

AP Literature and Composition—Mrs. Sutherlin (Lsutherlin@stpatrickhighschool.net)

Summer Reading and Writing Assignments

“To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting.” –Edmund Burke

Welcome to A.P. English Literature and Composition! Advanced Placement English is a rigorous college level course with two goals: (1) to work diligently, through discipline, to amass the knowledge and skills required of all students of scholarship-in depth study of reading and writing; (2) to gain university level credit while in high school through the successful completion of the AP exam or through dual enrollment. The course is largely self-directed learning. There is a tremendous amount of reading required, and there will be numerous writing assignments. Regular quizzes will help ensure reading is completed. Each student will be assigned a collection of poems and will be asked to write poetry responses on some of these. I will also ask you to keep up with Novel/Play/Short Story Sheets for each of the works we cover, so that at the end you will be able to quickly review before the exam.

In addition to reading for class discussion, each student must complete 600 pages of supplemental reading each term and complete a “book talk” for each book. A book talk is an oral book report in which you convince me that you have read the book. There will be a folder in the front of the room for you to schedule your book talks.

Over the summer, you are to read *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver, and *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster and the poems “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning and “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats. (You can find the poems online.) As you read keep a notebook, and write down any vocabulary with which you are unfamiliar, make notes on the characters, the setting, the plot, and any symbolism you find for the first two novels. You should have at least three pages per book. List the main character on one side and the minor characters on the other side. List and briefly describe the conflict of each novel and whether it is internal or external. Write a page on existentialism and how it applies to *The Stranger*. In your essay, describe which chapter you believe best expresses the overall themes and feelings of the novel. Write a 1-2 page essay (double-spaced, MLA style) in which you analyze the chapter as a representation of the novel as a whole. Avoid summary, and focus on analysis while providing textual evidence. For each of the poems write a response. What is interesting in each of them? What do you notice about the imagery and sound devices? You will submit this online by July 31st, and we will have tests on each of these works during the first two weeks of school.

In addition, you are required to read the following works and complete the following assignments.

- “The Creative Process” by James Baldwin (essay attached)
- “Your Brain on Fiction” by Annie Murphy Paul (article attached)
- “How to Mark a Book” by Mortimer Adler, Ph.D. (essay attached)
- *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

Additional assignments:

1. Read the Baldwin essay and Paul's article (attached) to explore the role of the artist and the function(s) of art. Later, we will explore the connections between these works and other literature of various genres.
2. Read Adler's essay "How to Mark a Book" (attached). Formally, we call this annotating a book. Yet, making a book is rather personal and unique to you as an individual. It is important that you create a system that works well for you. Consider the possibilities of highlighters, colored pens or pencils, and post-it notes (or flags) as some of your options. Your personal book-marking system will develop over time. However you decide to do it, marking your books is not a recommendation, it is required for AP English Literature. **Use your system to mark your thoughts as you read the other assigned works. These annotations will be checked the first week of school.**
3. Read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* before tackling the novel *Poisonwood Bible* and *The Stranger*. 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, he focuses on literary basics; themes, symbols, literary models, narrative devices, etc. Some of what you read will be familiar to you; some of it will be new and food for thought as you read your summer novel. The ideas and strategies in this book will aid you in your reading all year long, **so I encourage you to buy your own copy**, new or used. This way, you can mark your book to your heart's content.
4. After reading *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, complete the following assignment.
 - Read the book answering the set questions for each section and chapter.
 - Title each section as you write your answers. Your answers should be submitted online by July 31 along with the rest of your summer assignment.

How to Read Literature Like a Professor

Introduction "How'd He Do That?"

1. What is a 'milquetoast'?
2. Who wrote "Dr. Faustus"?
3. What was being given up?
4. Name the three items that an English professor acquires through reading.
5. Name the 'complex' that is the example of a 'pattern'.

Chapter 1 "Every Trip is a Quest"

1. What are the five essentials of a quest?
2. What is the real reason for a quest?
3. Why do professors think that *The Crying of Lot 49* is a terrific little book?
4. Why shouldn't the words "never" and "always" be used in literary analysis?

Chapter 2 "Nice to Eat with You"

1. What happens whenever people eat and drink together?
2. Breaking bread together is an act of what?
3. How is food a conflict solver?
4. Which writer took "such care about food and drink"?

Chapter 3 “Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires”

1. What else is vampirism about other than vampires?
2. Name the author fascinated with the dual nature of humanity.
3. Vampires were first written about in the Victorian age. Why?
4. What group of people does Foster name as an example of modern day vampires?

Chapter 4 “If It’s Square, It’s a Sonnet”

1. When was the sonnet first written?
2. Name the four adjectives Foster uses to describe the sonnet.
3. How does the shape of the square pertain to the sonnet?
4. Which type of sonnet has a quatrain, quatrain, quatrain, couplet, form?

Chapter 5 “Where Have I Seen Her Before?”

1. Northrop Frye speaks about literature. What does he say and what does he mean?
2. “O Brien_____”?
3. What is the point of the simile about the eels?
4. What is the point of the mushroom analogy?

Chapter 6 “When in Doubt, It’s from Shakespeare”

1. Name a television show that used a Shakespeare theme.
2. “King Lear” makes us think of...g_____,g_____,m_____and
l_____?
3. What does ‘ubiquity’ mean?

4. Whom does Foster mention as the greatest tragic hero?

Chapter 7 "...Or the Bible"

1. Foster notes that even Pulp Fiction has Biblical references. To what does it refer?

2. In Toni Morrison's "Beloved" who do "the four horsemen" represent?

3. James Baldwin was the son of a _____?

4. Where are "most of the great tribulations to which human beings are subjected" given in detail?

Chapter 8 "Hanseldee and Greteldum"

1. What is the "literary canon"?

2. What does any form of irony do?

3. For the reader, what does this borrowing bring us?

4. Name the titles of the two stories from which the title of this chapter comes.

Chapter 9 "It's Greek to Me"

1. What is the connection between religion and myth that causes trouble in the classroom?

2. Why does the story of Icarus still mean something today?

3. Give one reason why we give so much attention to Homer.
4. What is the tone of the author in this chapter?

Chapter 10 "It's More Than Just Rain or Snow"

1. Ever since "we crawled up on the land" what has the water been trying to do to us?
2. Name the four things that the use of rain achieved, in Hardy's story.
3. Explain the paradox of rain, how does it backfire?
4. What do the rainbow, fog and snow symbolize?

Interlude.

1. Name two "intentionalist" writers.
2. Name TWO things these writers try to do in their work
3. "Ulysses" is structured on_____? and "The Waste Land" is structured on_____ ?
4. The process of writing is very much to do with _____thinking.

Chapter 11 "More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence"

1. Of what is the story "Beloved" a representation?
2. What does the death of the boy in Frost's poem "Out, Out---"really represent?
3. Foster says that Lawrence's deaths are "heavily symbolic". Which character's

death in the story “The Fox” does Foster use as an example?

4 Why is it nearly impossible for us to generalize about the meaning of violence?

Chapter 12 “Is That a Symbol?”

1. What is the problem with symbols?

2. What is an allegory?

3. What variety of tools do we need to figure out what a symbol means?

4. Why does E.M.Forster (not the writer of this book) use the cave as an example of the ambiguity of a symbol?

5. State three examples of what the river symbolizes in

“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”.

Chapter 13 “It’s All Political”

1. In the story of “A Christmas Carol” what is Dickens really asking us to do?

2. Why doesn’t Foster like political literature, and why?

3. What type of political writing does Foster love, and why?

4. Explain how Sophocles’ “Oedipus at Colonus” could be political.

Chapter 14 “Yes, She’s a Christ Figure Too”

1. When reading literature, why is it that we need to know the Christian religion?

2. Of the 18 features listed about Christ, write out # 7 and # 10.

3. On pages 120 and 121, why are certain words italicized, and what book is Foster describing?

4. Why are there Christ figures?

Chapter 15 “Flights of Fancy”

1. Name the five ideas that flight could represent.

2. What does ‘xenophobia’ mean? (Research this)

3. What trumps everything? What does ‘trump’ mean?

4. What do the people of the town believe the angel brings in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”?

5. What does Stephen learn from the birds in “A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man”?

Chapter 16 “It’s All About Sex...”

1. What did Freud “unlock”?

2. From how far back does the idea of sexual symbolism stem?

3. What did the Hayes Code (c. 1935-65) say?

4. What is the sexiest scene that DH Lawrence ever wrote about?

Chapter 17 "...Except Sex"

1. Why didn't writers write about sex in the Victorian Age?
2. What happened to Joyce's writing?
3. After less than a century of sexual writing, what is left?
4. In Durrell's novels "the sex that occurs is invariably tied up with something else"
what is it? (4 parts)
5. O'Brien uses sex in her books, for what reason?

Chapter 18 "If She Comes Up, It's Baptism"

1. What are the four symbolic meanings of falling into the water?
2. Explain: "One cannot step into the same river twice."
3. What does Foster believe is the point of Henry Jr.'s drowning?
4. How is Mabel reborn?

Chapter 19 "Geography Matters"

1. Why does the actual geography of a place matter in a story?
2. Use a quote—what does Foster say about humans and geography?
3. How does Poe scare us without using the house in "The Fall of the House of Usher"?
4. How does DH Lawrence use geography as a metaphor?

Chapter 20 "...So Does Season"

1. In life, what does the winter represent?
2. Why does Henry James give a) Daisy Miller her name b) Frederic Winterbourne his?
3. What do spring, summer and fall represent.
4. What can the harvest represent?

Interlude* One Story

1. What does Foster believe the one story is about?
2. What is it that "everyone who writes anything knows"?
3. What does a writer have to do when 'she' gets to work?
4. What is the basic premise of intertextuality?
5. From where did the critic Northrop Frye get the notion of 'archetype'?

Chapter 21 "Marked for Greatness"

1. What does it mean when people have physical marks or imperfections?
2. What did the people of Shakespeare's time believe about physical deformity?
3. Why was Oedipus named Oedipus?
4. With what does the wasteland myth concern itself?

Chapter 22 “He’s blind for a Reason, You Know”

1. Why does Oedipus blind himself?
2. Why is blindness important when it is in a story?
3. What is Foster’s “Indiana Jones principal”?
4. Name four characters in Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot”.

Chapter 23 “It’s Never Just Heart Disease”

1. What is a ‘cuckold’ (Research this)?
2. How does Foster describe heart disease in terms of literature?
3. Of what is the heart symbolic since ancient times?
4. What “suitable emblem” does the heart provide?
5. Why would a writer use a heart attack as opposed to say alcoholism?

Chapter 24 “ ...And Rarely Just Illness”

1. Define “simony”. (Research this)
2. Before the twentieth century, why were people superstitious about disease?
3. What does “verisimilitude” mean?
4. If the disease is inherited from a parent, what does this symbolize?

5. AIDS is.....(complete)

6. What could fever represent?

Chapter 25 "Don't Read With Your Eyes"

1. Explain the social significance of the party the old ladies give in Joyce's story.

2. What does Foster mean when he says, "Don't read with your eyes."?

3. What does Foster say about the character of Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice"?

4. How does Foster use Pound as an example?

Chapter 26 "Is He Serious? And Other Ironies"

1. Who is the poet of stasis?

2. What does stasis mean?

3. What does the road represent in "Waiting for Godot"?

4. Give two of the examples Foster gives of irony on page 238.

5. How is Leonard Bast's death ironic?

6. What trumps everything? And what does this mean?

Chapter 27. "A Test Case" Read the story and Foster's notes.

1. Explain Foster's description of the disastrous readings some students may offer.

2. What does the story signify to the student Diane?
3. Read Foster's version, his interpretation of the story. What ancient myth/story does he see in it?
4. Quote the four areas Foster feels the story signifies.

Envoi.

1. What does this mean?
2. What is Foster's first thought?
3. What is his second?
5. As you read, keep your notes from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* close by, and mark those ideas that Foster pointed out in the book.
6. After you finish reading *Poisonwood Bible* and *The Stranger*, apply the ideas from **two chapters** of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* to one of the assigned novels, focusing on this question: **How did the information in *How to Read Literature* help you understand the deeper layers of the novel?**
For example, if you are reading *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, you might write a response applying the ideas from Ch. 1, "Elements of the Quest" to the story explaining how Goldilocks's journey could be seen as a type of quest with all the elements Foster discusses in his book. You might choose to write your second response using Ch. 2, "Nice to Eat With You: Acts of Communion" explaining how those ideas gave you clues to the story's larger meanings.

Each response should include:

- the name of the chapter from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*
- an explanation of how these points helped your understanding of literary aspects of the novel (which may include a discussion of theme, character, plot, symbol, irony, satire, setting, structure, tone and/or point of view).

Use Foster's "Test Case," Ch. 27 as an example of how to apply his ideas to a story. Each of your two responses should be a minimum of 150 words typed (include a word count). That will be 300 words total for both responses. As with any assignment, all work should be your own. Do not consult outside resources until you have finished all your assignments!

During the year, additional texts we will be reading are: *Fahrenheit 451* by Raymond Bradbury, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare, *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, and at least three others.

We will be taking AP Practice Tests, so you will need to keep up with these.

You will have a research paper (MLA style) due during the second term.

(credit for some of the ideas herein—Kim Thompson @ Mosley High School, M McLawhorn @ Madison High, and Mrs. Clinton—many thanks!) Please e-mail me if you have any questions about your reading or your assignments over the summer. Lucy Sutherlin — lsutherlin@stpatrickhighschool.net

THE CREATIVE PROCESS By James Baldwin from Creative America, Ridge Press, 1962. Perhaps the primary distinction of the artist is that he must actively cultivate that state which most men, necessarily, must avoid; the state of being alone. That all men are, when the chips are down, alone, is a banality—a banality because it is very frequently stated, but very rarely, on the evidence, believed. Most of us are not compelled to linger with the knowledge of our aloneness, for it is a knowledge that can paralyze all action in this world. There are, forever, swamps to be drained, cities to be created, mines to be exploited, children to be fed. None of these things can be done alone. But the conquest of the physical world is not man's only duty. He is also enjoined to conquer the great wilderness of himself. The precise role of the artist, then, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place. The state of being alone is not meant to bring to mind merely a rustic musing beside some silver lake. The aloneness of which I speak is much more like the aloneness of birth or death. It is like the fearless alone that one sees in the eyes of someone who is suffering, whom we cannot help. Or it is like the aloneness of love, the force and mystery that so many have extolled and so many have cursed, but which no one has ever understood or ever really been able to control. I put the matter this way, not out of any desire to create pity for the artist—God forbid!—but to suggest how nearly, after all, is his state the state of everyone, and in an attempt to make vivid his endeavor. The state of birth, suffering, love, and death are extreme states—extreme, universal, and inescapable. We all know this, but we would rather not know it. The artist is present to correct the delusions to which we fall prey in our attempts to avoid this knowledge. It is for this reason that all societies have battled with the incorrigible disturber of the peace—the artist. I doubt that future societies will get on with him any better. The entire purpose of society is to create a bulwark against the inner and the outer chaos, in order to make life bearable and to keep the human race alive. And it is absolutely inevitable that when a tradition has been evolved, whatever the tradition is, the people, in general, will suppose it to have existed from before the beginning of time and will be most unwilling and indeed unable to conceive of any changes in it. They do not know how they will live without those traditions that have given them their identity. Their reaction, when it is suggested that they can or that they must, is panic. And we see this panic, I think, everywhere in the world today, from the streets of New Orleans to the grisly battleground of Algeria. And a higher level of consciousness among the people is the only hope we have, now or in the future, of minimizing human damage. The artist is distinguished from all other responsible actors in society—the politicians, legislators, educators, and scientists—by the fact that he is his own test tube, his own laboratory, working according to very rigorous rules, however unstated these may be, and cannot allow any consideration to supersede his responsibility to reveal all that he can possibly discover concerning the mystery of the human being. Society must accept some things as real; but he must always know that visible reality hides a deeper one, and that all our action and achievement rest on things unseen. A society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and he must let us know, that there is nothing stable under heaven. One cannot possibly build a school, teach a child, or drive a car without taking some things for granted. The artist cannot and must not take anything for granted, but must drive to the heart of every answer and expose the question the answer hides. I seem to be making extremely grandiloquent claims for a breed of men and women historically despised while living and acclaimed when safely dead. But, in a way, the belated honor that all societies tender their artists proven the reality of the point I am trying to make. I am really trying to make clear the nature of

the artist's responsibility to his society. The peculiar nature of this responsibility is that he must never cease warring with it, for its sake and for his own. For the truth, in spite of appearances and all our hopes, is that everything is always changing and the measure of our maturity as nations and as men is how well prepared we are to meet these changes, and further, to use them for our health. Now, anyone who has ever been compelled to think about it—anyone, for example, who has ever been in love—knows that the one face that one can never see is one's own face. One's lover—or one's brother, or one's enemy—sees the face you wear, and this face can elicit the most extraordinary reactions. We do the things we do and feel what we feel essentially because we must—we are responsible for our actions, but we rarely understand them. It goes without saying, I believe, that if we understood ourselves better, we would damage ourselves less. But the barrier between oneself and one's knowledge of oneself is high indeed. There are so many things one would rather not know! We become social creatures because we cannot live any other way. But in order to become social, there are a great many other things that we must not become, and we are frightened, all of us, of these forces within us that perpetually menace our precarious security. Yet the forces are there: we cannot will them away. All we can do is learn to live with them. And we cannot learn this unless we are willing to tell the truth about ourselves, and the truth about us is always at variance with what we wish to be. The human effort is to bring these two realities into a relationship resembling reconciliation. The human beings whom we respect the most, after all—and sometimes fear the most—are those who are most deeply involved in this delicate and strenuous effort, for they have the unshakable authority that comes only from having looked on and endured and survived the worst. That nation is healthiest which has the least necessity to distrust or ostracize these people—whom, as I say, honor, once they are gone, because somewhere in our hearts we know that we cannot live without them. The dangers of being an American artist are not greater than those of being an artist anywhere else in the world, but they are very particular. These dangers are produced by our history. They rest on the fact that in order to conquer this continent, the particular aloneness of which I speak—the aloneness in which one discovers that life is tragic, and therefore unutterably beautiful—could not be permitted. And that this prohibition is typical of all emergent nations will be proved, I have no doubt, in many ways during the next fifty years. This continent now is conquered, but our habits and our fears remain. And, in the same way that to become a social human being one modifies and suppresses and, ultimately, without great courage, lies to oneself about all one's interior, uncharted chaos, so have we, as a nation, modified or suppressed and lied about all the darker forces in our history. We know, in the case of the person, that whoever cannot tell himself the truth about his past is trapped in it, is immobilized in the prison of his undiscovered self. This is also true of nations. We know how a person, in such a paralysis, is unable to assess either his weaknesses or his strengths, and how frequently indeed he mistakes the one for the other. And this, I think, we do. We are the strongest nation in the Western world, but this is not for the reasons that we think. It is because we have an opportunity that no other nation has in moving beyond the Old World concepts of race and class and caste, to create, finally, what we must have had in mind when we first began speaking of the New World. But the price of this is a long look backward when we came and an unflinching assessment of the record. For an artist, the record of that journey is most clearly revealed in the personalities of the people the journey produced. Societies never know it, but the war of an artist with his society is a lover's war, and he does, at his best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to himself and, with that revelation, to make freedom real.

Your Brain on Fiction

By ANNIE MURPHY PAUL

AMID the squawks and pings of our digital devices, the old-fashioned virtues of reading novels can seem faded, even futile. But new support for the value of fiction is arriving from an unexpected quarter: neuroscience.

Brain scans are revealing what happens in our heads when we read a detailed description, an evocative metaphor or an emotional exchange between characters. Stories, this research is showing, stimulate the brain and even change how we act in life.

Researchers have long known that the “classical” language regions, like Broca’s area and Wernicke’s area, are involved in how the brain interprets written words. What scientists have come to realize in the last few years is that narratives activate many other parts of our brains as well, suggesting why the experience of reading can feel so alive. Words like “lavender,” “cinnamon” and “soap,” for example, elicit a response not only from the language-processing areas of our brains, but also those devoted to dealing with smells.

In a 2006 study published in the journal *NeuroImage*, researchers in Spain asked participants to read words with strong odor associations, along with neutral words, while their brains were being scanned by a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machine. When subjects looked at the Spanish words for “perfume” and “coffee,” their primary olfactory cortex lit up; when they saw the words that mean “chair” and “key,” this region remained dark. The way the brain handles metaphors has also received extensive study; some scientists have contended that figures of speech like “a rough day” are so familiar that they are treated simply as words and no more. Last month, however, a team of researchers from Emory University reported in *Brain & Language* that when subjects in their laboratory read a metaphor involving texture, the sensory cortex, responsible for perceiving texture through touch, became active. Metaphors like “The singer had a velvet voice” and “He had leathery hands” roused the sensory cortex, while phrases matched for meaning, like “The singer had a pleasing voice” and “He had strong hands,” did not.

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Researchers have discovered that words describing motion also stimulate regions of the brain distinct from language-processing areas. In a study led by the cognitive scientist Véronique Boulenger, of the Laboratory of Language Dynamics in France, the brains of participants were scanned as they read sentences like “John grasped the object” and “Pablo kicked the ball.” The scans revealed activity in the motor cortex, which coordinates the body’s movements. What’s more, this activity was concentrated in one part of the motor cortex when the movement described was arm-related and in another part when the movement concerned the leg.

The brain, it seems, does not make much of a distinction between reading about an experience and encountering it in real life; in each case, the same neurological regions are stimulated. Keith Oatley, an emeritus professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Toronto (and a published novelist), has proposed that reading produces a vivid simulation of reality, one that “runs on minds of readers just as computer simulations run on computers.” Fiction — with its redolent details, imaginative metaphors and attentive descriptions of people and their actions — offers an especially rich replica. Indeed, in one respect novels go beyond simulating reality to give readers an experience unavailable off the page: the opportunity to enter fully into other people’s thoughts and feelings.

The novel, of course, is an unequalled medium for the exploration of human social and emotional life. And there is evidence that just as the brain responds to depictions of smells and textures and movements as if they were the real thing, so it treats the interactions among fictional characters as something like real-life social encounters.

Raymond Mar, a psychologist at York University in Canada, performed an analysis of 86 fMRI studies, published last year in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, and concluded that there was substantial overlap in the brain networks used to understand stories and the networks used to navigate interactions with other individuals — in particular, interactions in which we’re trying to figure out the thoughts and feelings of others. Scientists call this capacity of the brain to construct a map of other people’s intentions “theory of mind.” Narratives offer a unique opportunity to engage this capacity, as we identify with characters’ longings and frustrations, guess at their hidden motives and track their encounters with friends and enemies, neighbors and lovers.

It is an exercise that hones our real-life social skills, another body of research suggests. Dr. Oatley and Dr. Mar, in collaboration with several other scientists, reported in two studies, published in 2006 and 2009, that individuals who frequently read fiction seem to be better able to understand other people, empathize with them and see the world from their perspective. This relationship persisted even after the researchers accounted for the possibility that more empathetic individuals might prefer reading novels. A 2010 study by Dr. Mar found a similar result in preschool-age children: the

more stories they had read to them, the keener their theory of mind — an effect that was also produced by watching movies but, curiously, not by watching television. (Dr. Mar has conjectured that because children often watch TV alone, but go to the movies with their parents, they may experience more “parent-children conversations about mental states” when it comes to films.)

Fiction, Dr. Oatley notes, “is a particularly useful simulation because negotiating the social world effectively is extremely tricky, requiring us to weigh up myriad interacting instances of cause and effect. Just as computer simulations can help us get to grips with complex problems such as flying a plane or forecasting the weather, so novels, stories and dramas can help us understand the complexities of social life.”

These findings will affirm the experience of readers who have felt illuminated and instructed by a novel, who have found themselves comparing a plucky young woman to Elizabeth Bennet or a tiresome pedant to Edward Casaubon. Reading great literature, it has long been averred, enlarges and improves us as human beings. Brain science shows this claim is truer than we imagined.

Annie Murphy Paul is the author, most recently, of “Origins: How the Nine Months Before Birth Shape the Rest of Our Lives.”

HOW TO MARK A BOOK¹

by Mortimer J. Adler

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, at less than a dollar.

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 bloodstream 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 separated 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 C-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 wide 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 and bottom, as 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 two-way 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 your 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:

1. *Underlining*: of major points, of important or forceful statements.
2. *Vertical lines at the margin*: to emphasize a statement already underlined.
3. *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 corner 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 to take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded-corner page, refresh your recollection of the book.)
4. *Numbers in the margin*: to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.
5. *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.
6. *Circling of key words or phrases*.
7. *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 a kind of 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.

¹From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 6, 1941. By permission of the author.