READING: WORLD MASTERPIECES
Worksheet

In order to understand and appreciate world literature, you will need to read it with the following objectives in mind: to discover why the work is important, to learn about the author or narrator, and finally to analyze the work. Proceed through the work using the following steps:

Survey
◊ Read the introductory material to the period and to the work, ask about the author:
  • Who wrote this work? when? where?
  • Did the author conform to his/her contemporaries?
◊ Skim the work, ask about the work:
  • Is it written in prose or in verse?
  • Is it a narrative, play, epic, novel, short story, or essay?
  • If written in verse, what are the verse’s characteristics (rhyme, meter, form)?

Read and visualize
◊ Read difficult passages aloud with expression. Do not ignore footnotes. They are part of the text and often give necessary information.
◊ Visualize the characters:
  • Are they round characters (complex, able to surprise)?
  • Are they flat characters (may be recognized by one sentence)?
  • Are they types (easily recognized by characteristics)?
  • Are their names clues to their personalities?
◊ Visualize the setting:
  • How is the physical locale described?
  • How is the time, mood, culture, or environment described?

Turn page for last step....

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Summarize
◊ Picture how the story is framed:

• What is the tone of the speaker(s) or narrator(s)?
• What is the time, place and environment of the work?
• What are the literary conventions (familiar subjects, styles)?
• What are the social conventions (hierarchy, class, family, economics, politics, religion)?

◊ Consider the work as a whole:

• Is it a simple story that tells events as they happened?
• Is there a plot built on clues leading to climax and outcome?
• Is there a sub-plot that can be summarized separately?
• Does the work have versimilitude (semblance of truth)?

◊ Analyze the issues raised in the work:

• Are there parallels or contrasts among or between times, people, places and things?
• Are there similar or dissimilar people, places and objects that can be grouped?
• Are there recurrent themes, verbal phrases or circumstances?
• How do these issues compare with current times?

◊ Determine the narrator's and author's intentions for this work:

• Does the narrator want to persuade you to a certain point of view?
  What is that point of view?
• Does the author want you to agree or disagree?