

Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition

Course Description: This college level course is ideal for students who enjoy reading, discussing, and interpreting literature of merit. Through a study of a variety of novels, plays, and other major works, students will also engage in writing essays that show understanding, explanation, and evaluation. Moreover, students will study and show knowledge of literary terms such as: diction, tone, imagery, setting, structure, figures of speech, etc. Oral participation is a large component of this course. Students will engage in meaningful, verbal intercourse designed to interpret and evaluate each piece of literature studied. And, of course, students will be exposed to a variety of evaluations including: teacher made tests, AP multiple-choice tests, and AP timed essays. The reading selections used for the course will be chosen from a wide variety of British and American literature. (C2) However, emphasis will be on British literature, including an in depth study of Shakespeare through several of his plays. The course is designed to comply with the curricular requirements described in the *AP English Course Description*. (C1)

Course Objectives: The following course requirements are detailed at www.apcentral.collegeboard.com. Throughout this document these objectives will be identified as C1, C2, etc.

1. The teacher has read the most recent *AP English Course Description*, available as a free download at www.apcentral.collegeboard.com/englit.
2. The course includes an intensive study of representative works such as those cited in the *AP English Course Description*. The choice of works for the AP course is made by the school in relation to the school's overall English curriculum sequence, so that by the time the student completes AP English Literature and Composition she or he will have studied during high school literature from both British and American writers, as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth century to contemporary times. The works selected for the course should require careful, deliberative reading that yields multiple meanings.

3. The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of textual details, considering the work's:

- Structure, style, themes
- The social and historical value it reflects and embodies
- Such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone

4. The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed, in-class responses. The course requires:

- Writing to understand: Informal, expository activities that enable students to discover what they think in the process of writing about their reading (such assignments could include annotation, freewriting, keeping a journal, and response/reaction papers)
- Writing to explain: Expository, analytical essays in which students draw upon textual details to develop an extended explanation/interpretation of the meanings of a literary text
- Writing to evaluate: Analytical, argumentative essays in which students draw upon textual details to make and explain judgments about a work's artistry and quality, and its social and cultural values

5. The AP teacher provides structure and feedback on students' writing assignments, both before and after the students revise their work, that help the students develop:

- A wide range of vocabulary used appropriately and effectively
- A variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination
- 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 voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure

Ongoing Curricular Elements: The following activities are completed over the course of the school year, including the summer prior to the beginning of the course.

A. Summer Reading: Students will read *Song of Solomon* and complete three directed reading logs to be handed in on the first day of classes. (C2, C3, C4, C5)

B. For each author covered in the syllabus, students are responsible for researching the biographical background to be used in verbal discussion and/or written assignments.

C. Students will be exposed to practice multiple-choice questions and essays from materials such as Applied Practice or released AP tests.

D. Students will write a major research paper, which is also a school requirement.

Advance Placement English Literature and Composition Course Outline

Unit 1: Quest for Identity

A. Unit Goals: Through a variety of novels, students will study the common theme: search for identity. (C1) Additionally, students will study these novels for a better understanding of novel traits: setting, mood, tone, motifs, symbols, etc. Finally, students will study the novels and analyze the writer's craft through style, structure, diction and language. Background information for each author will be incorporated into the discussions and writings. (C2)

B. Unit Objectives:

- To become aware of the variety of styles used by authors;

- To become aware of the traits associated with the novel;
- To become aware of the literary elements used by the various authors;
- To practice answering AP multiple choice questions and writing AP essays;
- To become aware of the author's background as it is reflected in his works.

C. Class Readings:

1. *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison
2. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* by James Baldwin
3. *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway
4. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad
5. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce
6. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger

D. Class Writings: C3, C4, C5)

1. Summer Logs (*Song of Solomon*)

- *Song of Solomon* develops relationships throughout the novel. Discuss the significance and impact of the following relationships: Macon and Ruth; Macon and Pilot; Milkman and Hagar; Milkman and Guitar.
- Comment on Morrison's use of irony throughout the novel. The story is replete with many examples. Be sure to include the three kinds of irony – situational, dramatic, and verbal.
- Morrison develops a strong motif of flying throughout the novel. Trace this motif from the beginning to the end, commenting on the use and effect. Additionally, focus on the last scene of the novel and the motif. What is your interpretation of what happened and why?

2. Analyzing major works, especially novels, requires an understanding of the writer's craft. In order to get a more complete understanding of the work, it is important to recognize the use of important literary elements. Analyze the novel *Go Tell*

It on the Mountain and show how Baldwin uses the literary concepts of setting, structure, and themes. Additionally, show how each of these elements enhances the overall meaning of the story.

3. The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained allusion to the *Bible*. Using *The Old Man and the Sea*, write a well-organized essay that shows the sustained allusions that predominate in the work and analyze how they enhance the work's meaning.

4. "Pride goes before a fall" is a well-known aphorism. Drawing upon your reading of *Heart of Darkness*, observations, and experiences, write a well-organized essay in which you defend, challenge, or qualify the validity of the statement.

5. (*The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) Certainly, Chapter 3 is a pivotal chapter in the book. The focal point is the retreat and the sermons. Discuss and analyze the three sermons with regards to the central idea, structure, imagery, and their impact on Stephen.

6. Read the passage from Chapter 16 of *The Catcher in the Rye* which begins "When I came out of the record store" and ends "Kids always have to meet their friend That kills me" (pages 116-119). Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss the literary techniques the author uses to create the persona of the narrator as a confused and lonely teenager.

7. Moral Ladder: The teacher will select a number of characters developed in the novel/play and students are to rank/order the characters according to their moral standing from top (best) to bottom (worst). Criteria for ranking includes transgressions, motivation, consequences, and remorse. Students will present their "ladder" in a formal essay. Of course, evidence and details from the works must be used to support the findings. This assignment is well suited for *Song of Solomon* and any other work that is applicable.

8. Background/biographical essays: For each work the student is to do independent research on the background of the authors studied. The background will take into consideration the social, historical, political and economic concerns as they pertain to the author. The essay prompt would read: Discuss any biographical/autobiographical information that can be related to the author and the content of the novel. Using social, political, economic, and cultural findings, how is the overall meaning of the novel enhanced. (C2)

Unit 2: Poetry

A. Unit Goals: Students will be exposed to a variety of poems for basic understanding and interpretive meanings. (C2) They will practice reading poems and answering multiple-choice questions similar to those on the AP EXAM. Students will also be exposed to a lengthy list of literary terms associated with poetry. Finally, students will learn to read, interpret, and analyze poems using AP essay prompts.

B. Unit Objectives:

- To recognize and understand key figures of speech;
- To recognize and understand tone, mood, diction, syntax, imagery, and other specialized poetry terms;
- To recognize and understand various forms and structures associated with poetry;
- To practice and become proficient at answering multiple choice questions associated with poetry;
- To practice and become proficient at writing AP style essays.

C. General Procedure: Students will use *Sound and Sense* and *English Literature Close Reading and Analytic Writing* for nightly reading assignments; individual photocopies of poems will also be used for reading and class discussion. Additionally, poems that have appeared in the past on AP Exams will also be used for practice and evaluation for both essay writing and answering multiple-choice questions. The poems selected for this unit will vary, but an extensive list will be used to cover the major writers from past to present.

D. Class Writings: The following is a partial list of typical AP essays and writing assignments. (C2, C3, C4, C5)

1. The poem “Mosquito” is a mock heroic poem. How do setting, plot, characters, and especially diction create a mocking tone?

2. Using the poem “Eve” analyze how the sound devices contribute to its meaning and tone. Additionally, what irony emerges from the contrast between the poem’s age-old theme and the poet’s sensuous use of language?

3. Read “Death Be Not Proud” by John Donne and “To Death” by Anne Finch. Then compare and contrast the tones of these poems, analyzing the means by which the tone is produced.

4. Compare and contrast the poems “Song” by Edmund Waller and “Virtue” by George Herbert, considering such elements as form, structure, content, and theme.

5. Read the poem “Mirror” by Sylvia Plath. Then write a well-organized essay discussing how the poet uses imagery, diction, and poetic devices to reinforce the poem’s theme.

6. Read the poem “My Mistress’ Eyes” by William Shakespeare. Then write a well-organized essay in which you discuss how the language and the form of the poem reveal the speaker’s attitude toward his mistress.

7. Read the poem “Miniver Cheevy” by Edward Arlington Robinson. Then write a well-organized essay discussing how the poet’s use of language and allusion helps reveal both the character of Miniver Cheevy and the speaker’s attitude toward him.

8. Students will have the opportunity to write their own poems with practice with a sonnet, villanelle, and free verse.

Unit 3: Shakespeare

A. Unit Goals: Students will read and analyze several plays of Shakespeare. Emphasis will be placed on reading and studying the tragedies. Most importantly, students will appreciate the genius of Shakespeare in his portrayal of characters who are both complex and universally appealing. Of course, students will practice answering AP multiple-choice questions and write typical AP essays related to Shakespeare.

B. Unit Objectives:

- To study and understand Shakespeare's tragic heroes;
- To become aware of the definition of tragic hero;
- To recognize major and minor themes in the plays;
- To recognize and understand blank verse;
- To recognize and understand an aside and a soliloquy;
- To become aware of Shakespeare's greatest villains.
- To practice and become proficient with answering multiple choice questions related to the plays;
- To practice and become proficient at writing AP essays based on the plays.

C. General Procedure: The focus of this unit will be on the reading of the three tragedies: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. If time permits, a comedy will be read and studied. Choices will include *Twelfth Night* or *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*. Students will be responsible for researching the background of each play, including the plot sources, specialized terms, and the Elizabethan theater. Students will read the plays on their own. However, some parts of the plays will be read aloud in class. Realizing that Shakespeare is meant to be seen and heard, opportunities to view either a live performance or video performance will be utilized whenever possible. Essays and multiple-choice questions from *Applied Practice* will be used for both practice and evaluation.

D. Class Writings: The following is a partial list of typical AP essays and writing assignments. (C2, C3, C4, C5)

1. In some works of literature, the way a character speaks – either the tendency to elaborate or not, or the vocabulary the character chooses - is an important indicator of the character's qualities. Choose two or three characters from *King Lear*, and discuss how their method of speaking helps develop their character and helps the reader understand the nature of each character.

2. *King Lear* contains several themes important to the overall meaning of the play. Certainly, one dominant theme is love. Analyze the theme of love in the play. Be sure to address the different kinds of love as evidenced in the play. Also, discuss how the theme of love enhances the overall meaning of the play.

3. In many works of literature, the words and actions of minor characters are crucial to the development of the work's plot and themes. In a well-organized essay, discuss how two or three minor characters serve this function in *Hamlet*.

4. Read the following well-known soliloquy from *Hamlet* ("To be, or not to be..."). Then, in a well-organized essay, briefly summarize Hamlet's thoughts, and discuss how the diction, imagery, and syntax of the soliloquy help to convey his state of mind.

5. Some readers argue that Macbeth was completely a victim of the Witches' misleading prophecies (and later of Lady Macbeth's manipulation). Others argue that the Witches and Lady Macbeth simply provided the impetus to Macbeth's carrying out his own desires. In a well-organized essay, discuss which position you consider to be more accurate. Support your points with evidence from the play.

6. After reading the following soliloquy from *Macbeth*, ("Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow...") analyze the lines of poetry. Be sure to include the use of diction, structure, imagery, and tone and how each relates to the overall meaning of the soliloquy and play.

7. After reading and studying three of Shakespeare's great tragedies, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, we see three very different tragic heroes. First, show how each title character fits the definition of tragic hero. Then, choose which character best fits the definition. Use details and evidence from each play to support your answer.

8. The moral ladder essay previously mentioned could be used for all three plays. It also provokes stimulating discussions.

Unit 4: Satire

A. Unit Goals: Students will study several classical satires through a variety of works. (C2) As part of the study, students will explore the overall meaning of satire and recognize the various kinds of satire. Finally, techniques used in effective satire will be studied.

B. Unit Objectives:

- To become aware and understand the definition of satire;
- To recognize and understand different kinds of satire;
- To become aware of effective satire;
- To become aware of techniques used in writing effective satire;
- To practice and become proficient at answering multiple-choice questions in relation to satire;
- To practice and become proficient at writing AP essays reflecting an understanding of all kinds of satire.

C. Class Readings: Note, time constraints may limit which works can be read and studied. If necessary, excerpts from the works may be used.

1. *Gulliver's Travels*
2. *The Canterbury Tales*
3. *Brave New World*
4. *1984*
5. *The Importance of Being Earnest*

D. Class Writings: (C2, C3, C4, C5)

1. Many novels and plays use contrasts (for example two countries, cities, towns, or houses, or land or sea.) to represent opposed forces or ideas central to the meaning of the work. Using *Gulliver's Travels*, *Brave New World*, *1984*, or *The Importance of Being Earnest*, show how the work contrast two places and explain how the places differ, what each represents and how their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.

2. Some critics argue that even dystopian literary works are hopeful because they have at least one character who struggles against the evils of the dominant society. Use either *1984* or *Brave New World* and discuss whether this assertion applies and how the inclusion of a positive character or characters affects the theme of such a work.

3. In the twentieth century, many novels were written warning of the dangers of misusing scientific knowledge or of carrying such knowledge to extremes. In a well-organized essay, discuss how *Brave New World* could be considered such a cautionary work.

4. Write an essay in which you make a good case for distortion as a distinct form of literary realism. Use *Gulliver's Travels* and analyze how important elements of the work are distorted and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of the work.

5. Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social, political or religious attitudes or in traditions. Using *The Canterbury Tales* note briefly the attitudes or traditions the author wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's views.

Unit 5: Research Paper

A. Unit Goals: The AP research paper will reflect a study of two authors and two works. The paper will be a comparative study supported by a concise thesis statement and sufficient and appropriate research findings. Of course, the paper will reflect current and proper format for all documentation. (C4, C5)

Unit Objectives:

- To research two different authors and two different works for comparative study;
- To interpret and analyze the meanings of two different works;
- To effectively write a clear and precise thesis statement;
- To utilize a variety of available resources for research;
- To properly document and follow correct format for the research paper.

C. Class Procedures: Our students must do a research paper each year. Therefore, this project should be the culmination of the previous three years. Students

will work independently to complete the paper. However, class library time and computer lab time will be scheduled early on to facilitate the project.

Unit 6: AP Test Prep

A. Unit Goals: Through practice, the students will hone the necessary skills for taking the AP Exam. Since students have been exposed to practice with AP multiple-choice questions and AP essays throughout the year, this unit will cover strategies for taking the test including test-taking strategies. Multiple-choice questions for both prose passages and poems will be practiced. Also, the student will practice writing the three kinds of essays found on the AP Exam.

B. Unit Objectives:

- To better utilize time for completion of the entire AP Exam;
- To become test ready with regards to content and procedure;
- To practice techniques used in answering multiple-choice questions;
- To learn strategies used in answering essay questions for all three prompts;
- To become aware of the scoring of the essays using a rubric;
- To become aware of the value of each part of the exam with regards to the weighting scales used;

C. Class Procedure: A wide variety of AP resource materials will be used, the *AP Multiple Choice Booklet*, 6th edition. Other multiple-choice practice tests will come from *Applied Practice*. Moreover, AP essays from old AP Exams will be used for practice. When available, essays that have rubrics with sample essays will be used by the students. Finally, recent essays from past AP classes will be used as guides for writing and critiquing student essays. Also, included in the practice will be essays and sample essay responses that were used in past AP workshops. (C2, C3, C4, C5)

Student Texts:

Arp, Thomas R and Greg Johnson. *Perrine's Sound and Sense An Introduction to Poetry*. 11th ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.

Bloy, Barbara. *English Literature Close Reading and Analytic Writing*. Saddle Brook, New Jersey: The People's Publishing Group, Inc., 2006.

Vogel, Richard and Charles F. Winans. *Multiple-Choice & Free Response Questions in Preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination* 6th ed. Brooklyn, New York: D & S Marketing Systems, Inc., 2001.

Teacher Resources:

LaBonte, John. *Advanced Placement English II*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1986.

Manear, John. *Advanced Placement Poetry*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1988.

Moran, Margaret C., and W. Frances Holder. *AP Success English Literature & Composition*. 5th ed. Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Thomson Learning, Inc., 2004.

Peterson, Linda, et al. *The Norton Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2000.

Rankin, Estelle, & Barbara Murphy. *5 Steps to a 5 AP English Literature*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Rozakis, Laurie. *Master the AP Literature & Composition Test*. 6th ed. Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Thomson Learning, Inc., 2003.

