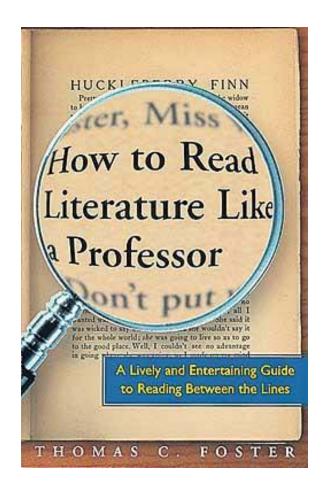
How to Read Literature Like a Professor Student Workbook

"A room without a book is like a body without a soul." -Cicero

"The man who doesn't read has no advantage over the man who can't read." -Mark Twain

AP Literature and Composition



Thomas Foster knows "how to read literature like a professor" because he is a professor of English at the University of Michigan. In a very informal style (this is not a textbook), Foster focuses on literary basics: major themes and motifs, literary models, and narrative devices...all of which will be helpful as we study texts throughout the school year ahead.

FIRST THING ABOUT EFFECTIVE READING

Some of what you read will be familiar to you, and some of it will be new and provide "food for thought" as you read future novels. As you read, you should annotate (see the article below "How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer Adler, Ph.D.), and might consider taking notes as well.

How to Mark a Book By Mortimer J. Adler, Ph.D.

You know you have to read "between the lines" to get the most out of anything. I want to persuade you to do something equally important in the course of your reading. I want to persuade you to write between the lines. Unless you do, you are not likely to do the most efficient kind of reading.

I contend, quite bluntly, that marking up a book is not an act of mutilation but of love. You shouldn't mark up a book which isn't yours.

Librarians (or your friends) who lend you books expect you to keep them clean, and you should. If you decide that I am right about the usefulness of marking books, you will have to buy them. Most of the world's great books are available today, in reprint editions.

There are two ways in which one can own a book. The first is the property right you establish by paying for it, just as you pay for clothes and furniture. But this act of purchase is only the prelude to possession. Full ownership comes only when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it is by writing in it. An illustration may make the point clear. You buy a beefsteak and transfer it from the butcher's icebox to your own. But you do not own the beefsteak in the most important sense until you consume it and get it into your bloodstream. I am arguing that books, too, must be absorbed in your blood stream to do you any good.

Confusion about what it means to "own" a book leads people to a false reverence for paper, binding, and type -- a respect for the physical thing -- the craft of the printer rather than the genius of the author. They forget that it is possible for a man to acquire the idea, to possess the beauty, which a great book contains, without staking his claim by pasting his bookplate inside the cover. Having a fine library doesn't prove that its owner has a mind enriched by books; it proves nothing more than that he, his father, or his wife, was rich enough to buy them. There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best sellers -- unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns wood pulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books -- a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many -- every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back. (This man owns books.)

Is it false respect, you may ask, to preserve intact and unblemished a beautifully printed book, an elegantly bound edition? Of course not. I'd no more scribble all over a first edition of 'Paradise Lost' than I'd give my baby a set of crayons and an original Rembrandt. I wouldn't mark up a painting or a statue. Its soul, so to speak, is inseparable from its body. And the beauty of a rare edition or of a richly manufactured volume is like that of a painting or a statue.

But the soul of a book "can" be separate from its body. A book is more like the score of a piece of music than it is like a painting. No great musician confuses a symphony with the printed sheets of music. Arturo Toscanini reveres Brahms, but Toscanini's score of the G minor Symphony is so thoroughly marked up that no one but the maestro himself can read it. The reason why a great conductor makes notations on his musical scores -- marks them up again and again each time he returns to study them--is the reason why you should mark your books. If your respect for magnificent binding or typography gets in the way, buy yourself a cheap edition and pay your respects to the author.

Why is marking up a book indispensable to reading? First, it keeps you awake. (And I don't mean merely conscious; I mean awake.) In the second place; reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The marked book is usually the thought-through book. Finally, writing helps you remember the thoughts you had, or the thoughts the author expressed. Let me develop these three points. If reading is to accomplish anything more than passing time, it must be active. You can't let your eyes glide across the lines of a book and come up with an understanding of what you have read. Now an ordinary piece of light fiction, like, say, "Gone With the Wind," doesn't require the most active kind of reading. The books you read for pleasure can be read in a state of relaxation, and nothing is lost. But a great book, rich in ideas and beauty, a book that raises and tries to answer great fundamental questions, demands the most active reading of which you are capable. You don't absorb the ideas of John Dewey the way you absorb the crooning of Mr. Vallee. You have to reach for them. That you cannot do while you're asleep.

If, when you've finished reading a book, the pages are filled with your notes, you know that you read actively. The most famous "active" reader of great books I know is President Hutchins, of the University of Chicago. He also has the hardest schedule of business activities of any man I know. He invariably reads with a pencil, and sometimes, when he picks up a book and pencil in the evening, he finds himself, instead of making intelligent notes, drawing what he calls 'caviar factories' on the margins. When that happens, he puts the book down. He knows he's too tired to read, and he's just wasting time.

But, you may ask, why is writing necessary? Well, the physical act of writing, with your own hand, brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory. To set down

your reaction to important words and sentences you have read, and the questions they have raised in your mind, is to preserve those reactions and sharpen those questions. Even if you wrote on a scratch pad, and threw the paper away when you had finished writing, your grasp of the book would be surer. But you don't have to throw the paper away. The margins (top as bottom, and well as side), the end-papers, the very space between the lines, are all available. They aren't sacred. And, best of all, your marks and notes become an integral part of the book and stay there forever. You can pick up the book the following week or year, and there are all your points of agreement, disagreement, doubt, and inquiry. It's like resuming an interrupted conversation with the advantage of being able to pick up where you left off. And that is exactly what reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach him. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a twoway operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author. There are all kinds of devices for marking a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here's the way I do it: Underlining (or highlighting): of major points, of important or forceful statements. Vertical lines at the margin: to emphasize a statement already underlined Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin: to be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book. (You may want to fold the bottom comer of each page on which you use such marks. It won't hurt the sturdy paper on which most modern books are printed, and you will be able take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded-corner page, refresh your recollection of the book.) Numbers in the margin: to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument. Numbers of other pages in the margin: to indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together. ☐ Circling or highlighting of key words or phrases. Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of: recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the books. I use the end-papers at the back of the book to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance.

The front end-papers are to me the most important. Some people reserve them for a fancy bookplate. I reserve them for fancy thinking. After I have finished reading the book and making my personal index on the back end-papers, I turn to the front and try to outline the book, not page by page or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure, with a basic unity and an order of parts. This outline is, to me, the measure of my understanding of the work. If you're a die-hard anti-book-marker, you may object that the margins, the space between the lines, and the end-papers don't give you room enough. All right. How about using a scratch pad slightly smaller than the page-size of the book -- so that the edges of the sheets won't protrude? Make your index, outlines and even your notes on the pad, and then insert these sheets permanently inside the front and back covers of the book.

Or, you may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your reading. It probably will. That's one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you -- how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances. If this be your aim, as it should be, you will not be impatient if it takes more time and effort to read a great book than it does a newspaper.

You may have one final objection to marking books. You can't lend them to your friends because nobody else can read them without being distracted by your notes. Furthermore, you won't want to lend them because a marked copy is kind of an intellectual diary, and lending it is almost like giving your mind away. If your friend wishes to read your *Plutarch's Lives*, *Shakespeare*, or *The Federalist Papers*, tell him gently but firmly, to buy a copy. You will lend him your car or your coat -- but your books are as much a part of you as your head or your heart.

HOW TO READ LITERATURE LIKE A PROFESSOR ASSIGNMENTS

Answer the accompanying questions. This "How-to" book will better prepare you to read carefully and analytically as you begin reading AP Literature. Having knowledge of the subjects covered in this text will give you an advantage throughout the school year and on the AP exam. I do not expect full essay responses for each question. As long as you satisfactorily answer the questions, length will not be an issue.



| Chapter 1 Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not) List the five aspects of the QUEST and then apply them to something you have read (or viewed) in the form used on pages 3-5. | | | |
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| Chapter 2 Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion Choose a meal from a literary work and apply the ideas of Chapter 2 to this literary depiction. | | | | |
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| Chapter 3:Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires What are the essentials of the Vampire story? Apply this to a literary work you have read or viewed. | | | | |
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| Chapter 4 If It's Square, It's a Sonnet Select three sonnets and show which form they are. Discuss how their content reflects the form. (Copy of the sonnet, and annotate them to show your analysis). | | | |
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| Chapter 5Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before? Define intertextuality. Discuss three examples that have helped you in reading specific works. | | | | |
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| Chapter 6 When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare Discuss a work that you are familiar with that alludes to or reflects Shakespeare. Show how the author uses this connection thematically. Read pages 44-46 carefully. In these pages, Foster shows how Fugard reflects Shakespeare through both plot and theme. In your discussion, focus on theme. | | | | |
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| Chapter 7Or the Bible Read "Araby" (available online). Discuss Biblical allusions that Foster does not mention. Look at the example of the "two great jars." Be creative and imaginative in these connections. | | | | |
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| Chapter 8 Hanseldee and Greteldum Think of a work of literature that reflects a fairy tale. Discuss the parallels. Does it create irony or deepen appreciation? | | | |
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| Chapter 9 It's Greek to Me Write a free verse poem derived or inspired by characters or situations from | | | | |
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| Greek mythology. Be prepared to share your poem with the class. | | | | |
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| Chapter 10 It's More Than Just Rain or Snow Discuss the importance of weather in a specific literary work, not in terms of plot. | | | | |
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| Chapter 11More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence Present examples of the two kinds of violence found in literature. Show how the effects are different. | | |
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| Chapter 12 Is That a Symbol? Use the process described on page 106 and investigate the symbolism of the fence in "Araby." (Mangan's sister stands behind it.) | | |
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| Chapter 13 It's All Political Assume that Foster is right and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that one any of the novels you have read are political. If you feel like you have not read one that is political, do research on a novel that is and use Foster's criteria to prove that it is a political novel. | | |
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| Chapter 14 Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too Apply the criteria on page 119 to a major character in a significant literary work. Try to choose a character that will have many matches. This is a particularly apt tool for analyzing film for example, <i>Star Wars</i> , <i>Cool Hand Luke</i> , <i>Excalibur</i> , <i>Malcolm X</i> , <i>Braveheart</i> , <i>Spartacus</i> , <i>Gladiator</i> , and <i>Ben-Hur</i> . | | |
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| Chapter 15 Flights of Fancy Select a literary work in which flight signifies escape or freedom. Explain in detail. |
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| Chapter 16 It's All About Sex Chapter 17 Except the Sex OK the sex chapters. The key idea from this chapter is that "scenes in which sex is coded rather than explicit can work at multiple levels and sometimes be more intense that literal depictions" (141). In other words, sex is often suggested with much more art and effort than it is described, and, if the author is doing his job, it reflects and creates theme or character. Choose a novel or movie in which sex is suggested, but not described, and discuss how the relationship is suggested and how this implication affects the theme or develops characterization. |
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| Chapter 18 If She Comes Up, It's Baptism Think of a "baptism scene" from a significant literary work. How was the character different after the experience? Discuss. | | | |
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| Chapter 19 Geography Matters Discuss at least four different aspects of a specific literary work that Foster would lassify under "geography." | | | | |
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| Chapter 20So Does Season Find a poem that mentions a specific season. Then discuss how the poet uses the season n a meaningful, traditional, or unusual way. (Copy the poem with your analysis.) | | | |
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| Interlude One Story Write your own definition for archetype. Then identify an archetypal story and apply it to a literary work with which you are familiar. | | | | |
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| Chapter 21 Marked for Greatness Figure out Harry Potter's scar. If you aren't familiar with Harry Potter, select another character with a physical imperfection and analyze its implications for characterization. | | | |
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| Chapter 22 He's Blind for a Reason, You Know Chapter 23 It's Never Just Heart Disease Chapter 24And Rarely Just Illness Recall two characters who died of a disease in a literary work. Consider how | | | | |
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| nese deaths reflect the "principles governing the use of disease in literature" (215-217). Discuss the | | | | |
| ffectiveness of the death as related to plot, theme, or symbolism. | | | | |
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| Chapter 25 Don't Read with Your Eyes After reading Chapter 25, choose a scene or episode from a novel, play or epic written before the twentieth century. Contrast how it could be viewed by a reader from the twenty-irst century with how it might be viewed by a contemporary reader. Focus on specific assumptions that the author makes - assumptions that would not make it in this century. | | | | lay or epic written before the twentieth century. Contrast how it could be viewed by a reader from the triest century with how it might be viewed by a contemporary reader. Focus on specific assumptions that | | |
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| Chapter 26 Is He Serious? And Other Ironies Select an ironic literary work and explain the multivocal nature of the irony in the work. | | | |
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| Chapter 27 A Test Case Read "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield, the short story starting on page 245. Complete the exercise on pages 265-266, following the directions exactly. Then compare your writing with the three examples. How did you do? What does the essay that follows comparing Laura with Persephone add to your appreciation of Mansfield's story? | | | | Complete the exercise on pages 265-266, following the directions exactly. Then compare your writing three examples. How did you do? What does the essay that follows comparing Laura with Persephone according to the example of the ex | | |
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| Envoi Choose a motif not discussed in this book (as the horse reference on page 280) and note its appearance in three or four different works. What does this idea seem to signify? | | | | | |
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