Summaries of the chapter will not be accepted as this does not constitute a close read - remember you are reading for both plot and analytical purposes
- Electronic copies will not be accepted - these annotations are to be written by hand and turned in on the first day of school

PART TWO

Directions: Answer each question using specific references from the text (quotes), making sure to write down the page numbers (as is appropriate). You may answer the questions in note format if desired. Be sure to be thorough in your responses.

THESE QUESTIONS MUST BE TURNED IN ON CLASSROOM

*** PLEASE MAKE A COPY OF YOUR DOCUMENT AS YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO UNSUBMIT WORK FOR ANY REASON!

1. The settings of many novels and plays, while establishing the time and place of the action, are also symbolic of character and theme. Analyze the potential symbolic significance of Starkfield in winter as the setting for the action in *Ethan Frome*.
2. Often the proximity of a novel's narrator to the characters and events of the novel points to theme and meaning. How does the narrative technique impact the novel's theme?
3. The inescapability of Fate is a theme common in literature. How do the characters' belief in Fate affect their attitudes and decisions in the novel?
4. The passage below is from the very beginning of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*. Analyze the sources of suspense in this episode.

Excerpt

... If you know Starkfield, Massachusetts, you know the post-office. If you know the post-office you must have seen Ethan Frome drive up to it, drop the reins on his hollow-backed bay and drag himself across the brick pavement to the white colonnade: and you must have asked who he was. It was there that, several years ago, I saw him for the first time; and the sight pulled me up sharp. Even then he was the most striking figure in Starkfield, though he was but the ruin of a man. It was not so much his great height that marked him, for the "natives" were easily singled out by their lank longitude from the stockier foreign breed: it was the careless powerful look he had, in spite of a lameness checking each step like the jerk of a chain. There was something bleak and unapproachable in his face, and he was so stiffened and grizzled that I took him for an old man and was surprised to hear that he was not more than fifty-two. I had this from Harmon Gow, who had driven the stage from Bettsbridge to Starkfield in pre-trolley days and knew the chronicle of all the families on his line. "He's looked that way ever since he had his smash-up; and that's twenty-four years ago come next February," Harmon threw out between reminiscent pauses. The "smash-up" it was—I gathered from the same informant—which, besides drawing the red gash across Ethan Frome's forehead, had so shortened and warped his right side that it cost him a visible effort to take the few steps from his buggy to the post-office window. He used to drive in from his farm every day at about noon, and as that was my own hour for fetching my mail I often passed him in the porch or stood beside him while we waited on the motions of the distributing hand behind the grating. I noticed that, though he came so punctually, he seldom received anything but a copy of the Bettsbridge Eagle, which he put without a glance into his sagging pocket. At intervals, however, the post-master would hand him an envelope addressed to Mrs. Zenobia—or Mrs. Zeena—Frome, and usually bearing conspicuously in the upper left

hand corner the address of some manufacturer of patent medicine and the name of his specific. These documents my neighbour would also pocket without a glance, as if too much used to them to wonder at their number and variety, and would then turn away with a silent nod to the post-master.

5. Read the following passage from Chapter VI of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, and analyze the sentence structure and narrative techniques Wharton uses to create a scene of rapid-paced suspense and drama.

Excerpt

.....He had driven his load half-way to the village when Jotham Powell overtook him, urging the reluctant sorrel toward the Flats. "I'll have to hurry up to do it," Ethan mused, as the sleigh dropped down ahead of him over the dip of the school-house hill. He worked like ten at the unloading, and when it was over hastened on to Michael Eady's for the glue. Eady and his assistant were both "down street," and young Denis, who seldom deigned to take their place, was lounging by the stove with a knot of the golden youth of Starkfield. They hailed Ethan with ironic compliment and offers of conviviality; but no one knew where to find the glue. Ethan, consumed with the longing for a last moment alone with Mattie, hung about impatiently while Denis made an ineffectual search in the obscurer corners of the store. "Looks as if we were all sold out. But if you'll wait around till the old man comes along maybe he can put his hand on it." "I'm obliged to you, but I'll try if I can get it down at Mrs. Homan's," Ethan answered, burning to be gone. Denis's commercial instinct compelled him to aver on oath that what Eady's store could not produce would never be found at the widow Homan's; but Ethan, heedless of this boast, had already climbed to the sledge and was driving on to the rival establishment. Here, after considerable search, and sympathetic questions as to what he wanted it for, and whether ordinary flour paste wouldn't do as well if she couldn't find it, the widow Homan finally hunted down her solitary bottle of glue to its hiding-place in a medley of cough-lozenges and corset-laces. "I hope Zeena ain't broken anything she sets store by," she called after him as he turned the greys toward home.

6. Based on your reading of Ammon's article, do you agree with her assertion that Wharton's novella is really a modern fairy tale targeted at adults? If so, what is the moral of the tale? If you disagree with Ammon's argument, was Wharton then simply trying to express the dangers of being indecisive?

11 Honors Background Article
***Ethan Frome*: Historical Information and Critical Commentary**

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Edith Wharton was born Edith Newbold Jones to the wealthy New York family that is often credited as being the Jones family in the phrase, "keeping up with the Joneses." She received a marriage proposal at a young age, but the wedding was called off by her fiancé's parents, who were upset by what they perceived as the Jones family's unsurpassed snobbery. In 1885, at the age of twenty-three, she married Edward (Teddy) Robbins Wharton, twelve years her senior. Wharton was from a well-established Boston family. He was a sportsman and a gentleman, and the Joneses approved of him as being of their social class. Edith and her husband shared a love of travel. Eventually, however, Edith concluded that they had little in common intellectually. He eventually began conducting a series of dalliances with younger women, which took its toll on Wharton's mental health. Her doctor suggested that she write as a means of relieving some of her tension. *Ethan Frome*, the story of a sensitive and intelligent man trapped in a loveless marriage with a manipulative and self-absorbed hypochondriac is the result. Edith and Edward divorced in 1913, after he suffered a nervous breakdown and was confined to a hospital. She never relinquished his family name. Besides her writing, Wharton was a well-respected landscape architect and interior designer. She wrote several influential books, including *The Decoration of Houses*, her first published work, and *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*. In 1921, Wharton won the Pulitzer Prize for her highly esteemed novel *The Age of Innocence*, making her the first woman to win the award. Edith Wharton died in 1937 in her villa near Paris at the age of seventy-five. *Ethan Frome* was released in 1911 and has been viewed negatively by some critics as morally or ethically insignificant. The novel, however, seems more a utobiographical than moralistic in intent. Ethan is analogous to Edith, Zeena to Edward, and Mattie to Edith's one-time lover, journalist Morton Fullerton. It is one of the few pieces of Wharton's fiction that does not take place in an urban, upper-class environment. Her normally lush and luxurious settings are replaced by the stark and foreboding descriptions of rural working-class New England, which is especially unusual given the fact that Wharton herself was a woman of leisure, living in the luxury of a French villa. Wharton claimed to have based the story of *Ethan Frome* on an accident that had occurred to an acquaintance in Lenox, Massachusetts—an area with which she was familiar.

THE PROBLEM OF NARRATIVE RELIABILITY

Critics have hailed *Ethan Frome* as the most carefully constructed of Wharton's novels, and one cannot discuss the novel without examining the frame story with which it begins and ends. Wharton admitted she got the idea for the frame narrative and the long flashback from Honore de Balzac's *La Grande Bretche*. Both the frame narrative and the embedded story are told by the same narrator, an unnamed engineer, stranded in

Starkfield, Massachusetts, during its long and brutal winter. This narrator's reliability—especially while telling the embedded story—is suspicious because of the variety of sources used to construct it and the fact that the narrator himself calls his account of the tale a “vision.” Clearly, the story presented to us is not a factual record of the events leading to Ethan's accident but the narrator's impressions of what those events might have been. The only verifiable facts of Ethan's story are revealed in the frame narrative. The story itself is tinged by the narrator's interpretation. It is, at best, a hypothesis, informed by the facts revealed in the frame, the impressions the narrator gathered during his night with the Fromes, and his lengthy conversation with Mrs. Hale. Critic Cynthia Griffin Wolff argues that the novel is not about Ethan Frome at all, but about the narrator and his reaction to the story. Wolff emphasizes the similarities established between Ethan and the narrator (e.g., the narrator is an engineer and Frome once hoped to be an engineer) and suggests that the narrator's “vision” is really his view of the man he might become if deprived of his profession and his independence. Jean Franz Blackall agrees that the narrator's story is based solely on inference, but asserts that there is evidence in the text to support his account. Blackall draws our attention to the fact that, at the end of the book, Mrs. Hale corroborates the narrator's assumptions. And Mrs. Hale, who was with Mattie on the morning after the accident, is the closest thing to an eyewitness that we have. Her conclusion that, if Mattie had died, Ethan might have lived, suggests that she knows about the couple's secret love and possibly that the “accident” was really a suicide attempt. Still, as Mrs. Hale never tells the narrator what Mattie told her (which the narrator never tells us), we must accept the sad tale of Ethan's life as largely conjecture and supposition.

THE MORAL DILEMMA IN AND SURROUNDING THE NOVEL

First published in 1911, *Ethan Frome* presents its readers with scenes of unmitigated misery. Many consider the suffering endured by Wharton's characters to be excessive and unjustified. Others argue that the novel attempts to tackle difficult moral and social questions. Still others still look to the novel for clues about the author's own life, especially her unfulfilling marriage to the much-older and ailing Edward Wharton. At the book's initial release, reviewers praised Wharton's style, but criticized the novel's utter bleakness and the inability of her characters to find a way out of their situation. Later critics went so far as to ask whether Ethan Frome was a truly tragic figure or simply emotionally and morally paralyzed. The novel's disastrous conclusion requires the reader to ask: Do Ethan, Mattie, and Zeena deserve their horrible fates? Many readers, of course, answer with a resounding no. Critique Lionel Trilling wrote that Wharton offered no justification for the suffering of her characters. He continued to argue that the novel presented “no moral issue at all.” Other critics, however, have found much significance in the novel's ending. Marlene Springer writes that *Ethan Frome* illustrates the notion that life sometimes presents us with equally strong but conflicting choices. Among the moral choices presented to the characters in the novel are: whether to pursue genuine love or remain “faithful” to what one perceives as his “duty;” whether the personal happiness of two people would justify condemning one person to utter aloneness and poverty; and whether it is “more right” to obey strict social conventions or pursue the American ideal of the rugged individual. Springer also argues that Ethan's apparent moral inertia is exactly the point. His story is an example of what happens

when one refuses to choose. Elizabeth Ammons bases her reading on the fact that Wharton labels Ethan Frome a “tale.” Looked at as a variation on the archetypal fairy tale, Ethan Frome tells a story not unlike “Snow White” or “Cinderella.” To support her thesis, Ammons points to the frozen landscape, Mattie’s physical appearance, her role as housekeeper, and her persecution by the witchlike Zeena—all parallels to the archetypal tale of the young girl whose jealous stepmother oppresses her and tries to keep her dependent, without friends and resources. The important difference, according to Ammons, is that in Ethan Frome, it is the witch who wins. And the victory is intensified by the failed suicide attempt that turns Mattie herself into a version of her tormentor and, at the same time, turns the tormentor into the caretaker. Ammons then takes her fairy tale moral one step further and concludes, “as long as women are kept isolated and dependent, Mattie Silvers will become Zeena Fromes: frigid crippled wrecks of human beings.” The fact that Wharton cripples Mattie but does not allow her to die reflects not Wharton’s cruelty, but that of the culture in which she lived and wrote. Ammons believes that Mattie’s fate is inevitable—without a family or marketable skills, she must live in poverty, become prematurely old, and have her dreams shattered. The sledding accident merely hastens the inevitable. Ammons is careful to point out that Ethan has seen this same disintegration into “queerness” in both his mother and his wife. Thus, according to Ammons, Zeena is herself a victim, a product of the society in which she lived. Zeena’s descent into Witchdom began soon after her marriage to Ethan. Like her treasured pickle dish, Zeena’s life was also put on a shelf the day she married. It is interesting to note that the pickle dish is red—a color associated in the novel with passion and Mattie—and that this symbol of passion is hidden away and never taken down. Thus, the fact that this treasured dish is broken by Mattie and Ethan takes on a new significance and makes Zeena, perhaps, a little more sympathetic. But do Ethan and Mattie deserve the fate Wharton assigns them? Perhaps the novel really is a cautionary tale, warning against wasting those opportunities to seize the day and invent for ourselves new destinies. Time and again, Ethan is overtaken by the urge to rebel, but each time he checks himself. His decision not to ask Hale for the money is probably the most troubling. In every other instance, there is a plausible justification for Ethan not to act or speak. But in this one instance, his justification not to act is so weak as to seem almost ridiculous. Blake Nevius suggests that Ethan’s not asking might have more to do with his fear of actually achieving his dreams than it does with his conscience. This would indeed illustrate emotional paralysis. Because of the novel’s structure, we know that Ethan does not escape from Starkfield or his cold and loveless marriage. We know there will be a “smash-up,” that Ethan will suffer crippling injuries, and that he will become “the ruin of a man.” And it is probably just this predictability that suggests the novel’s ultimate meaning. Perhaps our knowing Ethan’s fate from the very beginning lulls us into believing that this outcome is inevitable, and we, too, resign ourselves to the notion that no action on the part of any of the characters would ultimately have made any significant difference.

[Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome and the Question of Meaning PDF \(click\)](#)
[By Elizabeth Ammons](#)

END OF BACKGROUND ARTICLES FOR 11th Grade HONORS

ALL SENIOR CLASSES

Ms. Iverson

Over the summer, you should begin to draft/outline your college essay. We will be working on these drafts in class for the first few weeks of school, so you should come prepared with an idea of what you want to write about. Choose a prompt from the list below and begin drafting/outlining your essay.

- 1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.*
- 2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?*
- 3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?*
- 4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.*
- 5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.*
- 6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?*
- 7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.*

Don't Panic: The goal is not that you arrive with a perfect essay, but that you arrive having thoughtfully considered one of the prompts, considered a topic that addresses the prompt, and have an appropriate approach to the topic. The most time consuming part of the college essay is simply getting started. Take time this summer to write numerous drafts, consult family and friends, and consider what is it that makes you a unique and worthy candidate. You may decide to change your idea once we start working on the writing in class. That is fine. Do not feel like you have to commit to your first idea! We will spend time in class revising and refining, but you must come with a draft/outline in September to build upon.

Guidelines for final essay:

- Essay should have a controlling idea, some key point you are trying to convey
- Essay should be between 400 and 700 words (the actual essay is required to be between 250 and 650 words, but going over is OK in a draft as long as you revise)
- Essay should be organized into paragraphs and have a distinct beginning, middle, and end

12 Honors Summer Work

Ms. Iverson

Class Code: jnzzrfe

Text: *Mudbound* by Hillary Jordan

In addition to writing a draft of your college essay, read and annotate this novel. This involves “interacting” with the text via marginal notes, character lists on the inside covers, highlighting and underlining terms and quotes, using color coded post its, etc. *Your books will be collected and graded during the first week of school.*

Respond to the following prompts and upload your responses to classroom. Your responses should be AT LEAST a paragraph long, and include evidence directly from the text. Make sure to elaborate on your responses.

1. The setting of the Mississippi Delta is intrinsic to *Mudbound*. Discuss the ways in which the land functions as a character in the novel and how each of the other characters relates to it.
2. *Mudbound* is a chorus, told in six different voices. How do the changes in perspective affect your understanding of the story? Are all six voices equally sympathetic? Reliable?
3. Who gets to speak and who is silenced is a central theme, the silencing of Ronsel being the most literal and brutal example. Discuss the ways in which this theme plays out for the other characters. For instance, how does Laura's silence about her unhappiness on the farm affect her and her marriage? What are the consequences of Jamie's inability to speak to his family about the horrors he experienced in the war? How does speaking or not speaking confer power or take it away?
4. What is the significance of the title? In what ways are each of the characters bound—by the land, by circumstance, by tradition, by the law, by their own limitations? How much of this binding is inescapable and how much is self-imposed? Which characters are most successful in freeing themselves from what binds them? Why?
5. Where would you place the turning point for Ronsel? Who else is complicit in what happens to him, and why?
6. Are there some moral positions that are absolute, or should we take into account things like time and place when making judgments? Explain your answer using details from the novel.
7. How is the last chapter of *Mudbound* different from all the others? Why do you think the author chose to have Ronsel address you, the reader, directly? Do you believe he overcomes the formidable obstacles facing him and finds "something like happiness"? If so, why doesn't the author just say so explicitly? Would a less ambiguous ending have been more or less satisfying? Why or why not?

There will be a test on this novel at some point within the first week of school. Please come prepared with your notes and thorough knowledge of the novel.

AP Lit Summer Work:

Ms. Iverson

Class Code: fbndaf7

For AP Lit this year, you will come prepared for class in September by completing two summer assignments. **THESE MUST BE DONE IN ORDER!** The assignments are below.

1. First, read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster. This upfront, at times sassy and quip quilted guide holds invaluable insights for how to do what its title claims: read texts like a professor. While you read this book, you will answer the accompanying questions for each chapter. I would like bullet form answers-no long winded paragraphs needed! My primary goal is to see that you can identify what Foster discusses in texts you have read or seen. If you have any questions as you work on this, please feel free to email me. I want this assignment to be YOUR WORK ONLY (no discussion with classmates please). Have integrity!

Please TYPE the following assignment and post it on classroom.

Writing Assignments for *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster can be found on Classroom!!

2. Next you will read *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hossein. (One of my favorite books!) This powerful novel continues to rivet readers and is a modern day classic about the horrors and hidden beauty of Afghanistan. While you read the novel, please annotate it thoroughly: this involves “interacting” with the text via marginal notes, character lists on the inside covers, highlighting and underlining terms and quotes, using color coded post-its, etc (see below for a guide). Specifically, I would like you to highlight and label all “Fosterisms” you find. For example, Is there a quest? A dark and stormy night? Baptism? How does geography matter? How is it political? Include your analysis as well as issues on which Foster has enlightened you. (we’ll see who can come up with the most extra credit to the winner!) I will collect and check your books for a grade for this annotation the first week of school, and you can expect an in class timed write about the novel within the first week. I hope you appreciate this phenomenal bildungsroman (look this up if you don’t know what this means!) that conveys a heart wrenching story with deft techniques.

Annotation Guide

Tools:

1. Highlighter

A highlighter allows you to mark exactly what you are interested in. While you read, highlight whatever seems to be key information. At first, you will probably highlight too little or too much; with experience, you will choose more effectively which material to highlight.

2. Pencil

A pencil is better than a pen because you can make changes. Even geniuses make mistakes, temporary comments, and incomplete notes. While you read, use marginal notes to mark key material. Marginalia can include check marks, question marks, stars,

arrows, brackets, and written words and phrases. Create your own system for marking what is important, interesting, quotable, questionable, and so forth.

3. *Your Text*

As you read, section by section, chapter by chapter, consider doing the following: At the end of each chapter or section, briefly summarize the material. Title each chapter or section as soon as you finish it, especially if the text does not provide headings for chapters or sections. Make a list of vocabulary words on a back page or the inside back cover. Possible ideas for lists include the author's special jargon and new, unknown, or otherwise interesting words.

THERE WILL BE AN IN CLASS ESSAY (TEST) DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL ON THIS NOVEL! I WILL ALLOW YOU TO USE YOUR BOOK, SO THE MORE NOTES YOU HAVE, THE BETTER!