



American Literature

Author Project

Introduction

The Author Project involves reading, researching, and writing about the life and work of an American author. This project will begin in September and will culminate in a final product to be completed in late March. The aim of the project is to research the life and analyze the works of an American author of your choice using the Internet as well as other library sources.

Topic Ideas

Students in the same class period must choose a different writer for this project. Make sure to have several possibilities in mind since you may not get your first or second choice. Here is a list of possible authors, but it is by no means exhaustive. Please feel free to explore writers not mentioned here but your choice should have a print biography written about him or her in order to make your job easier. Your teacher must approve your author choice before you begin your project.

Suggestions for American Writers:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> William Faulkner | <input type="checkbox"/> Countee Cullen | <input type="checkbox"/> Dashiell Hammet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eudora Welty | <input type="checkbox"/> Joseph Heller | <input type="checkbox"/> Kate Chopin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John Steinbeck | <input type="checkbox"/> Amy Lowell | <input type="checkbox"/> James Thurber |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tennessee Williams | <input type="checkbox"/> Henry James | <input type="checkbox"/> Langston Hughes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sherwood Anderson | <input type="checkbox"/> Zora Neale Hurston | <input type="checkbox"/> T. S. Eliot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flannery O'Connor | <input type="checkbox"/> Arthur Miller | <input type="checkbox"/> E. E. Cummings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alice Walker | <input type="checkbox"/> Julia Alvarez | <input type="checkbox"/> Ernest Hemingway |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John Updike | <input type="checkbox"/> J.D. Salinger | <input type="checkbox"/> F. Scott Fitzgerald |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sylvia Plath | <input type="checkbox"/> Mark Twain | <input type="checkbox"/> Richard Wright |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Bishop | <input type="checkbox"/> Herman Melville | <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Frost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nikki Giovanni | <input type="checkbox"/> Willa Cather | <input type="checkbox"/> Toni Morrison |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lorraine Hansberry | <input type="checkbox"/> Paul Laurence Dunbar | <input type="checkbox"/> Issac Asimov |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandra Cisneros | <input type="checkbox"/> Stephen Crane | <input type="checkbox"/> James F. Cooper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amy Tan | <input type="checkbox"/> Washington Irving | <input type="checkbox"/> Theodore Dreiser |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kurt Vonnegut | <input type="checkbox"/> Edward Albee | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinclair Lewis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nathaniel Hawthorne | <input type="checkbox"/> Ray Bradbury | <input type="checkbox"/> Zane Grey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emily Dickinson | <input type="checkbox"/> James Baldwin | <input type="checkbox"/> Lillian Hellman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walt Whitman | <input type="checkbox"/> Saul Bellow | <input type="checkbox"/> Dorothy Allison |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frederick Douglass | <input type="checkbox"/> John Irving | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edgar Allan Poe | <input type="checkbox"/> Claude McKay | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Susan Glaspell | <input type="checkbox"/> Wallace Stevens | |

Getting Started

Choosing your Author

We have been doing this project for over 14 years with IHHS sophomores. Along the way we've learned a few things about which writers work best:

FIRST, choose a writer who really intrigues you---not just someone famous whose name you've heard before. Your project will be easier and more pleasant if you select someone you are interested in.

SECOND, be sure you feel comfortable with your author's writing. Carefully look over your author's work before you choose. You will need to read *at least TWO works* by your writer so be sure you can handle his/her writing and will enjoy it. If you're not a big reader, you might consider choosing an author who writes plays or short stories. But definitely preview those as well.

THIRD, avoid authors who primarily write autobiography, memoir, or essays---they don't work well for this project. Students have found that there is not enough for them to analyze in these types of writings.

LAST, choose a writer who produces works of "literary merit." Just because a writer tells good stories, doesn't mean his/her writing has substance, style, and complexity. Many a student has chosen a writer whose stories she likes but then finds there's nothing much of substance there to analyze. Since you'll be writing a number of essays and paragraphs analyzing the author's writing, you definitely want complexity of style, character, etc. Your teacher will help steer you away from any poor choices.

About Your Research

- Be thorough, varied, and in-depth in your research
- **Five total secondary research sources minimum** (This is a bare minimum)
- **At least two of the secondary sources must be print sources (primary sources such as novels, short story collections, etc. do NOT count as print sources)**
- Aside from searching the Internet, you should also check out the IHHS library as well as the public library for books, critical reviews, encyclopedias, etc.
- Keep note of all bibliographic information about your sources for your works cited page.

Three of the most important goals of this project are for you to learn how 1.) to properly do scholarly research, 2.) to properly cite sources in your text, and 3.) to complete your "Works Cited" page. You need to learn the proper Modern Language Association (MLA) format. This is the way you'll be doing things in college so it's best to learn the format and the terminology now. For instance, what you might call a "bibliography" is called a works cited page in MLA Style. You will learn the specifics of this in class but you should also consult your IH Student Writing Handbook and MLA text as well as these websites:

www.mla.org

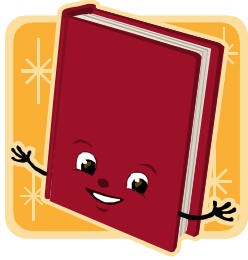
www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities/english.html



Analytical and Creative Writing Requirements

Your author project involves interacting with and analyzing your author's writing (150/200 points). Below you will find some ideas to help you get an idea about the quantity and quality of works you should be producing. The required quantities for American Literature students are listed in the appropriately marked row and those for Honors American Literature are listed below that. Please be sure you are referring to the appropriate row!

	Column A	Column B	Column C
	ESSAYS	PARAGRAPHS	CREATIVE PIECES
American Literature	Complete ONE	Complete THREE	Complete ONE
Honors American Literature	Complete TWO	Complete FOUR	Complete ONE
	A multi-paragraph essay comparing characters from two or more books	A paragraph analyzing the significance of a work's title	A personal response to a particular aspect of your author's work and life (2 pages) or
	A multi-paragraph essay describing and responding to the critical reception of author's work	A paragraph analyzing an important symbol in a work	A one-page effort at mimicking your author's style, plus a one-page reflection on the choices you made and how they reflect your author's style.
	A multi-paragraph essay comparing a movie made about a book by your author to the book	A paragraph analyzing a literary device used by your author	
	A multi-paragraph essay discussing common themes in your author's works	A paragraph analyzing a single character's development	
	A multi-paragraph essay discussing your author's writing style		
	<i>A multi-paragraph essay of your own devising</i>	<i>A paragraph of your own devising</i>	



Biographic Details Requirements

Your author project starts by getting to know a great deal about your author's life and times, and presenting and analyzing this information (150 points). As you research and write about your author, be sure you include information from your writer's entire life – not just childhood or young life. Focus on the usual biographical details but also look into people or experiences that may have influenced his/her writing. While completing your research, consider this essential question: How have my author's life experiences, literary influences, and interaction with current events shaped his or her writing? You need to analyze your research, not just state facts.

Research Paper

The biographical research paper on your author must be FIVE pages in length. You will also complete a works cited page that includes your research sources. (When submitting your final project, you will include one works cited page that includes your research sources and works by your author.) Your research paper will be organized as follows:

- Introduction
- Author biography
- Concurrent literary movement and/or literary influences
- American life/history during your author's life
- Conclusion (this is where you will connect all three aspects of your author's life, times, and writing influences)

For the paper's three main sections, you will include at least two images/visuals with captions and parenthetical citations. The paper will be formatted according to the MLA guidelines for writing a research paper, including appropriate headings for each section.

Note Cards

In order to help you along with your research, we will require that you take appropriate notes on index cards as you research. Each index card will include notes about your author's life or time AND correct citation information. We highly suggest you get an index card ring to help keep your note cards together. More information about taking notes will be given in class.

Preparing the Final Product

This is not something you can do the night before. **We repeat: This is not something you can do the night or even the week before!** Give yourself AMPLE time. These things always take longer than you think they will. We recommend that you save your documents in as many places as possible---especially your account on the IHHS server. Our server is backed up every week and is more reliable than disks and home hard drives. Two weeks before the project is due, check that you have ample ink on hand and the proper paper for printing things out. Figure this all out WELL ahead of time. You will undoubtedly encounter difficulties and this is not an excuse when it happens the night before the project is due!



The Final Week

Be in school the week the project is due. If you're absent, your classmates and your teachers assume you're home working on your project. **This doesn't look good.** Also, don't complain and whine to other teachers about this project **at any time**: you have been assigned this project SIX months before it is due, will have had some library workshop days to work on it, and will have had your homework load reduced during 3rd quarter. If you work on it a little bit *every week* of those six months, you should have no problem completing it. Ask the juniors, they will tell you: Procrastination will RUIN you!

The Day the Project is Due

Absolutely NO project will be accepted after the due date---no exceptions! Your project is due when your class period meets. It needs to get here whether you are in school or not. If you find you must be absent, send it in with your sister, friend, carpool, or parent! However you do it: GET IT HERE! Your project should be complete when you arrive at school. We know you know this already but we will repeat it just in case: You should not be doing any last minute work on this project in any of your other classes. If you do, you will be penalized by a point loss on the final product.

Just to be abundantly clear, we'll say it again:

Absolutely NO project will be accepted after the due date---no exceptions!

Evaluation of your Project

Your author project will be worth 400/450 points; this project will comprise a major portion of your second semester grade!

Turnitin.com

All rough and final drafts must be uploaded to www.turnitin.com the day they are due. Don't fail to do this or you may not receive credit for your work. Turnitin.com can help you avoid plagiarism---so make use of it! Upload your drafts early enough that you can access your paper's "originality report" and make any necessary changes before uploading for the final time.

Rough Drafts

Rough drafts will be due before you turn in your final product. You must turn in all corrected rough drafts with your final product. Pay attention to the comments you are given. **Don't turn back in unrevised pieces for the next draft** or you will have very cranky teachers on your hands!

Please note: Your teacher may request to see any print materials you have used. Consider renewing your library book(s) or keeping copies of the pages you cite or get information from.

Final Product

You MUST turn in any graded rough drafts with your final product. So, please keep them safe. Also, please remember, your teacher may request to see any print materials you have used, so ensure you have access to them. Consider renewing your library book(s) or keeping copies of the pages you cite or get information from.

Point Break Down

	American Literature	Honors American Literature
Analytical Writing	150	200
Biographical Writing and Research	150	150
Citing and Sources	50	50
Creative Piece/ Presentation	50	50
Total	400	450



Author Project

Important Dates

Assignment	Due Date
Introduction/Lottery <i>You will each select a number from "a hat" that will determine the order in which you will choose your author. If you get #1, you'll go first; #18, you'll choose nearer to the end and so should have several authors to choose from.</i>	September 4, 2009
Quiz and parent signature <i>Read all handouts in author project folder carefully and be prepared for a quiz on the important information. Please go over this packet with your parents and have them sign and return the enclosed parent letter.</i>	September 9, 2009
Selection of Authors <i>Depending on the lottery number you end up with, you may want to have SEVERAL choices. Remember, no one in the same class may do the same author. Begin researching right away!</i>	September 14, 2009
Research and Writing of Biographical Paper Biographical Note Cards due (30 card minimum) Biographical Outline due Submit and upload draft of Biographical Research Paper	September-November 2009 October 16, 2009 October 30, 2009 November 20, 2009
Reading and Analytical Writing of Author's Works Rough Draft of paragraph #1 due Rough Draft of paragraph #2 due Rough Draft of essay due Rough Draft of paragraph #3 due	October 2009 – March 2010 December 4, 2009 January 29, 2010 February 12, 2010 March 5, 2010
<i>Please upload all above rough drafts of research paper and analytical writing to www.turnitin.com and give hard copy to appropriate teacher. Keep corrected copies of all rough drafts to turn in with final product.</i>	
Library Visits <i>You must use this time to research your author AND to work on writing your project. You will certainly need to find considerable additional time to research and write on your own!</i>	TBD by your teachers
FINAL PRODUCT DUE <i>Please upload to www.turnitin.com. Please include graded rough drafts and notecards with final product.</i>	March 26, 2010