
Grade 10:

Summer Assignment 2026-27

Pre-AP English II

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Assignment

Below, you will find a list of 5 readings: one mandatory, four optional. **You are to purchase one PHYSICAL copy of the mandatory reading PLUS one PHYSICAL copy of any optional book of your choice. Then, in marker or pen, you will write your full name on the back of the front cover, or on the very first page of the book.**

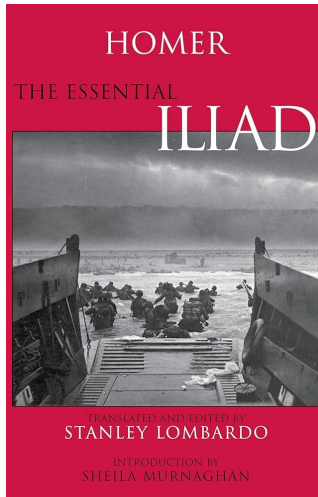
Each of the readings featured on this list have appeared on the Florida ELA FAST in some way, shape, or form. Beyond that, they are foundational and nourishing tales that establish the level of both the thematic veracity and literary substance we will be dealing with daily in class. Most importantly, I have made every reading on this list reasonable. Each book is 150 pages or less.

You will annotate your books from front to back. Annotations can cover anything from a developing thematic discussion of the text, to your reaction(s) to character developments, plot developments, interpersonal dynamics, motivations, social commentary, etc. **You will annotate at a minimum of one substantive annotation entry per individual page.** As your annotations develop throughout the book, so can the complexity of your commentary. Annotations are an exercise in gathering textual evidence to produce an argument/comment about the overarching meaning of the story, so by the time you get to the end, you should have something to say about the book and its meaning broadly speaking with the textual evidence you've gathered.

Confused about what good annotations look like? Don't worry, the absolute superstars of the class of 2026 have got your back. Some examples of A-level in-class annotations from last year's students can be found at the very bottom of this doc, below the books!

Annotations are due on the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.

Required Reading



The Essential Iliad - Homer (~150 pg Hackett Edition, 2001. Translated by Stanley Lombardo)

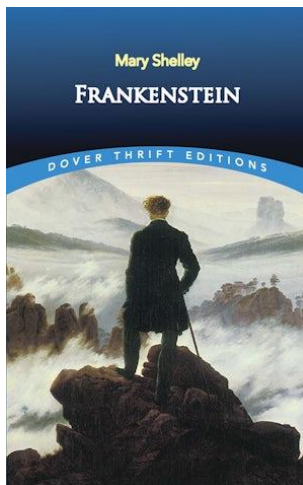
ISBN 100872205428

Amazon Link:

<https://www.amazon.com/Essential-Iliad-Homer/dp/0872205428>

There are three certainties in life: death, taxes, and Greek myth in the ELA FAST. This book is a faithfully translated, selected abridgement of the Iliad's most important passages, shortening the Homeric epic from its original ~600 page length to less than a third at ~150 pages. Homer's Iliad follows Achilles through to the final stages of the Trojan War, in which Greek warriors faced off against Trojan (from the ancient city of Troy) defenders. The Essential Iliad narrows the story down to Achilles's highest highs and lowest lows, from the pride that pulls him off the battlefield to the loss and thirst for vengeance that drives him right back into a brutal war. This reading serves the dual purpose of familiarizing students with ELA FAST reading material, while also priming students to engage with complex characters marred by conflicting ambitions and motivations.

Optional Selections (Pick ONE of Four)



Frankenstein - Mary Shelley (~160pg Dover Thrift Edition, 1994.)

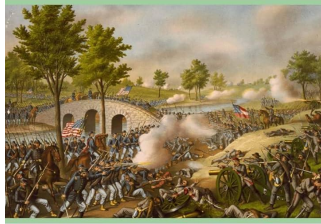
ISBN 100486282112

Amazon Link:

<https://www.amazon.com/Frankenstein-Mary-Shelley/dp/0486282112/>

For the last 200 years, Frankenstein has been one of the Romantic Era's enduring imprints on our culture and society, for good reason. It is an archetypical story both for its metaphorical/ allegorical value, and its character-driven storytelling approach. Throughout our time together in the 2026-27 academic year, we will encounter several stories where a single, fundamental conflict within or between characters have deep, lasting, and sometimes cataclysmic effects on the relationships, dynamics, and even the structures/societies around them. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is one of these: a story about creation, abandonment, revenge, and what happens when ambition outruns responsibility. It also provides a valuable first contact with existentialism, or how people attempt to understand their identity and place in the world.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE



The Red Badge of Courage - Stephen Crane (~90pg Millenium Publishing, 2019.)

ISBN 101508482764

Amazon Link:

<https://www.amazon.com/Red-Badge-Courage-Stephen-Crane/dp/1508482764>

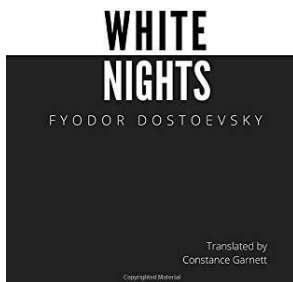
STEPHEN CRANE

Originally published in 1895, thirty years after the Civil War's end, Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* tells us as much about the society that produced it as it does about the war it depicts. To read it is to glimpse a Gilded Age America still romanticizing battlefield glory, and to watch that romance collapse in real time. Crane strips away the heroics and places readers inside the fear, shame, and self-deception of an ordinary soldier. Throughout our time together in the 2026-27 academic year, we will encounter stories where the values a society holds about courage, manhood, and duty press down hard on individual characters. *The Red Badge of Courage* asks what those values actually cost the people expected to live up to them.

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White Nights - Fyodor Dostoevsky (~95pg Translated by Constance Garnett, 2019.)

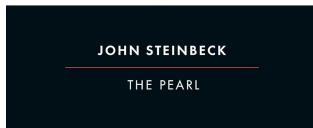
ISBN 101676885633



Amazon Link:

<https://www.amazon.com/White-Nights-Fyodor-Dostoevsky/dp/1676885633/>

In defiance of the Romantic period's idyllic, sappy depictions of love, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *White Nights* (originally published 1848) is a brief but devastating portrait of a particular kind of person that every society produces and few know how to account for: the dreamer, the chronic outsider, the one who lives more vividly in his imagination than in the world around him. Set across four summer nights in St. Petersburg, it is a story about what happens when that person encounters love, and finds that love does not operate on the same terms as their fantasy. Throughout our time together in the 2026-27 academic year, we will encounter characters whose inner lives and psychology are in open conflict with the world they inhabit. *White Nights* is perhaps the purest version of that conflict, told with a tenderness that makes it all the more difficult to look away from.



The Pearl - John Steinbeck (~125pg Penguin Classics, 1994.)

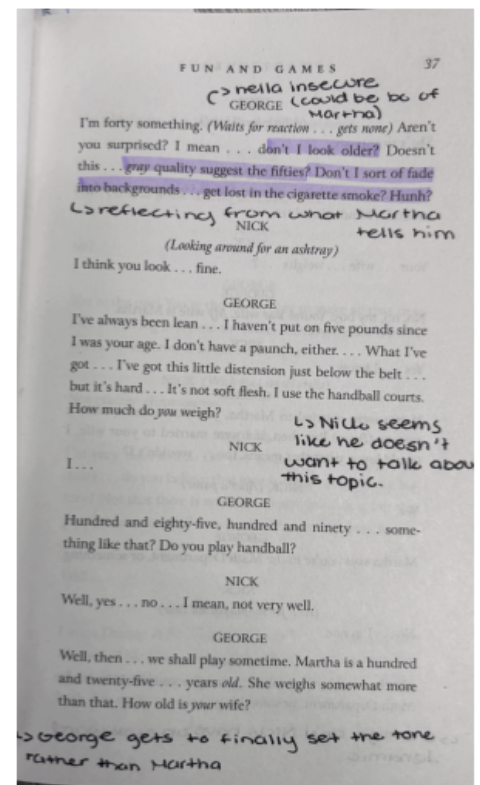
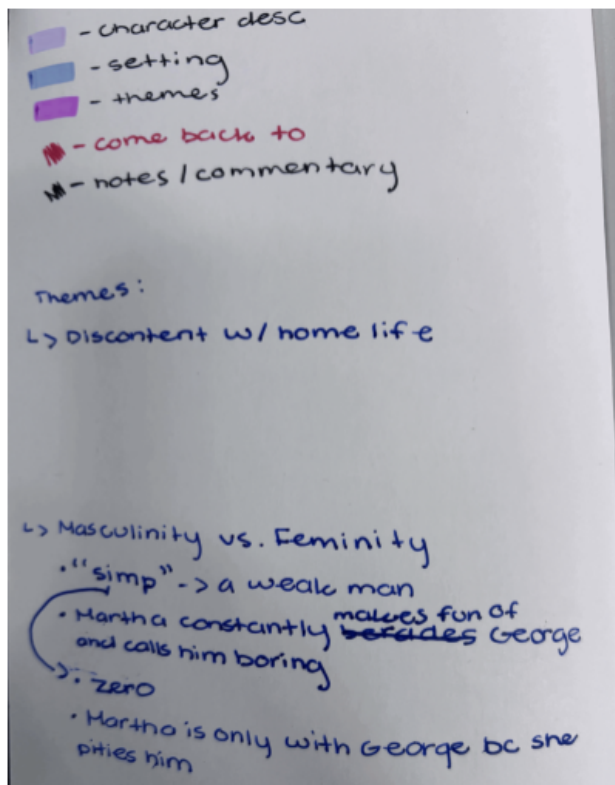
ISBN 100140187383

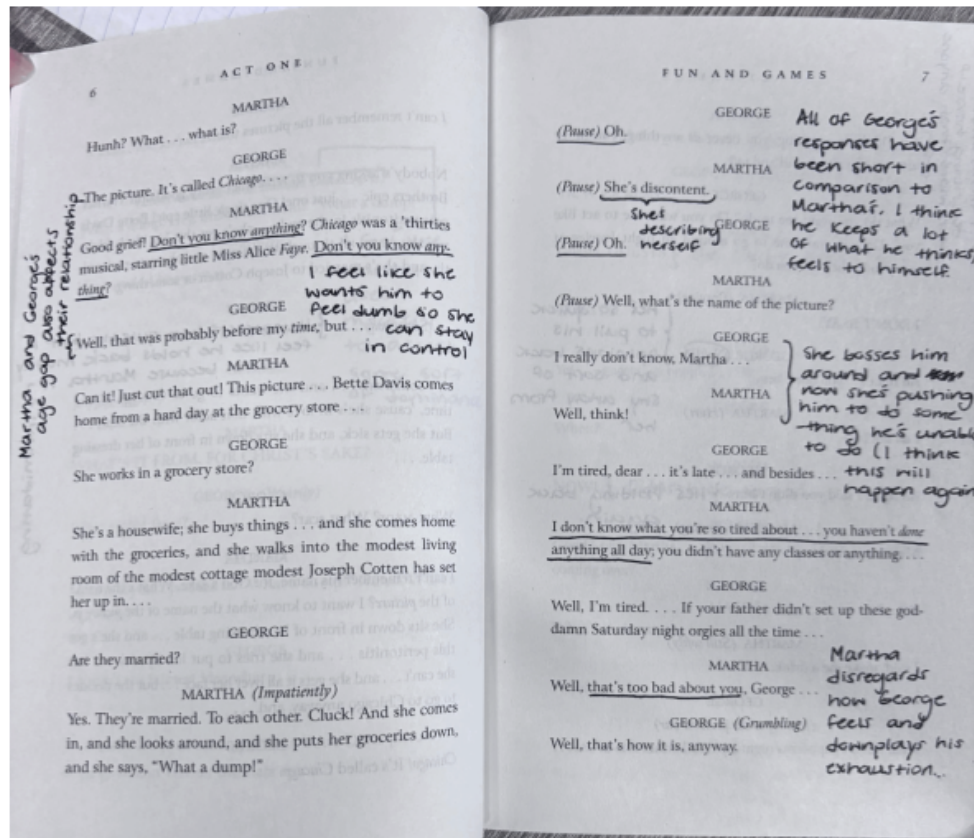
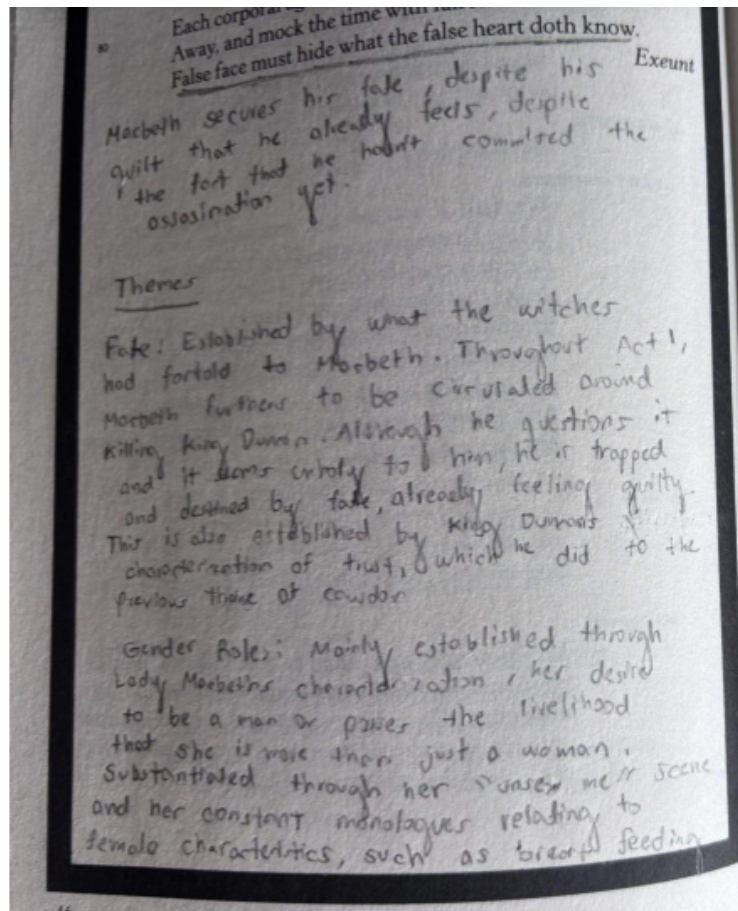
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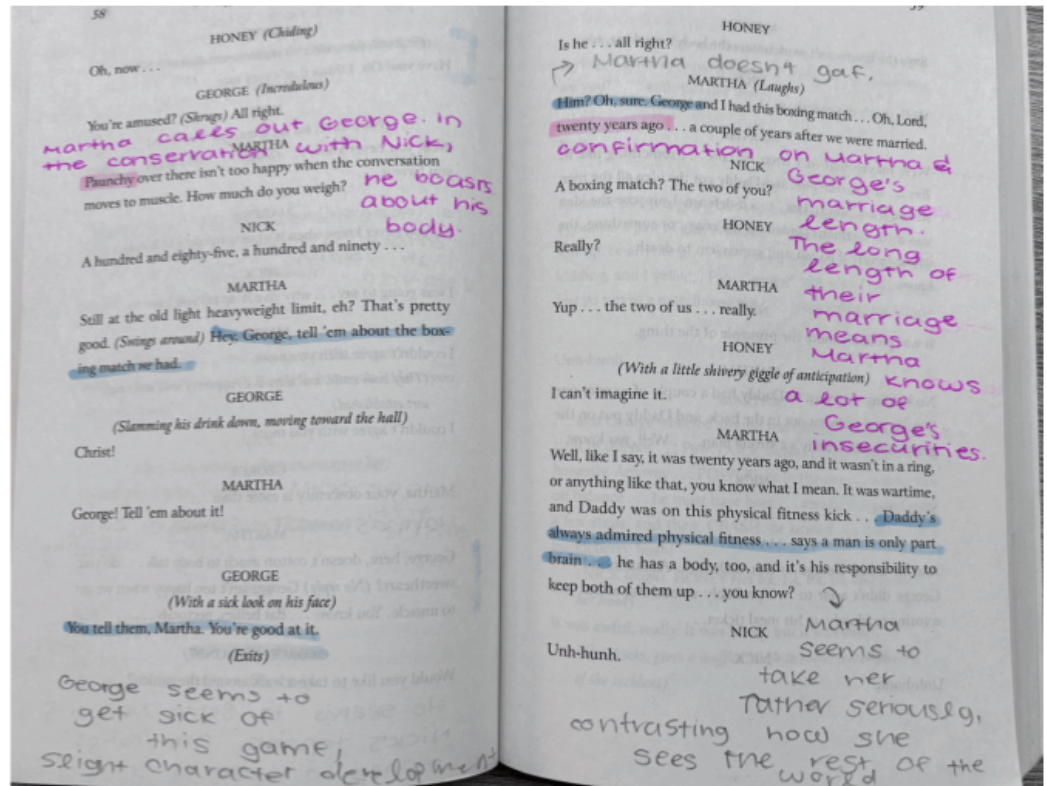
<https://www.amazon.com/Pearl-Penguin-Classics-John-Steinbeck/dp/0140187383/>

The Pearl (1947) comes to us during the dawn of the "rags-to-riches" American Golden Age, which most historians locate between 1945 and 1980. It spins a classic rags-to-riches tale, except that for the poor diver who stumbles upon his ticket to wealth (Kino), the fortune brings more ruin than relief. The doctors, dealers, and priests who circle Kino the moment fortune arrives tell us everything about how power sustains itself, and how completely it can crush the people who dare to push back against it. Throughout our time together in the 2026-27 academic year, we will encounter stories where a single event forces a character to reckon with the world as it actually is, rather than as they believed it to be. In The Pearl, that reckoning is as swift as it is devastating.

Annotation Exemplars







This exemplar is from the back of their book, offering a “final” overall analysis of the work with an argument about its overall meaning.

This play examines the ways people use illusion, cruelty, and power to survive emotional failure and inner expectations. At the center of the play is George and Martha's marriage, which functions not as a source of love or stability but as a battleground sustained by ritual-like conflict. Their constant insults and verbal games reveal a relationship in which intimacy has been replaced by domination, suggesting that marriage can become a mechanism for mutual destruction rather than support. This dysfunction is intensified by the academic setting, where professional success is closely tied to masculinity, authority, and self-worth. Martha's resentment toward George stems largely from his lack of ambition and stalled career, while her attraction to Nick reflects her fixation on youth, progress, and institutional power. Academia mirrors the cruelty of the marriage itself, exposing ambition as a caustic rarer than fulfilling.

It also explores the tension between appearance and truth, showing how honesty is frequently weaponized rather than used for clarity. George and Martha reveal secrets publicly, not to achieve understanding, but to humiliate one another and gain control. Alcohol accelerates this process, loosening social restraints and transforming truth into a weapon of emotional violence. The imaginary child represents the most significant intrusion in the play, functioning as a shared fantasy that gives meaning to the relationship, marked by disappointment and loss. In eventual destruction forces a confrontation with reality that is both devastating and necessary. Throughout the play, childish behavior underpins the characters' emotional immaturity, as broken games and dependencies replace genuine adult communication. The ending reinforces the play's central question, whether you can survive/live without illusion, as Martha's final admission of fear suggests that truth, while essential, offers no comfort or guarantee of reality. The play ultimately argues that illusion may be desirable, but reality without illusion is terrifying, leaving its characters suspended between honesty and despair.

In Page 25, Martha says George has a Dylan Thomas-y quality which Dylan Thomas was known for public intoxication/heavy drinking. Throughout the play, George is constantly refilling and serving drinks which could be seen as a technique to get forced honesty from guests but also escape