

AP Literature Summer Reading Assignment

Materials:

1. You will need to read Ayn Rand's *Anthem*. Copies will be given to the current students at South. If you add into the class after summer has begun, please come by South to pick up a copy or purchase your own.
2. You will also need to read the excerpt from Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* regarding Prometheus.

Assignment:

After reading both pieces, you need to answer the essay prompt. While writing, please attempt to provide adequate support from both works to back-up your claims. Pay particular attention to the language in the prompt, especially the part that asks you to reference "allusion." If you don't remember the term from last year, allusion is "an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference." In short, allusions are references that are made with the intention of bringing along significant prior knowledge without the author needing to restate that prior knowledge. In this case, Prometheus serves as an excellent example. When Rand uses Prometheus in her text, she is assuming that you, the reader, will reactivate the knowledge you have about him and apply that knowledge to understanding her text.

Most AP essays are written within 40 minutes; therefore, we look for the length to be a minimum of two to three handwritten pages. We would like you to type this assignment. Regardless of your device, please use 12 point font, Times New Roman, and double space. Typed pages in this format are typically half the length of handwritten pages; therefore, we would like your completed essay to be between one and two pages. Do NOT spend much time on your introduction. An introductory sentence is fine, but get to your thesis statement as quickly as possible and move on. A brief conclusion is also necessary, but the bulk of your essay should be comprised of body paragraphs that offer compelling evidence and explanation for your thesis.

AP Prompt:

The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and essays. From Ayn Rand's *Anthem*, select a fictional character who is in opposition to his or her society. In a critical essay, use allusion to analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the society. In addition, you may apply characterization, figurative language, or tone to help in your analysis.

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PROMETHEUS

BY EDITH HAMILTON

By now all was ready for the appearance of mankind. Even the places the good and bad should go after death had been arranged. It was time for men to be created. There is more than one account of how that came to pass. Some say it was delegated by the gods to Prometheus, the Titan who had sided with Zeus in the war with the Titans, and to his brother, Epimetheus. Prometheus, whose name means forethought, was very wise, wiser even than the gods, but Epimetheus, which means afterthought, was a scatterbrained person who invariably followed his first impulse and then changed his mind. So he did in this case. Before making men he gave all the best gifts to the animals, strength and swiftness and courage and shrewd cunning, fur and feathers and wings and shells and the like—until no good was left for me, no protective covering and no quality to make them a match for the beasts. Too late, as always, he was sorry and asked his brother's help. Prometheus, then, took over the task of creation and thought out a way to make mankind superior. He fashioned them in a nobler shape than the animals, upright like the gods; and then he went to heaven, to the sun, where he lit a torch and brought down fire, a protection to men far better than anything else, whether fur or feathers or strength or swiftness. And now, though feeble and short-lived, mankind has flaming fire and therefrom learns many crafts.

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For a long time, certainly throughout the happy Golden Age, only men were upon the earth; there were no women. Zeus created these later, in his anger at Prometheus for caring so much for men. Prometheus had not only stolen fire for men; he had also arranged that they should get the best part of any animal sacrificed and the gods the worst. He cut up a great ox and wrapped the good eatable parts in the hide, disguising them further by piling entrails on top. Beside this heap he put another of all the bones, dressed up with cunning and covered with shining fat, and bade Zeus choose between them. Zeus took up the white fat and was angry when he saw the bones craftily tricked out. But he had made his choice and he had to abide by it. Thereafter only fat and bones were burned to the gods upon their altars. Men kept the good meat for themselves.

But the Father of Men and Gods was not one to put up with this sort of treatment. He swore to be revenged, on mankind first and then on mankind's friend. He made a great evil for men, a sweet and lovely thing to look upon, in the likeness of a shy maiden, and all the gods gave her gifts, silvery raiment and a brodered veil, a wonder to behold, and bright garlands of blooming flowers and a crown of gold—great beauty shone out fro it. Because of what they gave her they called her *Pandora*, which means "the gift of all." When this beautiful disaster had been made, Zeus brought her out and wonder took hold of gods and men when they beheld

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her. From her, the first woman, comes the race of women, who are an evil to men, with a nature to do evil.

Another story about Pandora is that the source of all misfortune was not her wicked nature, but only her curiosity. The gods presented her with a box into which each had put something harmful and forbade her ever to open it. Then they sent her to Epimetheus, who took her gladly although Prometheus had warned him never to accept anything from Zeus. He took her, and afterward when that dangerous thing, a woman, was his, he understood how good his brother's advice had been. For Pandora, like all women was possessed of a lively curiosity. She had to know what was in the box. One day she lifted the lid—and out flew plagues innumerable, sorrow and mischief for mankind. In terror Pandora clapped the lid down, but too late. One good thing, however, was there—Hope. It was the only good the casket had held among the many evils, and it remains to this day mankind's sole comfort in misfortune. So mortals learned that it is not possible to get the better of Zeus or ever deceive him. The wise and compassionate Prometheus, too, found that out.

When Zeus had punished men by giving them women he turned his attention to the arch-sinner himself. The new ruler of the gods owed Prometheus much for helping him conquer the other Titans, but he forgot his debt. Zeus had his servants, Force and Violence, seize him and take him to the Caucasus, where they bound him to high-piercing, headlong rock in adamant chains that none can break, and they told him, forever shall the intolerable present grind you down. And he who will release you is not born. Such fruit you reap from your man-loving ways. A god yourself, you did not dread God's anger, but gave to mortals honor no their due. And therefore you must guard this joyless rock—No rest no sleep, no moment's respite. Groans shall your speech be, lamentation your only words.

The reason for inflicting this torture was not only to punish Prometheus, but also to force him to disclose a secret very important to the lord of Olympus. Zeus knew that fate, which brings all things to pass, had decreed that a son should some day be born to him who would dethrone him and drive the gods from their home in heaven, but only Prometheus knew who would be the mother of this son. As he lay bound upon the rock in agony, Zeus sent his messenger, Hermes, to bid him disclose the secret. Prometheus told him: "Go and persuade the sea wave not to break. You will persuade me no more easily." Hermes warned him that if he persisted in his stubborn silence, he should suffer still more terrible things. "An eagle red with blood shall come, a guest unbidden to your banquet. All day long he will tear to rags your body, feasting in fury on the blackened liver." But nothing, no threat, nor torture, could break Prometheus. His body was bound but his spirit was free. He refused to submit to cruelty and tyranny. He knew that he had served Zeus well and that he had done right to pity mortals in their helplessness. His suffering was utterly unjust, and he would not give in to brutal power no matter at what cost. He told Hermes: "There is no force which can compel my speech. So let

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Zeus hurl his blazing bolts, and with the white wings of the snow, with the thunder and with earthquake, confound the reeling world. None of all this will bend my will.” Hermes crying out, “Why these are ravings you may hear from madmen, left him to suffer what he must.”

Generations later we know he was released, but why and how is not told clearly anywhere. There is a strange story that the Centaur, Chiron, though immortal, was willing to die for him and that he was allowed to do so. When Hermes was urging Prometheus to give in to Zeus he spoke of this, but in such a way as to make it seem an incredible sacrifice: “Look for no ending to this agony until a god will freely suffer for you, will take on him your pain, and in your stead descend to where the sun is turned to darkness, the black depths of death.”

But Chiron did do this and Zeus seems to have accepted him as a substitute. We are told, too, that Hercules slew the eagle and delivered Prometheus from his bonds, and that Zeus was willing to have done this. But why Zeus changed his mind and whether Prometheus revealed the secret when he was freed, we do not know. One thing, however, is certain: in whatever way the two were reconciled, it was not Prometheus who yielded. His name has stood through all the centuries, from Greek days to our own, as that of the great rebel against injustice and the authority of power.