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AP Literature and Composition
Summer Reading 2019
Matt C

Dear deeply-engaged students of literature:

Welcome to AP Lit & Comp! I can't wait to meet each & every one of you, & to discuss the following two novels in our opening weeks in August:

- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Of course, my expectation is that you will have read both novels, & that you'll be prepared to lead energetic discussions of each work in our opening sessions. To that end, I would like you to prepare share a very short document prior to our first meeting. Because I have consistently found that seminar discussions work best when they are grounded in specific textual passages, I request that you select **two** scenes from both Woolf and Atwood (**30-40 lines** per scene is just fine)--scenes that, in your view, shed light on one or another of the novel's larger aims. (Very roughly speaking, one scene should come from the first "half" of the novel, one from the latter.) Please identify the opening and closing words of your selected scenes in the following manner:

Woolf, *TtL*: "Mr Ramsay halted suddenly . . . in her grasp" (59-60).

Woolf, *TtL*: "Once again, Lily felt . . . beyond her understanding" (111-12).

Simple enough, right? Then (I promise, we're almost finished), as an accompaniment to each of your chosen scenes, please provide three sentences that indicate *why* you find these passages of particular interest.

Sample:

Woolf, *TtL*: “Mr Ramsay halted suddenly . . . in her grasp” (59-60).

Even though nothing particularly dramatic occurs in these two paragraphs, we see once again the emotional clumsiness of Mr Ramsay, still incapable of perceiving his son’s anxieties. Instead, he dwells on his own intellectual insecurities, in a way that seems pretty comical. Lily pays him little attention, focused as she is on the weather, another reminder that these two characters have an awkward relationship with one another.

So: Please do something like that **twice** for Woolf’s novel, **twice** for Atwood’s, and we should be off to a fine start. That’s a grand total of four scenes/twelve sentences.

If you’ve got any questions whatsoever, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Cheers!

Matt