

WHS Book Rationale

Title: *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*

Author: Thomas Foster

- **Intended Audience**

A.P. English Literature and Composition students—this is a college level course.

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

Written by a college English professor, this book explains how to apply the skills of literary analysis. It gives a wide variety of examples, and is written in a humorous, conversational tone. This book is read widely by A.P. English classes and is a useful book to read over the summer to provide a context for the rest of the school year. Many of the examples used are books Wyoming students have or will read. Throughout the school year, we refer back to the explanations and examples of this book, often beginning a comment during discussion with, “Foster said...”

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

At the beginning of the school year, we discuss Foster’s ideas about analyzing literature and how to apply them to the A.P. exam and course requirements. Several times during the year, we refer specifically to individual chapters as they apply to works we are reading.

- **Potential problems**

Because Foster is writing about the whole of literature, he addresses the most common elements, those things that provide for conflict and drama, which is the heart of literature: sex, death, violence, etc. His chapters directly address such issues. For example, one chapter is titled “It’s All About Sex . . .” while the next chapter is called “. . . Except Sex.” These chapters address the ways that authors convey deeper meanings through figurative language and give examples of sex scenes from novels that are really more about ideas than about sex, as well as scenes that appear to be about something mundane but are really about sex.

- **Addressing potential problems**

Class discussion in which students both defend and challenge Foster’s assertions.
Examination of AP essays that give evidence of successful application of the principles Foster writes about.