AP Literature and Composition

Summer Reading 2020

Matt C

Dear deeply-engaged students of literature:

Welcome to AP Lit & Comp! I can’t wait to see (and talk to) each and every one of you, and to discuss the following two texts in our opening weeks in August:

* James Joyce, *Dubliners*
* James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

Of course, my expectation is that you will have read both texts (this is *summer* reading, after all) and that you’ll be prepared to lead energetic discussions of each work in our opening sessions.\* To that end, I would like you to share a very short document prior to our first class 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** passages from both Joyce and Baldwin (**30-40 lines** per passage is just fine)--scenes that, in your view, shed light on one or another of the author’s larger aims. (The two passages from Joyce should be from *different* stories; the Baldwin passages should be from *different* essays.)

Please identify the opening and closing words of your selected scenes in the following manner:

Joyce, “A Little Cloud”: “He turned to the right . . . in a tight corner” (72-73).

Joyce, “A Painful Case”: “Mr Duffy raised his eyes . . . the course he had taken” (115-16).

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**:

Joyce, “A Little Cloud”: “He turned to the right . . . in a tight corner” (72-73).

Even though nothing particularly dramatic occurs in this paragraph, we see once again the emotional clumsiness of Little Chandler, still incapable of perceiving the real source of his own anxieties. Instead, he dwells on his own mixture of admiration and resentment of Ignatius Gallaher, in a way that seems pretty comical, but also pathetic. Gallaher, of course, will never pay him any real attention, focused as he is on his own “successes,” another reminder that these two characters have an awkward relationship with one another.

So: Please do something like that **twice** for Joyce’s *Dubliners*, **twice** for Baldwin’s collection of essays, 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

\*Just to set the record straight ahead of time: *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories; *Notes of a Native Son* is a collection of nonfiction essays (largely, but not exclusively, of the “memoir” variety). Neither is a novel.