

African American Literature Summer Reading

In African American Literature, we will be studying the development of identity as it is seen in racially specific text. When you return in the fall, we will begin the year by discussing the origins of literature amongst the black race as it has a strong impact on the development of African American identity and literature. Before we even get to these lessons though, it is important to gain some background on African American Literature. For summer reading, you will be doing a variety of different things. Please do so in the following order.

Part A

The following are two texts that look at both the reason for studying African American Literature and the importance of African American literature being recognized as a literary tradition.

1. Read the following article:

[“Why I Teach Black Literature” by Julia Lee](#)

2. Watch the YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEfhA4Y-dzk>

“African American Literature: Henry Louis Gates Jr, Nellie McKay and Jamaica Kincaid”

Assignment: Write a one page reflection of these two texts discussing the impact that African American literature can have on students and what you expect to gain from studying this literature. You should make references to the texts.

Part B

Literature, simply put, is stories. With all stories, we bring with us prior knowledge whether conscious of it or not, which allows us to help understand and picture what is being said. Yet at times, this prior knowledge can be limiting, creating a single story instead of one that encompasses more.

1. Read the transcript of the TED Talk by Chimamanda Adichie:

[“The Danger of a Single Story”](#)

2. Read Adichie’s story

[“The Color of an Awkward Conversation”](#)

Assignment: While reading, take notes looking specifically at how stereotypes affect a culture.

Note: These two brief assignments will be collected for points in the fall and there will be an assessment of your knowledge of these texts.