

*Advanced Placement
Language and Composition*

*Introductory
and
Summer Reading Packet*

ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION INTRODUCTORY AND SUMMER READING INFORMATION PACKET

Dear Prospective AP student and parent:

We want you to make an educated decision. Advanced Placement English Language and Composition is one of the more difficult courses at this school. It is also one of the most highly regarded by universities and colleges. We want to encourage anyone with a passion for learning and a deep desire for success to consider this course. It is not just for the academic elite. However, we also want you to understand the challenge you are accepting. Carefully read over this packet before deciding whether or not to take this class.

Reasons for taking AP English Language and Composition:

If you take this class:

- ◆ Your abilities to read critically and write effectively will drastically improve.
- ◆ You will be surrounded by people who care deeply about school, who are not ashamed of their intellectual curiosity, and who want to learn.
- ◆ You will do very little busy work. The class is about analysis and writing—period.
- ◆ Your transcript will look competitive in the eyes of the universities and colleges you apply to.
- ◆ You will be well prepared for college level work.
- ◆ You will read a wide variety of prose writings that will greatly expand your appreciation and understanding of the English language.
- ◆ You will have an opportunity to earn college credit by passing the AP exam and be exempt from the CSU EPT.

The challenges you will face in this class are:

- ◆ An intense homework schedule, on average two hours of homework for every class session.
- ◆ An intense grading scale. Most students do not get A's in this class. Writing counts for 40% of the final grade and it is scored at a collegiate level of proficiency. This course frustrates students who cannot accept specific, critical feedback and less than perfect scores.
- ◆ A test-driven curriculum. While all of the AP teachers strive to make the work intellectually stimulating and applicable to life, much of our time by necessity is spent on test preparation skills. You will learn to write a coherent essay in 40 minutes or less. You will learn to take extremely difficult multiple choice tests. You will analyze your own learning process and make strategic decisions to prepare you for the AP exam. You will analyze models of good student writing and participate in assessing the quality of yours and other classmates' written work.
- ◆ Pressure and stress. The AP English Language and Composition exam is timed and so many of the activities we do in class will also be timed. The readings on the test are very difficult, and so the readings in class will also be difficult. Many students feel intimidated and stressed out by these factors. Students often have to overcome feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure in order to succeed in the class.

Students that are most successful in this class usually have at least some of the following qualities:

- ◆ Innate passion for reading and writing.
- ◆ Willingness to receive critical feedback and learn from mistakes.
- ◆ Acceptance of the rigorous grading criteria and workload.
- ◆ Good time management skills. They have weighed their time commitments and have dedicated themselves to the workload.
- ◆ A specific and serious purpose for taking the class, not just that their parents want them to.

The rest of this packet provides you with:

1. summer reading requirements
2. list of literary terms
3. a description of the AP exam
4. a sample multiple choice passage w/qsts
5. an example of an essay prompt
6. a successful student response

Required Summer Reading Program

Summer reading is required of all students entering this course. It will count as 5% of the first semester grade. On the first day of the school year you will be tested over your knowledge of both of the selections. You should also be prepared to write a thematic analytical essay. You may check these books out from the library before the end of this school year or you may purchase them at any bookstore. We highly recommend you annotate your text with sticky notes if you are using the library's copy or you may write in the book if you own your own copy. Annotations will facilitate timed writing and verbal assessments, but are not for a grade.

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

- **Description:** Miller explores the effects of hysteria upon a society by dramatizing the infamous Salem witch trials. Miller draws parallels between the hysteria over communism in the 1950's and that that afflicted the Puritans.
- **Background:** For background you could look up information on any of the following: Puritans society hysteria, The Red Scare, McCarthyism, Salem witch trials, and background on the author.
- **Annotate:**
 - Themes: social pressure, individual courage, hypocrisy vs. true morality.
 - Key characters: Proctor, Elizabeth, Abigail, Parris, Mr. Hale, Giles Corey, etc.
 - Literary devices: Dramatic and verbal irony, plot sequencing, symbolism, characterization, dynamic and static characters, tragic hero.
- **Reading Tip:** Make sure to keep the characters straight. There are many of them.

Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller

- **Description:** Another play by Arthur Miller. This one explores the way the American Dream changes as it relates to the personal experiences of the common man.
- **Background:** For background, you could research urbanization of the early 20th century, Post WWII, and the concept of the American Dream, and background on the author.
- **Annotate:**
 - Themes: The American Dream, reality vs. illusion, family dynamics.
 - Key characters: Willy, Biff, Happy, Linda, Bernard, Charlie, and Ben.
 - Literary devices: irony, flashbacks, symbolism, tragic hero.
- **Reading Tip:** To fully appreciate the play, you must accurately distinguish between Willy's flashbacks and his struggles in the present.

My Antonia by Willa Cather

- **Description:** Jim Burden reminisces about his childhood, growing up on his grandfather's farm on the Western Plains. His memories focus on his experience with an immigrant family, namely on a girl named Antonia. The story chronicles Antonia's struggles to achieve her dreams in a very foreign land.
- **Background:** For background, you could research frontier life, immigration movements of the late 19th century, and background on the author.
- **Annotate:**
 - Themes: The American Dream, coming of age, loss of innocence.
 - Key characters: Jim, Antonia, Mr. Shimerda, Mrs. Shimerda, Jim's grandfather, and Lena.
 - Literary devices: Descriptive imagery, symbolism.
- **Reading Tip:** The novel is an excellent read, but its pace is sometimes slow to match the simple slowness of the novel's atmosphere.

LITERARY TERMS

The following are some of the terms we use to do literary analysis in this class. You should come into the course with a basic understanding of many of them. If you do not know these terms, you should spend some time familiarizing yourself with them if you choose to take this course.

Alliteration
Assonance
Characterization
Clause (Independent and dependent)
Concrete Detail
Commentary
Connotation
Deductive reasoning
Details
Diction
Ellipses
Figurative language
Genre
Hyperbole
Imagery
Irony
Juxtaposition
Metaphor
Oxymoron
Personification
Plot
Prose
Parallel structure
Rhetoric
Rhetorical questions
Setting
Simile
Syntax
Thesis
Topic Sentence
Transitions

Note: Knowledge of these terms is not a prerequisite for the course, but your familiarity with them could give you a good indication of how prepared you are to take this course. Please do not let the fact that you may not know some of these be the deciding factor in whether or not you take the class.

Description of the AP Test

...we have evidence that students who complete AP and the AP test are more likely to succeed at the University. Thus our greatest weight is placed on the AP tests with 3-5 scores, then AP classes and Honors classes which are basically treated the same without corroboration of the test.

-Rae Lee Siporin, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools

Before describing the actual exam, we must take a moment to emphasize two items.

- First, colleges regard the AP test as an excellent indicator of college readiness. Students who pass the exam are usually ranked ahead of students who do not, and students who take the exam and do not pass it are still ranked above students who do not take the exam at all. For students hoping to get into top ranked colleges, passing the AP exam is very helpful; therefore, we insist that all students take the exam and prepare for it with absolute focus.
- Second, colleges would rather see students take the AP exam and fail than see them not take the exam at all. In the statement above one can see that students who take the exam and fail are ranked ahead of students in an Honors class. Failing the AP exam is not the end of the world and does not devalue a student's progress or potential for college work. We do not want a student to choose not to take this course simply because he or she is scared of failing the test.
- Finally, we try to strike a delicate balance between applying the right amount of pressure to help students go into the exam well prepared, and demystifying the test so students do not get too stressed out over the results.

Here is what the AP exam consists of:

Approximately three hours total time:

- One hour to read 4-5 extremely difficult prose passages and answer 50-60 critical analysis multiple choice questions.
- A little over two hours to complete three multi-paragraph essays. Essay prompts range from synthesis to persuasive free response questions to style analysis questions on rich passages of prose (40 minutes a piece).

Multiple Choice: The following is a sample passage for the Multiple Choice portion of the AP exam and the questions to go with it. On the AP exam students are given 4-5 such passages with 52-55 multiple choice questions. They have an hour to complete this portion of the exam.

Questions 1-12. Refer to the following passage.

One day when I went to my wood pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, fiercely contending with one another.

- (5) Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum* but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewed with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war, the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noonday prepared to fight until the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the numblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already diverted him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle cry was "Conquer or die." In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had dispatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs; whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it. Or perchance he was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus.¹ He saw this equal combat from afar—for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red—he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an

- inch of the combatants; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operation near the root of his right fore leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame. I should not have wondered by this time to find that they had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and playing their national airs the while, to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants. I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord history, that will bear a moment's comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz or Dresden.² Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots' side, and Luther Blanchard wounded! Why here every ant was a Buttrick—"Fire! for God's sake fire!"—and thousands shared the fate of Davis and Hosmer.³ There was not one hiring there. I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least....

¹ friend of Achilles who was slain while wearing his armor
² Napoleonic battles
³ heroic patriots at the Revolutionary War battle of Concord

1. The speaker is primarily concerned with

- (A) drawing an analogy
(B) conducting an experiment
(C) conveying a moral
(D) describing a phenomenon
(E) meditating upon death

2. The passage employs which of the following organizational structures?
- (A) comparison/contrast
 - (B) definition
 - (C) chronological development
 - (D) classification
 - (E) negation
3. The insertion of the qualification "or rather my pile of stumps" (lines 1-2) is intended to call into question
- (A) the speaker's powers of observation
 - (B) the speaker's work ethic
 - (C) the speaker's lack of time
 - (D) the quality of the wood
 - (E) the ownership of the wood
4. The speaker dramatizes the initial stages of the battle via
- (A) descriptive adjectives
 - (B) a series of action verbs
 - (C) hyperbolic language
 - (D) sanguinary diction
 - (E) dramatic punctuation
5. It may be inferred that the difference between a *duellum* and a *bellum* involves
- (A) color
 - (B) ferocity
 - (C) genus
 - (D) size
 - (E) number
6. The author uses all of the following to depict the epic struggle of the ants EXCEPT
- (A) martial colors and music
 - (B) a prominent protagonist and antagonist
 - (C) a famous Spartan command
 - (D) allusions to other epic conflicts
 - (E) epic similes
7. The phrase to "select among his own members" (lines 52-53) most likely means
- (A) abandon his fellow combatants
 - (B) engage an opponent in battle
 - (C) volunteer someone else's services
 - (D) determine which limb to sacrifice
 - (E) choose a supporter
8. The speaker accents the "heroism" of the ants via a combination of which of the following?
- (A) hyperbole and understatement
 - (B) metaphor and allusion
 - (C) personification and simile
 - (D) irony and paradox
 - (E) imagery and onomatopoeia
9. Near the end of the passage, the speaker alludes to all of the following elements of the American war for independence EXCEPT
- (A) several heroic patriots
 - (B) the site of a significant battle
 - (C) an abusive tariff
 - (D) the British capitulation
 - (E) the headline of a Colonial newspaper
10. A "hireling" (line 72) is BEST defined as a
- (A) mercenary
 - (B) coward
 - (C) officer
 - (D) correspondent
 - (E) casualty
11. Which of the following words BEST exemplifies the author's deft use of understatement?
- (A) "locked" (line 23)
 - (B) "gnaw" (line 29)
 - (C) "dashed" (line 31)
 - (D) "divested" (line 33)
 - (E) "charged" (line 42)
12. When one considers its content, the passage is BEST labeled a(n)
- (A) subtle satire
 - (B) witty parody
 - (C) sententious diatribe
 - (D) allegorical anecdote
 - (E) poignant elegy

See answer key - last page of packet

Section II

Question I

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following passage a young man agonizes over whether to serve his country in Vietnam or to flee across the border into Canada. Read the following passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss the various ways in which the author uses language to dramatize the young man's troublesome dilemma.

(5) On my last full day, the sixth day, the old man took me out fishing on the Rainy River. The afternoon was sunny and cold. A stiff breeze came in from the north, and I remember how the little fourteen-foot boat made sharp rocking motions as we pushed off from the dock. The current was fast. All around us, I remember, there was a vastness to the world, an unpeopled rawness, just the trees and the sky and the water reaching out to nowhere. The air had the brittle scent of October.

(10) For ten or fifteen minutes Elroy held the course upstream, the river choppy and silver-gray, then he turned straight north and put the engine on full throttle. I felt the bow lift beneath me. I remember the wind in my ears, the sound of the old outboard Evinrude. For a time I didn't pay attention to anything, just feeling the cold spray against my face, but then it occurred to me that at some point we must've passed into Canadian waters, across that dotted line between two different worlds, and I remember a sudden tightness in my chest as I looked up and watched the far shore come at me....

(15) I remember staring at the old man, then at my hands, then at Canada. The shoreline was dense with brush and timber. I could see tiny red berries on the bushes. I could see a squirrel up in one of the birch trees, a big crow looking at me from a boulder across the river. That close—twenty yards—and I could see the delicate latticework of the leaves, the texture of the soil, the browned needles beneath the pines, the configurations of geology and human history. Twenty yards. I could've done it. I could've jumped and started swimming for my life. Inside me, in my chest, I felt a terrible squeezing pressure. Even now, as I write this, I can still feel that tightness. And I want you to feel it—the wind coming off the river, the waves, the silence, the wooded frontier. You're at the bow of a boat on the Rainy River. You're twenty-one years old, you're scared, and there's a hard squeezing pressure in your chest.

What would you do?

(20) Would you jump? Would you feel pity for yourself? Would you think about your family and your childhood and your dreams and all you're leaving behind? Would it hurt? Would it feel like dying? Would you cry, as I did?....

(50) At the rear of the boat Elroy Berdahl pretended not to notice. He held a fishing rod in his hands, his head bowed to hide his eyes. He kept humming a soft, monotonous little tune. Everywhere, it seemed, in the trees and water and sky, a great worldwide sadness came pressing down on me, a crushing sorrow, sorrow like I had never known it before. And what was so sad, I realized, was that Canada had become a pitiful fantasy. Silly and hopeless. It was no longer a possibility. Right then, with the shore so close, I understood that I would not do what I should do. I would not swim away from my hometown and my country and my life. I would not be brave. That old image of myself as a hero, as a man of conscience and courage, all that was just a threadbare pipe dream. Bobbing there on the Rainy River, looking back at the Minnesota shore, I felt a sudden swell of helplessness come over me, a drowning sensation, as if I had toppled overboard and was being swept away by the silver waves. Chunks of my own history flashed by. I saw a seven-year-old boy in a white cowboy hat and a Lone Ranger mask and a pair of holstered six-shooters; I saw a twelve-year-old Little League shortstop pivoting to turn a double play; I saw a sixteen-year-old kid decked out for his first prom, looking spiffy in a white tux and a black bow tie, his hair cut short and flat, his shoes freshly polished....I saw my parents calling to me from the far shoreline. I saw my brother and sister, all the townsfolk, the mayor and the entire Chamber of Commerce and all my old teachers and girlfriends and high school buddies. Like some weird sporting event; everybody screaming from the sideline rooting me on....A squad of cheerleaders did cartwheels along the banks of the Rainy River; they had megaphones and pom poms and smooth brown thighs....A marching band played fight songs. All my aunts and uncles were there, and Abraham Lincoln, and Saint George....and several members of the United States Senate, and a blind poet scribbling notes, and LBJ, and Huck Finn, and Abbie Hoffman, and all the dead soldiers back from the grave....and a million ferocious citizens waving flags of all shapes and colors—people in hard hats, people in headbands—they were all whooping and chanting and urging me toward one shore or the other....

Student Response #3 - Earned a 6 on a 9 point scale.

In Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, he discusses the trials of a young man drafted to the Vietnam War. In this piece, "On the Rainy River," he uses several literary techniques to emphasize the difficult decision he was forced to make.

O'Brien uses diction to convey his point. One aspect of the situation he portrays through word choice is its pain and difficulty. He uses words such as "rawness," "brittle," "tightness" and "hard squeezing pressure." These words emphasize the incredible difficulty of O'Brien's dilemma. He also uses words which show the size of his problem and the way it is portrayed in nature. He is contained in a "little fourteen-foot boat," and the world above him overwhelms him. He uses words with extremely positive connotations ("conscience," "courage," "brave") to contrast with the cowardice of the choice he is about to make.

O'Brien also uses syntax to impress upon the reader the importance of his decision. He often places the most important part of a sentence at its end, leaving a lasting impression upon its reader. For example, he states, "For a time I didn't pay attention to anything, just feeling the cold spray against my face, but then it occurred to me that at some point we must've passed into Canadian waters..." Later he says, "I remember staring at the old man, then at my hands, then at Canada." He also uses extremely short sentences (especially when compared to his normally complex structure) to grab the reader's attention. In bringing his dilemma into a sphere the reader can relate to, he separates "What would you do?" into its own paragraph. Later, he says, "Silly and hopeless. It was no longer a possibility." The length of these sentences emphasizes the finality of his decision and the tragic nature of its possible consequences.

O'Brien also makes strong connections between the setting of the land and his decision. This brings his inner conflict into a unique environment that's really understandable for the reader. He makes these connections by placing intangible concepts in lists along with the tangible descriptions of the earth. He states, "there was a vastness to the world..." Later, he describes "the torture of the soul, the browned needles beneath the pines, the confirmations of geology and human history." The last item in the list brings the difficult-to-grasp concept of history into a familiar realm. In the same paragraph, he comments on "the wind coming off the river, the waves, the *silence* [emphasis mine], the wooded frontier."

Through diction, syntax, and connections with nature, O'Brien effectively communicates the difficulty of his decision.

Question Answer key:

1. A	2. C	3. B	4. B	5. E	6. E	7. D
8. B	9. D	10. A	11. D	12. D		

For a passing score on the Multiple Choice section of the AP exam, students need to get somewhere between 27-35 questions correct out of 54. On this passage students would want to get somewhere between 6-10 questions correct. Students would also want to skip the 2-3 most difficult questions because wrong answers are penalized by a quarter point each. For students to finish all passages on the multiple choice exam, they would need to complete this passage in somewhere between 12-15 minutes.