

ADVANCED PLACEMENT LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

Adapted in part from the *AP English Course Description* published by the College Board.

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

--Kenneth Burke, from *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

INTRODUCTION

In schools, we are asked to do different kinds of reading and different kinds of writing than we do in our daily lives. We are asked to read a range of textbooks, course syllabi, novels, poems, plays, articles, and histories. We are also asked to write essays on exams, research papers, term papers, and expository essays. We are not only asked to read and write pieces that we might never read and write if we were not in school, but we are also asked to read and write in different ways. That is, we are asked to think about the ways we read, to understand what we read on more than one level, and to write pieces through which we express complicated understandings and ideas. Thus, in school the subject matter of our conversations shifts as well as the way in which we begin to "speak" in those conversations. In this course, we will focus on the kinds of reading and writing tasks surrounding literature (novels, short stories, drama, and poetry) that students are asked to do in college. We will hone our skills as readers and increase our proficiency as writers to acquire the skills that will enable us to take part in the conversation of the university, take part in a conversation that is long in progress.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The AP English Literature and Composition course focuses intensively on the study and practice of reading, writing, and discussing the works of major writers.

Writing. Students will write in the various modes about the many aspects of literature, but *will always concentrate on how a writer uses rhetorical strategies to achieve meaning*. Students will write literary interpretations based on careful observation of textual details, with consideration of 1) structure, style, and themes; 2) the social and historical values reflected in the work; and 3) literary elements and strategies, such as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone. Such analysis will lead us to understand the writer's work and then to evaluate it.

Reading. The texts selected for this class require careful, deliberative reading that yields multiple meanings, multiple possibilities for debate and discussion. We will always be in the process of reading an important long work, such as an epic poem, play or novel, but we will also read a variety of short stories and poetry written from the sixteenth century to the present. Analyzing and interpreting this material involves students in learning how to make careful observations of textual detail, establishing connections among their observations, and drawing from those connections a

series of inferences leading to an interpretive conclusion about a piece of writing's meaning and value. The goal of all writing assignments—formal and informal—is to increase your ability to explain clearly, cogently, even elegantly, what you understand about literary works and why you interpret them as you do.

This course is designed to comply with the curricular requirements described in the *AP English Course Description*.

GOALS

The primary purpose of this class is to prepare you for college and career by helping you to develop critical reading and writing skills, as well as to help you raise awareness of your own composing processes: the way you explore ideas, reconsider strategies, and revise your work.

Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on helping you develop stylistic maturity, characterized by the following:

- A wide-ranging vocabulary with denotative accuracy and connotative resourcefulness;
- A variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordinate and coordinate constructions;
- Logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis;
- A balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail;
- An effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining a consistent voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

Toward this end, we will emphasize the expository, analytical, and argumentative writing that forms the basis of academic and professional communication, as well as the personal and reflective writing that fosters the development of writing facility in any context. In doing this, this class will also prepare you for the AP exam in May.

THE AP EXAM

The three-hour AP English Literature and Composition exam gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of their skills and abilities. It employs multiple-choice questions that test the students' critical reading of selected passages. The exam also requires writing as a direct measure of the student's ability to read and interpret literature and to use other forms of discourse effectively. Although the skills tested in the exam remain essentially the same from year to year, each year's exam is composed of new questions.

Ordinarily, the exam consists of 60 minutes for multiple-choice questions followed by 120 minutes for essay questions. Performance on the essay section of the exam counts for 55 percent of the total grade; performance on the multiple-choice section, 45 percent.

Beginning with the May 2011 AP Exam administration, total scores on the multiple-choice section will be based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points will no longer be deducted for incorrect answers and, as always, no points will be awarded for unanswered questions.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Class time will be spent:

- Discussing writing, reading, and/or assignments. During discussions, you will be called upon to raise questions, pose problems, interpret what you have read, challenge each other, and develop insights about the reading/writing.
- Reviewing writing strategies, applications, and/or elements. There is a significant emphasis on how writers consciously use rhetorical strategies and literary devices to create powerful and effective texts.
- Practicing various approaches to writing:
 - Writing to explore: informal, personal narrative writing; descriptive story telling
 - Writing to understand: informal, exploratory writing designed to help students discover what they think; typically focused on the reading in progress
 - Writing to explain: expository, analytical essays focused on textual details to develop an extended explanation or interpretation of the meanings of a literary text
 - Writing to evaluate: analytical, argumentative essays focused on textual details to make and explain judgments about a work's artistry and quality, and its social and cultural values.
- Participating in writing workshops, writing conferences, peer review, or sentence work sessions.
- Reading (often as a "read aloud").
- Honing test-taking skills: timed writing and passage analysis (multiple choice).

COURSE TEXTS

The course includes an intensive study of representative works from British, American and World writers, as well as works written in several genres from our earliest writings to contemporary times. These works have been selected from the AP "list," that is, from the list of literature used on prior AP exams.

Supplied by school:

AP English Writing Reminders, including additional readings (short stories, articles, and excerpts from books) and reference materials (glossaries, histories, explanations, instructions, etc.). Students are supplied with careful and complete information and instruction for each aspect of the learning process.

Perrine, Lawrence. *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. 5th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers. 1988.

Supplied by students, either via the internet, through the lending library, or through purchase:

Assorted essays, articles, stories, and/or novels. Reading assignments will be announced orally, on the homework board, or online on my webpage.

Students are encouraged to purchase their own copies of novels for annotation purposes. However, any student needing assistance in obtaining books should see me.

Recommended: Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

Reading List: Texts of similar AP merit may be substituted at teacher discretion.

Summer Reading

- *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens
- *The Stranger*, Albert Camus

Fall Reading

- *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen
- *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley
- *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen (in Perrine) *Read aloud*
- *Catcher in the Rye*, J. D. Salinger
- *Beowulf*, trans. Seamus Heaney
- *Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck
- *Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney, Trans. *Read aloud excerpts*
- Assorted short stories and poetry

Spring Reading

- *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf
- *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham
- *Twelfth Night*, William Shakespeare (or alternative Shakespearean drama) *Read aloud*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
- *Othello*, William Shakespeare (in Perrine) *Read aloud*
- *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko
- Assorted short stories and poetry

Although some works are available online, I highly recommend acquiring a copy of these texts (except those "in Perrine" and read alouds), as it is difficult to curl up with a "good" book (and annotate) when your computer is involved. Of course, if you have an e-reader (iPad, Kindle, Nook, etc.), you are welcome to use that. A very limited number of these novels are also available from my lending library. First come, first serve.

COURSE COMPONENTS/ASSIGNMENTS

Personal Essay

This exploratory essay is used as part of the course introduction as writing warm-ups and toward assisting students prepare for the college application process.

Responding To Literature

Response Statements

- Reading Response: exploratory reflection after completion of every reading (to be done at home as homework and submitted). This should be a reflective engagement with the text—and not just skating across the surface.
- Personal Response: an in-class writing in response to a quotation, a pointed question, or through the lens of a literary theory. These responses will serve as a catalyst for discussion and as a check on reading comprehension.
- Oral Response: discussion focused on the text either in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.



Timed Writings. Throughout the school year, particularly as we complete novels and plays, students will write in response to either a passage or a free response prompt. Like all essays in this class, these essays are graded using the AP rubric.

Dialectical Journals (DJ) (see Perrine, p. 307-312 to introduce DJs)

Even though some have termed them "diabolical," DJs provide an easy and interesting method to help you write succinctly and with voice. "Dialectical" suggests the art of discourse (or the investigation of truths through discussion)—and that is the skill you will be developing—talking "to" and about a text. Each week you will be assigned a short story (or other text) to read closely. Then choose an angle into the story that interests you on which to focus your analysis. This angle provides your focus and can be drawn from one of the literary elements literary devices or rhetorical strategies. (see *Writing Reminders*, "Essays," for detailed instruction).

Author Project. This synthesis research project is designed to give students the opportunity for focused study of one author of choice of AP merit.

Spotlight On Poetry. During "Poetry Bootcamp," students are required to write a series of SPOTTTS, an assignment is designed to introduce you to a wide variety of poets, poetry, and poetic forms and devices. These one-two page writings will raise your comfort level with a literary form that many students find intimidating (and perhaps "boring").

Additional Expectations

Vocabulary.

- Most words come from an SAT vocabulary word list; however, words in context will be checked in the dictionary and/or other reference books, as well as on-line sources.
- Weekly vocabulary worksheet + cumulative Friday quiz serve as assessments.
- Students are also rewarded for finding (and defining) vocabulary words in their reading and using vocabulary words (as appropriate) in their writing.

AP Model Exams. Throughout the year we will examine past AP exams and look at actual student responses. You will take in-class essay tests using past prompts. In addition, you will practice making and taking the multiple-choice section of the exam. My hope is that by May you will be extremely familiar with the AP rubric, the multiple-choice portion of the exam, and will know the characteristics of a high scoring essay.

Revisions: You will have the opportunity to revise selected essays (at least three per quarter) over the course of each semester. These revisions must be submitted within 2 weeks of the return date (stamped on your essay). A primary focus in this class is improving your analytical skills, particularly in writing—revising is an essential practice toward reaching that goal. You will receive timely feedback on each assessed writing assignment toward assisting you identify both areas of power (strengths) and areas in need of improvement.

Class-time will also be used for writing conferences and peer review, as well as to review patterns of problems (building varied sentences, using effective diction, creating logical organization, incorporating specific detail and support, finding your voice, and mastering

punctuation and other rhetorical details). The revised—and presumably improved—grade will replace the earlier grade.

Class Participation. This is a college prep class. Consequently, I expect you to prepare for each class by reading the assigned work *alertly, curiously, and critically* --- that is, in a way that generates meaningful questions and ideas about the reading that you then bring to class and make a part of our daily discussion. The first purpose of the class is *not* for you to learn my interpretations of literature but for you to practice your own. So, you must come ready to practice: i.e. poems should be read three or four times, difficult passages in novels at least twice, and unfamiliar words looked up in a dictionary.

GRADING

I am much more concerned with ATTITUDE than APTITUDE. Being "brilliant" alone is not enough; I expect you to get the most out of yourself, and I expect you to succeed. My grading of your work will reflect this view. If you are working, you will survive; if you don't, your talent can only partly rescue you from academic oblivion. You will be assessed in a variety of ways, from daily homework to major tests, formal essays, timed essays, literary vocabulary work and class participation. All work is weighted proportionately to its importance or significance and /or the work and effort it requires of you. Writing assignments and exams will be valued the highest. Timeliness is essential.

AP Scoring Model

Top Scores 9-8	These are well-written papers which respond fully to the question asked. The best papers show a full understanding of the issues and support their points with appropriate textual evidence and examples. Writers of these essays demonstrate stylistic maturity by an effective command of sentence structure, diction, and organization. The writing need not be without flaws, but it should reveal the writer's ability to choose from and control a wide range of elements of effective writing.
Upper Scores 7-6	These essays also respond correctly to the questions asked but do so less fully or less effectively than the essays in the top range. Their discussion may be less thorough and less specific. These essays are well-written in an appropriate style but reveal less maturity than the top papers. They do make use of textual evidence to support their points. Some lapses in diction or syntax may appear, but the writing demonstrates sufficient control over the elements of composition to present the writer's ideas clearly.
Middle Score 5	These essays respond to the question, but the comments may be simplistic or imprecise; they may be overly generalized, vague, or inadequately supported. These essays are adequately written, but may demonstrate inconsistent control over the elements of composition. Organization is attempted, but it may not be fully realized or particularly effective.
Lower Scores 4-3	These essays attempt to deal with the question, but do so either inaccurately or without support or specific evidence. They may show some misunderstanding or omit pertinent analysis. The writing can convey the writer's ideas, but it reveals weak control over diction, syntax, organization. These essays may contain excessive and distracting spelling and grammatical errors. Statements are seldom supported with specific or persuasive evidence, or inappropriately lengthy quotations may replace discussion and analysis.
Lowest Scores 2-1	These essays fail to respond adequately to the question. They may reveal misunderstanding or may distort the interpretation. They compound the problems of the Lower Score papers. Generally these essays are unacceptably brief or poorly written. Although some attempts to answer the question may be indicated, the writer's view has little clarity and only slight, if any, evidence in its support.

Format For Written Work. Take-home essays and other writing assignments (unless otherwise specified) should be typed. Documents must be typed in an easy-to-read font (12 point), printed in black ink, and titled, the margins no larger than one inch. On all work, the heading—name, date, period, course name—must be in the upper left hand corner of the first page. On handwritten notes or other assignments, I expect neat, legible handwriting or printing in black or dark blue ink only. *If I cannot read your writing, it is your problem and not mine.*

Be forewarned—I take the formal appearance of your papers quite seriously. I expect you to strictly adhere to MLA guidelines.

RULES TO LIVE BY

Academic Integrity

This applies to both written work and oral presentations. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: the willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized text, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students using fraud, duress, deception, theft, trickery, talking, signs, gestures, copying, or any other methodology.

Plagiarism:

- Submitting or presenting another person's work as your own without proper documentation, including downloaded information from the Internet
- Using another student's material without prior approval.

Cheating:

- Giving or receiving information during a test, quiz, and/or class work assignment without teacher authorization.
- Using hand signals, gestures, and the like during tests or quizzes to obtain/give information.
- Using unauthorized materials during a test or quiz.

A student who plagiarizes a work can expect to receive an "F" for the assignment. The student may also be placed on academic and/or disciplinary probation.

Attendance: Regular attendance is required. You can't learn if you are not here.

Behavior. RESPECT, RESPONSE, RESPONSIBILITY are the three rules that set the tone in our community of learners. We will respect ourselves, each other, and the facility; we will respond thoughtfully (not react without thinking) to each other, and we will accept responsibility for our own actions.

Living with Others in Small, Warm, Crowded Classrooms (Revisiting 7th Grade)

- Be considerate—use soap (often) and try not to share germs.
- Wear clean clothes, as opposed to ones you found under your bed. More important than having the "in" clothes and the "in" shoes is not smelling like you slept on a park bench in your gym

clothes. If you violate these rules, we will be talking—and that is not a conversation that either of us wants to have.

- Do not overdo the Axe or similar smelly stuff.

Pay Attention. *Listen* when I am giving instructions. If you ask me a question I have “just” answered, you can expect an extra writing assignment. The punishment is not the writing part (because we love to write); the punishment is that the assignment is homework (and no one likes homework, especially extra homework).

Personal Needs

- Potty breaks, hydration needs, and pencil sharpening may occur before class (preferred) and on your work time—and NEVER on my teaching time.
- Snacking and drinking water bottles may occur during class provided you do not leave a mess. If this privilege is abused, it will be suspended.

Technology

- iPods (MP3s, CD players, etc.). Use is acceptable during writing work sessions, as long as only you can hear your music, you don't share headphones or ear buds, and you are listening to music (not comedy, etc.). Use is not acceptable during other types of class sessions, especially during lessons. NO MOVIES—NO GAMES!
- Cell Phones: Use (without permission) is NEVER acceptable in this classroom. This includes texting. Use it and lose it—no warnings, no exceptions.

Other Distractions

This is English class. Therefore, you may NEVER work on assignments for other classes during my class. If you do, you will lose it. Permanently. Not kidding.

Timeliness

- Please arrive to class on time and settle into daily work as soon as the bell rings.
- Please submit all work/papers on time (at the start of class). Late work will receive a 10% reduction/day for an essay that is passed in after the due date. **Essays will not be accepted if they are more than five days late.**
- Assignments will not be considered late if the absence is excused. However, for planned absences (vacations and athletics, for example), you are expected to turn in work prior to your departure.
- Students who are not prepared for class—that is, missing *Writing Reminders*, textbooks, notebooks, paper, writing implements, assignments—will be consequence. **NO LOCKER VISITS TO RETRIEVE FORGOTTEN STUFF.**
- Students experiencing technological difficulties (my computer crashed, printer is out of ink, dog ate my flashdrive, etc.) must write their assignments by hand and submit a note from a parent/guardian describing the problem. Students with ongoing technological difficulties should discuss alternatives with me.