

12 AP Literature & Composition Summer Reading

NONFICTION SELECTION:

How to Read Literature Like a Professor by Thomas Foster

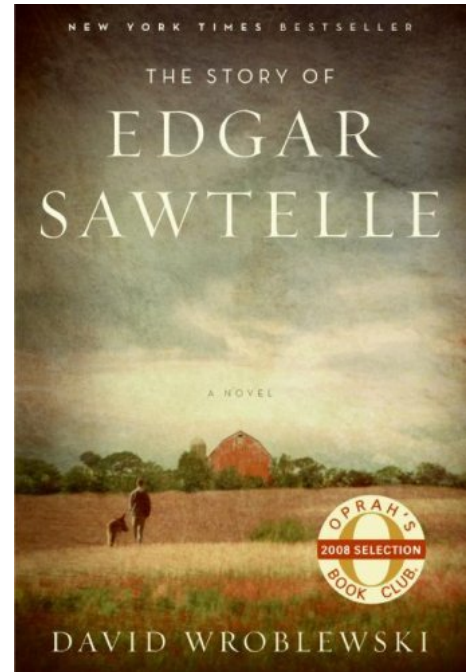
Read/review this text as a resource for literary analysis throughout the semester.

FICTION SELECTION:

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski

“ It is as true for the writer as for the reader that any novel worth its ink should be an experience first and foremost—not an essay, not a statement, not an orderly rollout of themes and propositions. All of which is to say: stories, too, are wild things.”

— David Wroblewski, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*



Context

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle is loosely based on the Shakespearean play *Hamlet*, the story of a Danish prince who must avenge fratricide. If you are familiar with the plot of *Hamlet*, look for similarities but realize that this novel must first be considered on its own. We will be reading *Hamlet* in class and analyzing the novel again as we study the play.

Annotation

Annotation involves a careful, critical, active reading of a text. So, buy a paper copy of the novel. Write (annotate) in the actual book. You can highlight important passages/quotations. Keep track of characters and important plot elements. You may choose to take notes in the margins. Putting the work in as you read will be very helpful when we begin discussion and assessment.

Literary Analysis

Consider the following topics as you read. Approaching a text with a purpose will make your reading more focused and beneficial, so consider the following topics:

- **Setting:** Consider the two major locations of the novel. How do these settings influence the characters, conflict, and plot?
- **Allusion:** Consider how the allusion to *Hamlet* contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.
- **Death Scenes-** pay careful attention to the death scenes in the novel. How do these death scenes impact the plot and characters?
- **Motifs-**a motif is the reoccurrence of an element in a text (symbol, idea, character, etc.) Look for repeating patterns or ideas in the novel (communication, heredity, companionship, fate, etc.)

Assessment

Please read with these upcoming assessments in mind:

- Multiple Choice Exam-100 points
- Formal/In-Class Writings- ~200 points
- Circle Discussion OR Group Presentation -100 points
- Regardless of your scheduled semester, you should have the novel read **before** the semester begins. You do not want the summer reading in addition to your daily reading/course work.

The Story of Edgar of Sawtelle is a beautifully written, unique novel. It has chapters written from a dog's perspective! Please read so you can begin the semester prepared, and I can enjoy hearing your insight and connections to our study of *Hamlet*. Please remember that if you have 12 AP in Spring 2017, you will want to allow yourself time to review it if you read it this summer.

Please feel free to email your 12 AP teacher with questions.

Have a wonderful summer!

I look forward to meeting each of you!

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A glimpse of the novel's wisdom:

- “Life was a swarm of accidents waiting in the treetops, descending upon any living thing that passed, ready to eat them alive. You swam in a river of chance and coincidence. You clung to the happiest accidents- the rest you let float by.”
- “Just when normal life felt almost possible - when the world held some kind of order, meaning, even loveliness (the prismatic spray of light through an icicle; the stillness of a sunrise), some small thing would go awry and the veil of optimism was torn away, the barren world revealed. They learned, somehow, to wait those times out. There was no cure, no answer, no reparation.”
- “That was how it was, sometimes. You put yourself in front of the thing and waited for whatever was going to happen and that was all. It scared you and it didn't matter. You stood and faced it. There was no outwitting anything.”
- “You couldn't change a river into a sea, but you could trace a new channel for it to follow.”

- “The strangest kind of curse had been laid upon him: knowledge without hope of evidence.”