

# **English Language Arts Curriculum**



**Course Title: AP English Literature and  
Composition**

**Grade Level: High School**

**Board Approved: January 5, 2022**

Point Pleasant Borough High School  
AP Literature and Composition  
Course Syllabus – by Mary Catherine Orrok

### **Course Overview**

The philosophy behind the content and teaching of the AP Literature and Composition course at our school is based on that put forth in the national College Board's description of the AP Literature course, as are our goals and objectives.

Students are expected to read widely and critically, to recognize and appreciate the elements of literature, and to understand the social, political, and artistic values of different historical eras as they are reflected in various literary movements and traditions. Ultimately, we hope to instill in students “a love for the written word.”

Students are expected to write frequently and well, to apply the conventions of standard English but also to take compositional risks. They are expected to develop composition and discourse skills in all rhetorical modes, and to apply the rhetorical strategies they have been taught to analyze in the works they read.

Finally, students are expected to develop “an intellectual curiosity” as well as “a disciplined approach to learning” that will prepare them for a life long process of education. They are expected “to tolerate ambiguity” and to consider the validity of the opinions and interpretations of others alongside their own.

### **Themes**

To the ends described above, this course will include reading, writing, research, and discussion activities loosely organized into **four thematic units**: 1) “A Family Portrait: Tales of the Ties that Bind Us”; 2) “Honor and Insanity: All's Fair in Love and War”; 3) “Ethics and Values: The Good, the Bad, and the Existential”; and 4) “Men are from Mars . . . : The Nature of Men and Women.” The reading requirements will include novels, plays, poetry, short stories, and essays related to these themes. Each thematic unit is designed to take place in a ten week marking period. Because “The Family Portrait” unit is substantially larger than the other three, some of the reading list and writing assignments are assigned as summer work preceding the beginning of the AP Literature course. Conversely, the “Ethics and Values” and “The Nature of Men and Women” units are smaller than the first two units covered, allowing more time during the latter part of the year for poetry analysis, examination preparation, and work on the Senior Anthology (described later in this syllabus). The specific contents of each unit appears at the end of this syllabus.

### **Reading Requirements for all Thematic Units**

Frequently throughout the year, students will be reading two or three works at a time in order to make the best use of both class and home “time.” For example, students will be

assigned the **independent reading** of a long work of fiction in preparation for instruction, class activities, discussion, and writing assignments based on that work. Meanwhile, in class, we will engage in **reading aloud** works of poetry or a play in order to facilitate understanding and enact the drama inherent in such works.

When works are assigned for independent reading, students will be given reading **tests** on the days the readings are due to be completed. Hopefully this, in addition to their love for reading, will keep students motivated and on schedule. The questions on these tests will be designed to enable a student to demonstrate that he or she has read the book and achieved a basic understanding of its characters, plot, and themes. A more comprehensive understanding of the work and a deeper analysis of its elements will be achieved through class discussion and activities, as well as through the writing process. The student's performance on these assessments will be given test grades.

Throughout the year, students will keep a record of their reading. The reading list for this course is lengthy and difficult, and students need to revisit works throughout the year, not only to prepare them for the AP exam, but also to make connections between historic periods, literary movements, authors' styles, themes, and characters. Students will be given graphic organizers to serve as the **reading records** for each novel or play they read. The organizer will include space for all of the following: 1) title, author, genre, and publication date; 2) any biographical and historical information students received during the instructor's presentation of a new text; 3) major and minor characters; 4) plot synopsis; 5) stylistic devices; 6) significant or memorable quotes from the text; 7) themes and motifs; 8) significant moments and/or specific details. The reading records will be assessed throughout the year and each will earn the student a homework grade.

Students continue to build **vocabulary skills** in the AP Literature course through work based on Point Pleasant High School's vocabulary program: *Vocabulary Workshop* by Jerome Shostak (Level G). In this program, students complete regular unit practice packets, unit quizzes, and mastery tests which are administered at the end of every three units.

### **Writing Requirements for all Thematic Units**

The major writing assignment for each of the four thematic units will be a **synthesis paper**, a documented essay written in response to a specific assertion pertaining to the thematic content of the unit. Students will discuss the validity or significance of the assertion through the exploration of several works read throughout the unit. The essay will include quotes and other evidence from these works which will be documented using MLA format. The students will **conference with the instructor** at least once during the writing process. The finished essay will reflect a formidable amount of thought, time, and effort on the student's part and will be evaluated as would be an essay written for a 200 level college English course. Examples of the assertions to which the synthesis essays will respond appear below, within the individual unit work descriptions. Students will receive a test grade for this assignment.

To give students frequent, regular practice at writing, and to help prepare them for the AP exam, students will be given two or three **timed writing assignments** during the course of each marking period. Whenever possible, the writing prompts will relate to the theme being studied at the time. Sometimes the timed writing will be done in-class; other times it will be assigned for homework. These timed writings will be graded according to the AP exam scoring rubric (1-9) and will count as quiz grades within the marking period.

To emphasize that writing is a process and to ensure that students work on improving their own writing, students will choose one of the timed essays described above for **revision**. Students will workshop their original essays, giving and receiving peer feedback, attending to the instructor's written comments and suggestions, and brainstorm ideas to develop their original essays further. The essays will be revised at home and resubmitted, this time for a test grade within the marking period.

To improve voice, focus, analysis, and attention to specific detail in essays about literature, students will write two or three **short response papers** after completing each novel or play in the syllabus. These written responses will focus on an idea, a character, a stylistic feature, a scene, or a moment that intrigued the student in the course of his or her reading. The instructor will assess these papers informally, evaluating and commenting on the relevance of their focus, the logic and level of the analysis they offer, their inclusion of specific detail and some language from the text. These response papers serve the students well when it comes time to write their synthesis papers for each unit, as well as when it comes time to prepare some works for use on the AP exam. Each set of responses will earn the student a quiz grade for the marking period.

Formal **composition and grammar** instruction will take place in the AP class on an as-needed basis. At this level, the lessons tend to focus on the more obscure or subtle points of grammar, the effective use of syntax and diction, and the smoothest ways to incorporate text and correctly cite it. Passages from student essays are used for revise and edit practice, with the students' permission.

### **Poetry Analysis for all Thematic Units**

In addition to their attention to in-class reading and lectures, students will acquire knowledge of poets and poetry and the ability to analyze poetry in a number of ways.

**First**, for each semester, students will select a poet to read in depth; they will submit three of this poet's works, after marking the text of each poem; they will write a two-to three-page analysis of one of the poems they've read and marked. This project will receive a test grade in the first and third marking periods. Students will be assessed on their ability to read and mark text extensively and appropriately, their knowledge of the poet and the characteristics of his work, their understanding of the poem's theme, and their ability to select specific aspects of the poem to support their understanding of its meaning.

**Second**, students will work cooperatively to select a poem related to each thematic unit being studied and, as a group, prepare and present a lesson to the class on that poem. This lesson will be graded based on content and presentation. It will be counted as a quiz grade within the marking period

**Third**, students will work cooperatively to select a poem or a prose excerpt related to each thematic unit being studied and, as a group, create a 10-15 question multiple choice mini-test, including an explanatory answer key, based on the selection. The class will provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the questions and answers on the test, after attempting to complete it for homework. This work will be given a participation grade for the marking period.

**Fourth**, students will be assigned two calendar dates throughout the year on which to present a poem that intrigues them (other than one they have already studied or written about) and to lead the class in a fifteen-minute discussion of the poem's specific features. They will also provide the class with general information about the author and the characteristics of his works.

### **Midterm and Final Examinations**

It is the policy of Point Pleasant Borough High School that all students take midterm and final examinations. The students' scores on these exams are combined to create a fifth marking period grade that is calculated into the students' final grade for the course. AP Literature students take a "live" released AP Literature exam at midterm, according to the rules and time frame of the national AP Exam. This exam is scored according to the standardized rubric and formula used to score the national AP Exam, and students are given a raw score and a final grade of 1-5. This final grade, however, is scaled in consideration of the overall class performance and translated into a letter grade for the student's report card. Students enrolled in the AP Literature course are expected to sit for the national exam in May, and if they do, no other final exam is administered for the course. Students who do not take the national exam in May, however, must sit for a teacher generated final exam on all of the course material from the third and fourth marking periods.

### **Preparation for the AP Literature Exam**

Students will use the *Cliff's Guide to Preparation for the AP Literature Exam* independently to help prepare for the national exam in May. Frequent references to the information and guidelines provided in this text will be made by the instructor in class. Students will practice responding to past **AP Exam essay prompts** through in-class and at-home timed writing assignments throughout the year, as mentioned above under Writing Requirements.

Students will continue to expand and practice their **knowledge of the literary terms** necessary to answer both the multiple choice and free response sections of the test, as well as to achieve a working vocabulary for the discussion of literature in class and in their writing.

Frequently throughout the year, students will **practice for the multiple choice** section of the exam by answering 10-15 questions about one prose passage or poem, either in class or at home, within approximately a 15 minute time frame. For these mini-tests, students will be scored on the percentage of answers they get correct. The percentage scores will be scaled against the overall class performance and assigned a letter grade that will count as a quiz.

Students are expected to attend **tutorial sessions at night** in the six weeks preceding the exam. These sessions are offered by the AP Instructor, voluntarily, twice a week (to allow for small class size) but the material covered will be the same in each session, and students are only expected to attend one session weekly. These supplementary exam preparation classes are in keeping with the philosophy and practices shared by the various AP course instructors at Point Pleasant Borough High School. They are not required by the administration nor mandatory for the students, they simply reflect an attempt on the part of the instructors to offer students “extra help” preparing for the exam in a time-efficient way.

### **Senior Anthology Project**

Following the AP Literature exam in May, students spend time during the remainder of the year creating an anthology of their favorite works of literature. The anthologies present a creative visual and written record of students’ individual literary “treasures,” from childhood to present day. The students share their anthologies with one another during the final week of classes in the AP Lit course. Although these projects will receive a test grade for the final marking period, the real prize at the end of this “labor of love” is the students’ possession of the product itself.

### **Unit Contents**

The works in each unit are classified first by genre and then listed within those categories “in order of appearance.” Some sample assignments, activities, and topics for discussion *which are unique to each unit and/or not specified above* are also included here.

### **Theme #1: A Family Portrait: Tales of the Ties that Bind Us**

Baldwin, James. "Sonny's Blues"  
O'Connor, Flannery. "Everything That Rises Must Converge"  
Faulkner, William. "A Rose for Emily"  
Olsen, Tillie. "As I Stand Here Ironing"  
Cheever, John. "Reunion"

- Biographical Elements in an Author's Fiction
- America at the Turn of the Century
- Faulkner's Style and Stream of Consciousness
- Conventions and Themes in Southern Literature
- Point of View—how it affects or contributes to theme
- Structure—how it affects or contributes to theme
- Understanding Biblical Allusion
- Twentieth Century Politics in the Middle East
- The African American Experience in Modern America
- Conventions and Themes of Modern American Literature
- Elements of Poetry

- Poetry Analysis on a poet of their choice and one out of three poems they've annotated
- Out of Class Essay: *The Namesake*.
- Out of Class Essay: *Students collect and write an analysis of several print advertisements in order to evaluate contemporary society's "standards of beauty," as discussed throughout reading of *The Bluest Eye*.*
- Out of Class Essay: *Write an essay explaining if/how Joe Keller in All My Sons or Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman fit Arthur Miller's definition of the American tragic hero.*
- *Out of Class Essay on the student's choice book based on an original thesis.*
- *Student created test on their choice book.*

- Suggested Timed Writing/AP Exam open-ended prompt: *“Discuss the psychological events that contribute to the plot and the characters in Death of a Salesman.”*
- Suggested Timed Writing/AP Exam prose analysis prompt: *“Discuss how Joyce Carol Oates uses language to characterize young Judd Mulvaney in an excerpt from the novel We Were the Mulvaneys.”*

## **Theme #2: Honor and Insanity: All's Fair in Love and War**

### **Novels and Dramas**

O'Brien, Tim. The Things They Carried

Hemingway, Ernest. A Farewell to Arms

Heller, Joseph. Catch 22 (will also be addressed in unit including existentialism)

### **Short Stories**

Hemingway, Ernest. "Soldier's Home"

"A Clean, Well-Lighted Place"

**Selected Poems:** Arf, Thomas and Johnson, Greg. *Perrine's Sound and Sense*

## **Sample Literary/Historical Topics for Discussion in this Unit**

- The Vietnam War, at home and in the field
- World War I, at home and at the front
- The Hemingway Hero and the Code Hero
- World War II, tactics, institutions, and bureaucracy
- Point of view—how it affects or contributes to the meaning of the work
- Structure and the manipulation of time—how it relates to the meaning of the work as a whole.
- The nature of comedy/elements of comedic writing
- The nature of satire/elements of satiric
- Analyzing Style
- Understanding Biblical allusion

## **Sample Assignments/Activities for this Unit**

- Imitating style: students will be given a brief passage from Hemingway's Farewell to Arms and from Heller's Catch-22 that are particularly exemplary of each author's style. They will then write a passage on a similar but original incident or situation of their own invention, imitating the syntax and other obvious stylistic elements of one of the two authors' passages.

Note: This is a difficult assignment, and students will benefit simply from the attempt. Therefore students will be graded leniently and holistically, and be given a participation grade based on their effort to analyze and imitate the author's style more so than on the product that results.



- Write a satire of a familiar situation or element in teenage culture. This assignment can be done cooperatively if scripted and performed/videotaped for a class audience.

Note: This “writing” assignment will be evaluated based on the students’ ability to include the elements of satire learned in this unit, as well as on the original and creative rendering of these elements. The assignment will receive a quiz grade for the marking period.

- Guest Speakers: Two guest speakers will address the class during the war unit. A veteran of the Vietnam War, and a person who was of age to serve in that war but avoided the draft. The former will describe life as a soldier. The latter will describe life in America during the tumultuous Vietnam era. Both speakers will include artifacts from the era—objects, letters, music, and pictures.
- Timed Writing/AP Literature open-ended prompt: *“Discuss a character who rarely or never appears in either the novel The Things They Carried, the novel A Farewell to Arms or the novel Catch-22. How does this absent character contribute to the development of the other characters and/or the plot in the novel?”*
- Timed Writing/AP Literature poetry analysis prompt: *“In the poem ‘The Farmer’s Wife’, how does the poet create the reader’s response to the farmer and his situation?”*

Note: These timed assignments, as well as those in other units throughout the year, will be evaluated based on the AP Literature essay scoring rubric and guidelines.

- Creative Writing: After reading Andrew Marvel’s poem “To His Coy Mistress,” compose an answer in response to the speaker’s plea. The response can be written as a letter or a poem.

Note: To succeed, this piece of writing must indicate an understanding of the speaker’s request and arguments in the Marvel poem; it must offer an answer to those arguments; and it must be written in the language of the speaker’s time and society. It will be given a quiz grade for the marking period.

- Documented Essay/Synthesis Paper in response to “war” unit assertion (see description above under “Required Writing”).

### **Theme #3: Values and Ethics: The Good, the Bad, and the Existential**

#### **Novels and Dramas**

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart\*

Camus, Albert. The Stranger  
 Kesey, Ken. One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest  
 Shakespeare, William. Othello  
 Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness

### **Short Stories**

Camus, Albert. "The Guest"

**Selected Poems:** Arf, Thomas and Johnson, Greg. *Perrine's Sound and Sense*

### **Sample Literary/ Historical Topics for Discussion in this Unit**

- Aspects of Tribal Culture
- Western Imperialism
- Existentialism
- The Death Penalty
- The Nature of the Villain
- Care of the Elderly, the Inmate, and the Mentally Ill
- Institutions and Bureaucracy
- Frame Stories

### **Sample Assignments/Activities for this Unit**

- Research and Writing Using Literary Criticism: Students will compile a collection of excerpts from essays in literary criticism about Ken Kesey's One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest. Class members will discuss and share their findings. Students will then write a short, focused essay on the novel, using a quote from one of the critics as a starting point. (This assignment will be counted as one of the "short response" papers described earlier in this syllabus for all readings.)
- Suggested Timed Writing/AP Literature open-ended prompt: *"Using one of the works from this unit, write an essay about the "spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation (quote from Fay Weldon) evident in the ending; explain its significance to the work as a whole."*
- Suggested Timed Writing/AP Literature poetry prompt: *"Explain how elements such as structure, syntax, diction, and imagery reveal the speaker's response to the death of a toad in Richard Wilbur's poem 'The Death of a Toad.'"*
- Out of Class Essay: Documented Essay/Synthesis Paper in response to "values" unit assertion (see description above under "Required Writing").

## **Theme #4: Men Are from Mars . . . : The Nature of Men and Women**

**Novels and Dramas**Austen, Jane. Emma\*Pride and PrejudiceBronte, Emily. Wuthering HeightsFlaubert, Gustave. Madame BovaryIbsen, Henrik. A Doll's House**Short Stories**

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour"

Hemingway, Ernest. "Hills Like White Elephants"

Hurstun, Zora Neale. "Sweat"

**Selected Poems:** Arf, Thomas and Johnson, Greg. *Perrine's Sound and Sense***Sample Literary/ Historical Topics for Discussion in this Unit**

- The Development of the Novel
- Novel of Manners
- The Gothic Influence in Bronte's Literature
- The Unreliable Narrator
- Natural and Supernatural Imagery
- Victorian Society
- Romanticism
- Realism
- Flaubert on Trial: "Je suis Mme. Bovary"
- Irony and Satire
- Women's Rights, Then and Now

**Sample Assignments/Activities for this Unit**

Creative Writing: Write a scene from an imaginary play or novel involving interaction between three of the heroines from our reading in this unit.

Timed Writing/AP Literature open-ended prompt: *"Write an essay about a character from our reading in this unit whose private passion is in conflict with his or her moral obligations, and show how this conflict is significant to the work as a whole."*

Timed Writing/AP Literature poetry prompt: *"Write an essay about colonial poet Anne Bradstreet's poem 'The Author to her Book' in which you discuss how the poem's controlling metaphor expresses the complex attitude of the speaker."*

Timed Writing/AP Literature open-ended prompt: *“Write an essay about a play or novel from this unit featuring a morally ambiguous character. Analyze this character’s actions and explain how the moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole.”*

Timed Writing/ AP Literature poetry prompt: *“Write an essay in which you analyze the speaker’s complex conception of a woman’s world in the poem ‘It’s a woman’s World,’ by Eavan Boland.”*

- Documented Essay/Synthesis Paper in response to the “men and women” unit assertion (see description above under “Required Writing”).

\*indicates books assigned for independent reading—no reading tests or written responses required

**Amistad Law: N.J.S.A. 18A 52:16A-88** Every board of education shall incorporate the information regarding the contributions of African-Americans to our country in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

**Holocaust Law: N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28** Every board of education shall include instruction on the Holocaust and genocides in an appropriate place in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary school pupils. The instruction shall further emphasize the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

**LGBT and Disabilities Law: N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35** A board of education shall include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle school and high school students as part of the district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (N.J.S.A.18A:35-4.36) A board of education shall have policies and procedures in place pertaining to the selection of instructional materials to implement the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35.

