

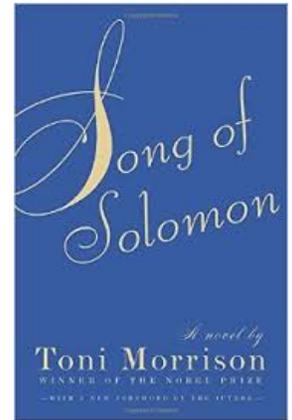
The Texts:

1) *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison

This award-winning bestseller tells the tale of Milkman Dead, who spends his whole life trying to...fly. Written by the first African-American winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, this novel is full of symbols, allusions, and images ripe for analysis.

2) Excerpts from *How to Read Literature like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

This entertaining and informative "how-to" guide, written by an experienced college English professor, will give you tips and strategies for being an active literary investigator.



The Assignment:

Step 1: Read Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon*. As you do, pay attention for aspects of the story that connect to **a) the Bible, b) weather, c) flight, and d) Baptism**. Keep track of your ideas on these topics in a notebook or use sticky notes!

Step 2: Use these notes to share your ideas on our online class discussion via **weekly blog posts**. *You need a valid Gmail address to do so.* Post as you read—the suggested timeline is one post per week. These posts will help you draft your essay. **ALL FOUR POSTS ARE DUE BY FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2017.**

Step 3: Read the HTRLLAP four-chapter packet. (*You will receive a copy before you leave for the summer; it will be available for download/printing on the class web site*). These chapters discuss **the Bible, weather, flight, and Baptism** as symbols in Morrison's novel. As you read the packet, pay attention for the points the author Thomas Foster makes about Morrison's characters and the novel's themes.

Step 4: Choose one of the four symbols and compose an original four-paragraph essay that answers the prompt: How does Morrison's choice to use [the Bible, weather, flight, or Baptism] support [a theme]? When you write your body paragraphs, one will be a **summary** of Foster's ideas about your chosen topic and one will be a **typical Power Paragraph analysis** of how Morrison applies this thinking in her novel.

Example of a good thesis statement:

Morrison's choice to have Milkman's spurned lover Hagar get caught in a ferocious **rainstorm** reveals **the danger in trying to change your identity to please someone else.**

This thesis is good because it identifies one of the symbolic topics discussed in "How to Read Literature Like a Professor" (rain) and makes a conclusion about a universal message Morrison is sending through her novel. This essay will summarize Foster's ideas about weather as symbolic and then analyze an example from the novel featuring rain, connecting it to the theme about changing for another person.

General Writing Guidelines:

- Cite specific textual evidence from both the Foster packet and Morrison's novel in your paragraphs and include a correctly formatted Works Cited page at the end of your paper.
- Follow the Power Paragraph model for basic essay writing.
- Meet all required MLA requirements for formatting and citations (check rubric if you're unsure).
- Proofread your writing so that it is free of major grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

NOTE: Plagiarism is a thought-crime! Do NOT consult outside sources. AP Literature is all about training you to be able to decode tough literature—a task you will never be able to do independently if you allow SparkNotes to do the thinking for you. I want and need to see you thinking for yourself—even if you struggle or interpret something "incorrectly"—DO NOT CHEAT! IF YOU DO, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO ON THIS ASSIGNMENT AND THE CASE WILL BE SENT TO THE HEAD OF ACADEMICS.

Below is a sample for use when composing your own summer reading essay. I have included a sample introduction and a body paragraph on rain. Please do NOT choose this scene as evidence for your body paragraph. Please email me with any questions—but only after you've carefully looked through all the instructions and examples!

Carlough 1

Stacey Carlough

Ms. APTeacher

AP Literature

31 Aug 2017

Reading Between the Lines

Many readers view characters, places, and situations in the books they read as real. They get sad when a favorite character dies or smile from ear to ear when a nefarious villain is defeated. In Thomas C. Foster's book *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, however, readers are encouraged to think beyond those initial emotions and instead view these plot points as purposeful choices by an author. He states that if readers spend some time learning the "language of reading" (Foster xxv) they "will read and understand literature in a new light, and it'll be more rewarding and fun" (Foster xxvii). When Foster's methods are applied to Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon*, new layers of meaning emerge around the story of Milkman Dead. Reading like a professor forces readers to not simply accept what happens in Morrison's story but to consider why she orchestrated the story that way. **In this novel, Morrison's choice to have Milkman's spurned lover Hagar get caught in a ferocious rainstorm reveals the danger in trying to change your identity to please someone else.**

According to Chapter 9 in Foster's book, weather is more than just an aspect of the story's setting. Rain can arouse fears of drowning, but it can also signify a "fresh start" by alluding to the Bible story of Noah's Ark (Foster 70)... [THIS PARAGRAPH WILL CONTINUE AS A SUMMARY OF FOSTER'S IDEAS ABOUT RAIN AS SYMBOLIC].

It is this transformative nature of rain that Foster applies to Morrison's character Hagar. This character is lovesick over having lost Milkman's affections, and she goes from murderous rage to depressed stupor. In an attempt to make herself more appealing to him, Hagar embarks on a fanatical shopping spree and makeover. Leaving the salon, Hagar unthinkingly steps right into a rainstorm: "She was thoroughly soaked before she realized it was raining and then only because one of the shopping bags split" (Morrison 313). But instead of ducking back inside to stay dry, the frantic Hagar fumbles on, spilling and recollecting her new purchases from the muddy ground until she gets home. Once there, she madly dons her new clothing and makeup and presents herself to her family, but their reaction tells her just how fantastically her plan has failed: "It was in their eyes that she saw what she had not seen before in the mirror: the wet ripped hose, the soiled white dress, the sticky, lumpy face powder, the streaked rouge, and the wild wet shoals of hair. All this she saw in their eyes, and the sight filled her own with water warmer and much older than the rain. Water that lasted for hours..." (Morrison 314). Hagar has been through what Foster calls a "cleansing rain" (72). But what is Hagar being cleansed of? She seems no better than she was before the storm, if not worse. Foster argues that this "rain cleanses her of illusions and the false idea of beauty" (72). Unfortunately, Hagar cannot handle this truth, but perhaps the lesson here is not for Hagar: Perhaps it is for the reader to see the folly in trying to change ourselves to please others.