

Summer Assignment for AP European History

Read **ONE** of the following books:

These books are readily available to buy online or to check out at the library. Within the first three days of class, we will have an open-book, open-noted 40 minute writing assessment for you to demonstrate that you have read and considered the significance of one of these books. As such, it is required of you to take **hand-written** notes, which will be assessed for a grade on the first day of class. This being the **ONLY** required summer work, I expect you take the reading seriously.

I have attached points to consider for each of the books

1. "A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century" by Barbara Tuchman
2. "The Great Mortality" by John Kelly
3. "The Little Ice Age" by Brian Fagan
4. "The Hundred Years War" by David Green
5. "1381: The Year of the Peasants" by Juliet Barker

The Great Mortality – *John Kelly*

Focus: The Black Death (1347–1351)

Big Questions:

- What were the biological and environmental causes of the plague?
- How did the pandemic reshape social, political, and religious life in Europe?

Key Themes:

- Disease and Medicine
- Religion and Society
- Fear and Human Behavior
- Social Disruption

What to Look For:

- Geographic spread via trade routes
- Role of superstition and scapegoating
- Eyewitness accounts and how they shape the narrative
- Changes in labor systems and social structure

AP Euro Connections:

- Demographic collapse and feudalism
- Church authority and heretical movements
- Early seeds of the Renaissance

The Hundred Years War – *David Green*

Focus: The prolonged conflict between England and France (1337–1453)

Big Questions:

- What were the causes and consequences of the Hundred Years' War?
- How did war influence nationalism and political identity?

Key Themes:

- Dynastic politics
- Military evolution
- Nationalism
- Power and legitimacy

What to Look For:

- Roles of Edward III, Henry V, Joan of Arc
- How the war impacted peasantry and nobility
- Use of propaganda and chronicles
- The war's influence on state formation

AP Euro Connections:

- Growth of national monarchies
- Decline of chivalry
- Long-term military and technological change

The Little Ice Age – *Brian Fagan*

Focus: Climate changes in Europe (1300–1850)

Big Questions:

- How did climate shape European economies, migrations, and conflicts?
- How did societies adapt to environmental stress?

Key Themes:

- Environmental history
- Agricultural change
- Resilience and collapse
- Economic hardship

What to Look For:

- Specific cold periods and their effects
- Famines, rebellions, and cultural changes
- Climate's role in historical turning points

AP Euro Connections:

- Pre-industrial economy and population stress
- Relationship between environment and revolution
- Science, skepticism, and early modern thought

1381: The Year of the Peasants – *Juliet Barker*

Focus: The English Peasants' Revolt

Big Questions:

- What caused the revolt, and what were its effects?
- How did commoners challenge authority and express political thought?

Key Themes:

- Class struggle
- Taxation and war
- Popular uprisings
- Early political consciousness

What to Look For:

- Roles of Wat Tyler and John Ball
- Local grievances vs national policies
- Government response and aftermath

AP Euro Connections:

- Decline of feudalism
- Rise of centralized monarchies
- Voice of the lower classes in European history

A Distant Mirror – *Barbara Tuchman*

Focus: 14th-century Europe through the life of Enguerrand de Coucy

Big Questions:

- How can one person's life reflect the age they lived in?
- What do the crises of the 14th century reveal about medieval society?

Key Themes:

- War, plague, and social transformation
- Religion and authority
- Personal biography as a historical lens

What to Look For:

- Tuchman's blend of narrative and analysis
- Recurring themes: war, faith, wealth, death
- Role of the nobility and changing feudal norms

AP Euro Connections:

- End of the medieval world
- Social upheaval and the coming of modern Europe
- Critical view of institutions (Church, monarchy)