# Crash Course Literature Preview

Crash Course: Literature
https://youtube.com/watch?v=zMTERytCNAU
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Hi, I'm John Green, this is Crash Course Literature and I'm back! Over the next 10 weeks we're gonna read a bunch of books together.

I got some of them right here, we're gonna read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, *Lord of the Flies* by William Goulding, my least favorite book. Also *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison and a bunch of books that aren't currently on my bookshelf including *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and we're gonna round out our reading list this year with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, some Shakespeare sonnets, and a personal favorite of mine, *Sula* by Toni Morrison.

So I've talked a little bit in the past about how and why we read, but as we go into this course, I'd ask you to consider one big question, "What in the heck do you mean when you talk about your self?"

Like you, and this is not a compliment exactly, just an observation, are fiendishly complex. I mean, to borrow a phrase from Walt Whitman, 'You contain multitudes'. Right? And a lot of the adjectives that other people apply to you, like for instance, maybe they say that you're smart, or that you're stupid, are insufficient.

Because you know that you are both smart and stupid. There are some facets of the universe that you understand clearly and with depth, and others that baffle you.

So you aren't a collection of adjectives, at least not entirely. You also aren't a body. I mean you have a body, and if you didn't have it, you would cease to be you, but you aren't your body. Like for one thing, there are pieces of you, outside of your body. You affect your friends and your family. You also make things that live outside of you, from poetry to artwork to initials carved into trees.

And not to sound too much like my brother over at Crash Course Philosophy, but the more we think about this question of what constitutes you, the more vexing it becomes. There are of course many joys to reading literature, but chief among them to me is that literature is a way of exploring and explaining the self, of understanding how we come to identify ourselves and other people as human.

For lack of a better term, how are you going to make yourself up? And how are you going to understand the even more complicated worlds of other people? And what are you going to do if the world refuses to acknowledge your personhood?

Those are some of the questions at the heart of the books we're going to read, along with questions like: Should you shoot your husband if he has rabies? Oh love you are so complicated, and beautiful, and deadly.

Speaking of which, our first book will be *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It's a great one so get to reading it and I'll see you next week.