

Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition

Course Overview

The AP English Literature and Composition course has been designed to provide students with a learning experience equivalent to the introductory year of college literature course work. The aim of this course is to engage students in careful reading and critical analysis of literature. Through the close reading of literary texts, students sharpen their understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers. Students enrolling in AP English Literature and Composition are expected to have had training in reading and writing Standard English.

Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition is a course which is offered to seniors and has no real prerequisite, though students who have been in honors English tend to have more background knowledge and a higher level of success. All students who are willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous English curriculum are considered for admission to this course. Students are asked to submit an application and write an essay which is used for diagnostic purposes. Those students who sign up for the course are required to complete summer reading, writing and inquiry. These assignments are graded and given credit. Any student not completing summer work is not exempt from the course, but clearly starts at a disadvantage, both in knowledge and background.

The course is organized as a review of genre as well as to focus on themes to which students can relate. As students study fiction, drama and poetry, they will be expected to focus on several essential questions, including:

- *How does literature help us understand ourselves and others?*
- *How does literature reflect the human condition?*
- *How does a work of literature reflect the time and place in which it was written (or written about?)*
- *How is writing a tool for understanding and interpretation?*

Major Concepts and Content

Because AP English Literature and Composition is designed as a college level course it is meant to provide students with the rigor and challenge commensurate to a typical undergraduate English Literature course on the university level. Students are expected to read and write considerably more than in the standard high school college preparatory class and are also given the opportunity to receive college credit by taking the AP

English Literature and Composition Exam given in May. A grade of 3, 4 or 5 on this exam will be granted college credit by most colleges in the U.S.

Course Goals

1. Using close reading techniques, students will learn to utilize higher level thinking skills to analyze works of imaginative literature (fiction, drama, poetry)
2. Students will become observers of history and humanity by studying works from a variety of literary periods and writers.
3. Students will consider a work's structure, style and theme in aiding understanding of the broader implications of literature.
4. Students will write focused literary analysis as well as expository, argumentative, reflective, creative and research essays.
5. Through speaking, listening, reading and most importantly, writing, students will focus on the resources of language including connotation, metaphor and other figurative devices, irony, syntax and tone.

Required Texts and Materials

The English Department will provide the primary textbook as well as all supplemental novels and plays (with the exception of outside reading as in the case of literature circles) for students in AP English Literature and Composition. Students are encouraged to purchase novels and plays to learn to annotate, though a number of other methods of note taking are taught in this course to enable those students who cannot purchase their own text to learn the techniques of active reading.

The primary text for this course is Robert DiYanni's *Literature* (cited below). Included in this text are several major works read in this course (*Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *The Metamorphosis*). This text also includes critical essays, short fiction and an expansive poetry collection, all of which are used in this course. All other works listed are supplemented through English Department resources.

DiYanni, Robert. *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. 5th Edition. New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 2002.

Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*

Foster, Thomas C. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*

Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet*

Shelley, Mary W. *Frankenstein*

Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Course Syllabus

This course, entitled *Literature and Composition*, will require students to practice their best writing for every assignment that involves practicing writing skills.

Because a major part of the senior year entails creating and maintaining the Senior Exit Portfolio, students will be expected to revise and rewrite their best pieces for inclusion. By the end of the first semester, students should have 4 major essays and creative works prepared for this purpose along with the personal statement and updated resume.

As a reader for ETS, the instructor is privileged to have the opportunity each year to read for the AP English Literature and Composition exam, which students take in May. Each essay assigned has a scoring rubric which will enable students to see errors and improve writing on the next timed writing (or revise as assigned).

Below is a sample of a general rubric which is used to evaluate in-class essays when a specific rubric is not provided.

C2 – The course includes an intensive study of representative works of both British and American writers as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth to contemporary times.

C4 – Students have frequent opportunities to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed, in-class response in all of the following modes: writing to understand, writing to explain and writing to evaluate.

C5 – The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on student' writing assignments both before and after students revise their work.

GENERAL RUBRIC FOR AP ENGLISH

The 9-point scale is perhaps the most widely used for holistic scoring. It is currently used by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) for Advanced Placement essay scoring. The following is a general outline of a sample rubric, though those used for AP grading are tailored to the question and the expected response.

9/8: A 9 is the top score assigned to excellent essay which combine adherence to the topic with clear organization, precise content and insight; facile use of language, and the mastery of mechanics. These papers demonstrate uncommon skill. The essay which is assigned a score of 8 is equally fluent and well written, but may not exhibit the use of vocabulary or sentence structure or the **persuasive** nature of the 9 essay.

7/6: The 7 essay is a thinner version of the excellent paper and is considered. While still impressive, cogent and convincing, it may be less well handled in terms of organization, insight and vocabulary. The writer may have skimmed over elements which the more able writer was able to elaborate on. A 6 paper is also **convincing**, but may be sketchier in detail or the less mature in thought. There may be some evidence of inexperience in syntactical, organizational or mechanical areas.

5: A 5 essay is often characterized as pedestrian, meaning it is average and predictable, though it may be considered **adequate**. Though the essay maintains the general idea of the prompt, it may lack maturity of thought and language facility. Though the writer understands the task, he may distort it or fail to deal adequately with one important aspect of it.

4/3: These scores are assigned to an essay that makes an attempt to deal with the topic but demonstrates serious weaknesses in content and coherence and/or syntax and mechanics. It may simply retell the story or paraphrase the poem. Often, though the writer understands the question, he may misinterpret the work or fail to deal adequately with all elements of the prompt. A score of 3 often contains all of the above-mentioned problems, but may be poorly written. These essays are considered **inadequate** for consideration.

2: This is the grade given to any on-topic response that has very little redeeming quality. It may be very brief or very long, but will be scarcely coherent and probably full of mechanical errors as well. Though the writer may write to the prompt, he may fail to focus his ideas adequately and is considered **unacceptable**.

1: This score is given to a non-topic response, or one which merely mentions the task.

0: This score is given to a blank essay.

Students are often asked to share their viewpoints on how a specific passage or piece of literature relates to their own life or the times of the author/story. In order to provide a continued venue for such interaction, students utilize a blog to discuss ideas which they may not have had time to explore in class. For this purpose, please go to: <clammers.edublogs.org > This will be an on going and often updated site and student participation will be monitored and given credit. Due to the high schools expansive library and computer lab hours and availability, all students are expected to participate in this activity.

The following is an outline of assigned reading and assessments organized in a thematic format. Length of time allotted to each unit is approximate and may be altered as needed; however, the number and breadth of reading and writing assignments will remain constant.

I. The Search for Identity (summer work) 2-3 weeks

Required Texts:

**How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

**The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger

~**Assessments:**

* Timed Writing (*Catcher*)

Sample Essay Prompt:

(Original essays are copiously scored, and students will revise this essay after meeting with the teacher. This piece will be included in their portfolio).

II. The Search for Identity II: Creativity 3 weeks

* "The Creative Attitude" by Erich Fromm

* *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

~**Assessments:**

* Research Project: Romanticism

* Timed Writing: *Frankenstein*

* Literary Criticism (*Frankenstein*) –Group Project

****see attached sample assignment**

*Creative Writing: Poem of Dedication or Tribute

Investigation and analysis of fiction devices and terminology

III. The Search for Identity III: The Impact of the Past upon the Future 4 weeks

~Assessments:

- * Personal Statement
- * Creative Writing: Memoir
- * Timed Writing

C2—The course includes an intensive study of representative works of both British and American writers as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth to contemporary times

IV. The Search for Truth 3 weeks

- * “The Allegory of the Cave” by Plato
- * Selected Poetry:
 - “from *The Prelude*” by William Wordsworth
 - “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats
 - “Dover Beach” by Matthew Arnold
 - “Dulce Et Decorum Est” by Wilfred Owen
- * *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

o ~ **Assessments:**

- o * Modern Allegory
- Blog - Meaning of truth in Wordsworth ~ Modern Film and the truth it portrays
- From paraphrase to analysis – Keats
- Poetry Term. Test (objective and short answer)
- Socratic Discussion
- Analytical Essay (3-5 pages) – Owen
- Syntax Essay (*Heart of Darkness*)

C3—Students write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on careful observations of textual details.

Sample Essay Prompt: Analyze Wilfred Owen’s “Dulce Et Decorum Est” specifically focusing on diction and imagery. By embedding passages, extrapolating words from passages and writing astute commentary on diction and images, students will demonstrate an understanding of literary devices and how language leads to a deeper understanding of poetry and the meaning of the work as a whole. (Original essays are copiously scored, and students will revise this essay after meeting with the teacher. This piece will be included in their portfolio).

- Investigation and analysis of poetic devices and terminology

V. Amor Vincit Omnia 5 weeks (including Xmas vacation)

- * *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- * *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte

C2 – The course includes an intensive study of representative works of both British and American writers as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth to contemporary times.

- * *A Streetcar Named Desire* - Tennessee Williams
- ~ **Assessments:**
 - * Close Reading: Soliloquies (take home and in class essay writing)
 - * Fiction Techniques: Group Project and Timed Writing:(*Wuthering Heights*) ***
 - * Timed Writing: Modern Drama

Investigation and analysis of dramatic devices and terminology

VI. Midterm Examination 1 week

Students will take an objective exam which tests their knowledge of literary devices introduced and reviewed throughout the semester. They will also take a complete AP Exam, created by the College Board for use in 1999. After the exams are scored, students will choose either their essay on the poem "Blackberry Picking" by Seamus Heaney or on the excerpt from McCarthy's *The Crossing* to expand to a 3-5 page essay discussing how the language in the poem or passage leads to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole. Students will use teacher suggestions and marking to improve upon logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis. This will be revised for portfolio inclusion.

VII. Drama Unit: Supplemental reading assignment

Students will choose from the following works for outside reading. They will have until the end of February to complete their reading, and will be meeting with the instructor and fellow readers for a group discussion. Culminating assessment will be a timed writing.

Henrik Ibsen – *A Doll's House*
 Arthur Miller – *Death of a Salesman*
 David Henry Hwang—*M. Butterfly*
 Oscar Wilde—*The Importance of Being Earnest*
 Tennessee Williams—*The Glass Menagerie*
 August Wilson—*Fences*

VI. Loss and Alienation (or, was it always this bad?) 6-8 weeks

- * "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka
- * "The Myth of Sisyphus" by Albert Camus
- * "Existentialism" by Jean Paul Sartre
- * *The Stranger* by Albert Camus
- * *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

- * *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard

- ~ **Assessments:**
 - * Existentialism Research Paper (I-Search)
7-10 pages
 - * Close Reading (Explication) *Hamlet*
 - * Timed Writings

VII. Laughter is the Best Medicine 2 weeks

- * "A Modest Proposal"
- * A variety of passages and excerpts to study humor in literature

- ~ **Assessments:**
 - * Close reading
 - * Timed Writings

VIII. Poetry Review 4 weeks

Students will utilize the DiYanni text which will help them review and practice reading, discussing and writing about poetry. We will be looking specifically at John Donne, Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, William Shakespeare as well as modern and contemporary poetry.

IX. "Literature is the question minus the answer." Roland Barth

Students choose one of the dystopian works below (which are often referenced on the AP exam) to read. Write a question which you feel the novel addresses and be prepared to write an in-class essay using both.

<i>1984</i>	<i>Brave New World</i>
<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<i>The Road</i>
<i>The Passage</i>	<i>Slaughterhouse Five</i>
<i>Iron Heel</i>	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>
<i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep</i>	<i>Children of Men</i>
<i>We</i>	<i>Into the Forest</i>
<i>Time Machine</i>	

One complete AP Exam is given per semester and used for analysis of skills each student needs further work on. These are scored as actual AP Exams. Students complete approximately 20 in-class essays on a variety of past AP prompts. This gives students a great deal of practice with the timed writing, on which they become quite proficient, and often former

students return to share how much this process prepared them for college in-class essay writing.

Students also write a total of 6-8 five to seven page analytical essays on selected novels, plays and poetry. During the first semester, these essays are carefully scaffolded and several drafts are completed and checked to insure student success. Second semester, students write formal essays including a research paper meeting MLA specifications. Students often choose to include this in their portfolio (see below).

Students keep a notebook first semester and a Senior Exit Portfolio second semester. Following the AP Exam, all students submit their portfolios and participate in the Senior Exit Interviews. These are conducted on a formal basis by staff and community members to give the students the opportunity to participate in a high stakes interview process to prepare them for the working/college world.

Sample Literary Criticism Group Project

Literary Criticism

3.8 Analyze the clarity and consistency of political assumptions in a selection of literary works or essays on a topic (e.g., suffrage, women's role in organized labor). (Political approach)

3.9 Analyze the philosophical arguments presented in literary works to determine whether the authors' positions have contributed to the quality of each work and the credibility of the characters. (Philosophical approach)

Literary Criticism Group Work

Now that we have finished reading *Frankenstein*, read one of the literary criticisms provided with your group. Choose among feminist, gender, Freudian, Marxist or cultural criticism. Complete the following steps:

- Define the type of criticism you are reading - be prepared to define and/or explain it for the class. Think in bullets.
- Read your critical article and extract 3-5 main premises or stances presented by the author.
- As a group, write a clear explanation of the type of criticism you are working with. Agree with or refute each of the critical issues brought forth in your criticism. Turn in a group paper on the definition and these issues.
- As a group, prepare a poster on your type of literary criticism. Use excerpts from your article to illustrate any points. Make this visually informative and appealing.

- As an individual, write a one page (or more) critique of the criticism. What valid points are present? What is just too far-fetched for you to buy into and why?

After all projects are turned in we will be taking a gallery walk and noting how each type of criticism broadens our understanding of Shelley's novel. You will be asked to take copious notes and share your findings with your group.