

AP English Literature 2019 Summer Reading Assignment

Read the works of literature listed below over the summer months and write an analysis of the tragic hero in each by following the guidelines provided in this document.

1. *Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley
2. *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand

Both of these are available free as text, PDF or versions for e-readers from www.gutenberg.org. If you wish, you may also purchase copies from a bookstore at reasonable prices.

For each of these works of literature, you must write a character analysis of the protagonist in the story with the following considerations.

- A. Describe the character's strengths, explaining the qualities that make this character admirable in the reader's estimation.
- B. Describe the character's weaknesses, explaining how these deficiencies influence his/her decisions, relationships with others, and accomplishments.
- C. Describe the character's motivations, the reasons why he/she acts for good or ill and how these motivations affect the outcome of the story.
- D. Explain how this character fits the model of the tragic hero. (See the attached definition)

Follow this format for your summer reading response paper:

- The answers to these questions should be typed, double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman with one inch margins.
- On the top of the first page on the left, type the following heading:
 - Full Name
 - Mr. Hendricks
 - AP English Literature
 - August 2019
- Centered directly below the heading on the first page type the following title:
 - AP English Literature 2019 Summer Reading Assignment
- For each book, type the title.
- Then type the Letter and answer to each of the four questions.
- Each answer must be 250-300 words in length.
- This assignment is due by August 12, 2019.*
- Late assignments may be subject to a 50% deduction.

* When you finish, save the file as a doc or docx and e-mail it to me as an attachment at rjhendricks@phoenixchristian.org.

TRAGIC HERO: CLASSICAL DEFINITION

A tragic hero is a person of noble birth with heroic or potentially heroic qualities.

This person is fated by the Gods or by some supernatural force to doom and destruction or at least to great suffering.

But the hero struggles mightily against this fate and this cosmic conflict wins our admiration.

Because the tragic hero simply cannot accept a diminished view of the self and because of some personality flaw, the hero fails in this epic struggle against fate.

This tragic drama involves choices (free will) and results in a paradox --- Is it Fate or Free Will which is primarily responsible for the suffering in the hero's life (and in our lives in light of our own personal tragedies)? Though fated the hero makes choices which bring about his destruction.

In addition, tragic drama usually reveals the hero's true identity. Oedipus --- instead of being the proud savior of Thebes --- discovers that he is the cause of the city's plague, the killer of his father and the husband of his mother.

The hero's suffering, however, is not gratuitous because through great suffering the hero is enlightened. Such heroes learn about themselves and their place in the universe. Pride is chastened. Though destroyed the hero is at peace intellectually.

Tragic doom is both public (the State) and private (a family tragedy as well) and usually sexual transgressions are involved in some way.

We are energized by witnessing this eternal drama for it encompasses the fate and "stuff" of all humans from kings and queens to paupers. As for paupers, in his famous editorial for the *NY Times*, *Tragedy and the Common Man*, Arthur Miller argues that the common person is also capable of tragic stature in so far as each one of us seeks a true identity and a personal dignity.

Santora, Ronald. "Tragic Hero: Classical Definition." 2 May 2011. 5 Aug. 2004.

<<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/santorar/engl190v/trag.hero.htm>>