

## Simon---English II HCA Honors Summer Reading Assignment

*How to Read Literature Like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines* by Thomas C. Foster

What does it mean when a fictional hero takes a journey? Shares a meal? Gets drenched in a sudden rain shower? Often, there is much more going on in a novel or poem than is readily visible on the surface—a symbol, maybe, that remains elusive, or an unexpected twist on a character—and there's that sneaking suspicion that the deeper meaning of a literary text keeps escaping you. In this practical and amusing guide to literature, Thomas C. Foster shows how easy and gratifying it is to unlock those hidden truths, and to discover a world where a road leads to a quest; a shared meal may signify a communion; and rain, whether cleansing or destructive, is never just rain. Ranging from major themes to literary models, narrative devices, and form, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* is the perfect companion for making your reading experience more enriching, satisfying, and fun. (from the publisher)

**Assignment:** Read this book in its **entirety**. At a **minimum** you need to complete five of the **paragraph assignments** on required chapters. Responses should be typed. These short writing assignments are designed not only to help you practice your literary analysis skills but also to help me get to know you and your literary tastes. Whenever I ask for an example from literature, you may use short stories, novels, plays, or films (yes, film is a literary genre). I encourage you to refer to works you studied previous years in English. If your literary repertoire is thin and undeveloped, use Foster's Appendix to jog your memory or to select additional works to explore. At the very least, watch some of the "Movies to Read" that are listed on pages 293-294. You may use the same literary work more than once in completing the other prompts.

**Please note that you are only required to do five of the thirteen paragraph responses. All five-paragraph assignments will be due on the first day of class.**

Again, remember your responses should be paragraphs—not pages! A well-developed paragraph should be six to eight sentences. Some chapters do not have a prompt, but you still need to have these chapters read by the first class meeting.

As you compose each written response, re-phrase the prompt as part of your answer. In other words, I should be able to tell which question you are answering without referring back to the prompts. Support your opinions with evidence from the texts you use. You must back up your assertions with quotes from the texts. Always record the page numbers for quotes and use MLA guidelines for referencing page numbers.

**Paragraph Assignments for Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*:**

**Introduction: How'd He Do That?**

How do memory, symbol, and pattern affect the reading of literature? How does the recognition of patterns make it easier to read complicated literature? Discuss a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbol or pattern.

**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.

**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.

**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. [Look at works that have a vampire-like character, *not* a vampire story, so nothing from the *Twilight* series.]

**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.

**Chapter 12 -- Is That a Symbol?**

Use the process described on page 106 and investigate the symbolism used in a specific literary work you have read.

**Chapter 13 -- It's All Political**

Assume that Foster is right and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that a literary work is political.

**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, *Star Wars*, *Braveheart*, *Gladiator*, *Matrix Trilogy*, *The Green Mile*, *Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Lord of the Rings*.

**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.

**Chapter 19 -- Geography Matters...**

Discuss at least four different aspects of a specific literary work that Foster would classify under "geography."

**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.

**Chapter 24 -- ...And Rarely Just Illness**

Recall two characters that died of a disease in a literary work. Consider how these deaths reflect the "principles governing the use of disease in literature" (215-217). Discuss the effectiveness of the death as related to plot, theme, or symbolism.

**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 a reader from a previous century could view it 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.