AP English Literature and Composition Syllabus
2011-2012

General Course Information

Grade level offered: 12

1.0 Credits, .5 per semester

Prerequisites: Students have taken AP Language and Composition during their 11th grade year, which includes study of the following major texts/authors: Walden and “Resistance to Civil Government”, Henry David Thoreau; “A Modest Proposal”, Jonathan Swift; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and “Advice to Youth”, Mark Twain; “Shooting an Elephant”, George Orwell; In Cold Blood, Truman Capote, The Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson; “Education”, Ralph Waldo Emerson; and “On Seeing England for the First Time,” Jamaica Kincaid.

It is expected that students enrolled in AP English Literature and Composition will take the AP English Literature and Composition test in May. Check with your college/university to see what credit(s) they offer for the AP test.

Brief Course Description:

AP English Literature and Composition is a rigorous course with the ultimate goal of comprehensively preparing students for the AP English Literature and Composition exam. Along the way, students will read a broad range of demanding texts from classical and contemporary canonical literature. Students will gain strategies to help them navigate, comprehend, annotate, interpret, and analyze literature. They will become familiar with works from major literary movements and learn how to recognize both the historical and philosophical contexts of a piece as well as the enduring themes present in literature which continue to speak to readers today. They will be encouraged to question, discover, and explore as they are immersed in novels, poetry, short fiction, and drama.

In addition to developing an impressive reading repertoire, students will also write about literature. Lessons will focus on strengthening college-level writing skills. Students will learn to assert themselves as confident writers who can articulate innovative ideas about a text, formulate a logical argument, support a thematic statement and thesis with exhaustive textual evidence, and define their own original voices. Formal and informal writing assignments will provide opportunities for students to experiment and grow as they pursue the goal of becoming superior writers. Good student writing should achieve sound grammar, structure, and clarity, but must also breathe life into insightful ideas. Students will be encouraged to view writing as a living process and will be encouraged to participate in writing conferences, engage in revision, and examine their own writing processes and products throughout the course. During some units, writing tasks will be timed in order to accustom students to thinking and composing gracefully under pressure.
Course Outcomes:

• Students will acquire knowledge and skills they need to score a 3 or higher on the AP English Literature and Composition exam.
• Students will evaluate the effect of literary works on our society, both past and present.
• Students will apply historical and philosophical contexts to their interpretation of literature.
• Students will analyze literature both for author craft/literary elements as well as broader thematic significance.
• Students will develop an effective use of rhetoric, showing command of logical organization, a variety of sentence structures, and an impressive vocabulary.
• Students will use illustrative details and carefully selected textual evidence to support their written arguments.
• Students will consistently display nuanced, insightful, creative, critical thinking.
• Students will acquire new vocabulary in the context of the literature.

Methods of Instruction:

Classroom discussion, mini lessons/lectures, interactive classroom activities, small group workshops, consulting online/multimedia resources, supplementary reading, writing conferences, practice tests—in short, a wide variety of things to keep students engaged, challenged, and prepared to tackle the course material.

Resources/Texts:

*Texts listed below are generally included in course, but list may be adapted according to classroom needs.

Primary texts:


Secondary texts:

*Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, Sophocles.
*The Inferno*, Dante Alighieri
*Hamlet*, William Shakespeare.
*A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens
*The Awakening*, Kate Chopin
*Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway
*Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley
*Native Son*, Richard Wright
Assessment:

- Formal, analytical essays tied to course readings, scored with AP rubric
- Opportunities to revise/rework formal writing
- Close reading/poem analysis exercises
- Timed free response writing
- Informal, reflective writing
- Verbal participation in academic discussion
- Quizzes (weekly vocabulary quizzes, some terms or skills may be quizzed).
- Practice AP tests
- Semester One exam (designed to approximate the AP test) is given at the end of first semester.
- AP Test in May, or alternative exam in the case of students who elect not to take the test.

Essay Summary:

The following list indicates the formal essays that students will prepare throughout each unit, along with major concepts that their study of the texts will encompass. Student writing should examine literary elements, analyze author craft, and also—crucially—illuminate themes within each text that reveal a truth about the human experience. Formal essays will closely resemble free response questions from past AP tests, and should be submitted electronically by 11:59pm on the due date.

You will receive feedback on your writing throughout the drafting process and after your assignment is submitted. This is to celebrate your successes, offer solutions for your weak spots, and ask questions of your writing to see the answers it may (or may not) yield. Considering this feedback will also aid your revision process.

1. (Summer) Analysis of choice novel: Theme
2. Oedipus Rex/Antigone: Structure and Plot
3. The Inferno: Tone, Allusion, and Connotation
4. Hamlet: Characterization & Theme
5. Tale of Two Cities: Language and Imagery
6. The Awakening: Point of view and Narration
7. The Old Man and the Sea: Setting & Mood
8. Brave New World: Diction & Dystopia
9. Native Son: Social Commentary
10. Death of a Salesman: Symbol & Allegory
11. The Things They Carried: Style & Patterning
Grading:

- Standard English Department Grading Scale: [A 100-90, B 89-80, C 79-70, D 69-60]
- Grades are calculated using total points earned out of total points available.
- AP Rubric is used for scoring essays. Each essay worth 45 points. To get percentage score, multiply AP rubric score by 5. For example, a “7” is equal to a 35/45, a 77%. During semester one, students may receive “booster points” on some early essays to balance out their inexperience with the AP Literature and Composition writing style. Also, essays may always be revised for a better score, accompanying a conference with the instructor.

COURSE OUTLINE

Semester One: (18 weeks)

WEEKLY: Vocabulary Quizzes, Poetry Study (various representative authors)
DAILY: Literary/poetic elements focus

INTRODUCTORY UNIT (1 week)

- Syllabus, course expectations
- Becoming familiar with the AP Literature and Composition test format
- Examining the first formal essay (summer): successes and needs
- Reading strategies
- Answering the “So what?” question
- Creating a thesis / thematic statement
- What is literature? Why study it? How to study it?
- Get acquainted with vocabulary study and other weekly rituals

OEDIPUS REX AND ANTIGONE (2 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: structure, plot, irony, classical tragedy, Greek drama
- Thematic Focus: self-knowledge, pride, fate, power, righteousness
- Writing workshop and Essay #2. Essay preview: Students will analyze these classical examples of Greek tragedy and formulate an argument that upholds or critiques the effect of the tragic form as a scaffold for the plot. What messages about self-knowledge, fate, and power was Sophocles sending through these plays? What parts do Sophocles’ rhetoric and the tragic form in particular play in getting these messages across?
THE INFERNO AND BIBLICAL REFERENCES (2 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: tone, allusion, structure (terza rima), connotation, symbolism
- Thematic Focus: heroic journey, religion and society, perception of morality
- Writing workshop and Essay #3. Essay preview: Through the reading of Dante’s *Inferno* and selections of frequently alluded to Biblical passages (Genesis, the Great Flood, the Passion and Resurrection), students will comment upon the use of tone, symbolism, and “heroic journey” patterning in Judeo-Christian sacred works. While analyzing these texts in a literary scope, students will be asked to postulate a theory about the ways in which these works—and the use of language within them—have shaped, and continue to shape Western society’s perception of morality.

HAMLET (4 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: Characterization, Theme, Shakespearean language/tradition
- Thematic Focus: Madness, violence, self-control, power, secrets
- Writing workshop and Essay #4. Essay preview: Students will select a monologue to analyze, and use it as the main basis to support what they will argue is the most pivotal moment for one of the main characters (Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, or Laertes). Students will explore how this key moment in time, and the way the character reacts to it, reinforces a major theme of the play.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES (4 weeks)

- Analytical focus: Language, tone, imagery, historical fiction, allegory
- Thematic focus: sacrifice, justice, social position, destiny
- Writing workshop and Essay #5. Essay preview: In this analytical essay, students will examine the ways in which Dickens’ prose reflects a certain view of the French Revolution, and how the personal lives and identities of his characters parallel the public, political events of the historical period in which the story is set. How and where does the tumult of the characters’ lives outweigh, underscore, or equal that of the country and its people?

THE AWAKENING (2 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: Point of view, narration, symbolism, diction
- Thematic Focus: love, self-realization, independence, motherhood, feminism
- Writing workshop and Essay #6. Essay preview: Students will formulate an argumentative essay that defends or denounces Chopin’s novella as an effective and moving contribution to the body of feminist literature. What can we reasonably infer that Chopin hoped to achieve through her portrayal of her protagonist’s thoughts, emotions, and actions? Did she achieve these ends? How might modern reactions to the text differ from those of Chopin’s contemporaries? What do those differences indicate about the lasting artistry and quality of the work?
THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA (1 week)

- Analytical Focus: Setting, mood, allegory, realism, theme
- Thematic Focus: life as a struggle, nature, age, memory
- Writing workshop and Essay #7. Essay preview: Students will take a close look at Hemingway’s distinctive use of language and the themes it quietly weaves in this deceptively simple-seeming book. How do Hemingway’s detailed, realistic descriptions of setting and the old man’s seafaring life reveal truths about the relationship between humanity and nature? What mood does Hemingway achieve—is the story one of defeat or determination? (And who is Santiago, really?)

REVISION, REFLECTION, TEST SKILLS, AND EXAM PREP (2 weeks)

- Window for revising and resubmitting writing
- Look back on progress over the semester—what’s working? What still needs work?
- Take time to realign with AP test format
- Practice applying classroom discoveries to testing approach

SEMESTER EXAM

- A practice AP exam is given as the 1st semester exam
- Performance and answers will be reviewed as a class at the beginning of semester two.
Semester Two: (16 weeks until the test, 2-3 weeks post-test)

WEEKLY: Vocabulary Quizzes, Poetry Study (various representative authors)
DAILY: Literary/poetic elements focus

BRAVE NEW WORLD (4 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: Dystopian genre, diction, style, theme
- Thematic Focus: value of art, what it means to be human, ethics of science & technology
- Writing workshop and Essay #8. Essay preview: In this essay, students will select a feature of Huxley’s dystopian society and formulate a theory about a related feature in American society (from the 1930s on) that may have inspired it. Students will use textual evidence to discuss how this social feature influences John as a character, and in turn, how Huxley uses his prose to suggest a similar trend could change our own cultural images of happiness, ethics, technology, and the definition of humanity itself.

NATIVE SON (4 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: social commentary, point of view, tone, structure
- Thematic Focus: Social justice, power relationships, racism, and Individual vs. Society
- Writing workshop and Essay #9. Essay preview: Students will use Wright’s novel as a platform for considering the unequal positions of power and privilege that have historically plagued American society, using the text as a lens through which to approach the question of whether society creates its own criminals. They will compare the point of view and tone of the novel to that of modern media on similar issues. Is the rhetoric of Native Son the rhetoric of today’s American media? What differences exist between the two, and would Wright be satisfied, enraged, or indifferent due to them?

DEATH OF A SALESMAN (2 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: Symbol, allegory, diction, modern tragedy
- Thematic Focus: family, fatherhood, the American Dream, economics
- Writing workshop and Essay #10. Essay preview: Miller’s use of diction and symbol both greatly shape the play—students will select one of these two to analyze as they support a claim about the meaning that the audience is left with when the curtain falls. They will use this interpretation to situate Miller’s contemporary tragedy in the tradition of classical tragedy: how does Willy Loman fit the classical description of a tragic hero? Does Miller paint him in a way that makes him more or less impactful than, for example, Hamlet or Oedipus?
THE THINGS THEY CARRIED (4 weeks)

- Analytical Focus: Style, patterning, point of view, meta-fiction, post-colonialism
- Thematic Focus: War, love, death, rebirth, dealing with trauma, humanity
- Writing workshop and Essay #11. Essay preview: As referenced in the 1989 open response prompt, in questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O’Connor wrote, “I am pleased to make a good case for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see.” Students will write an analytical essay in which they examine O’Brien’s use of patterning, distinctive style, and meta-fiction as an example of such “distortion,” and illuminate specific effects that such a work can have on a reader—effects which a realistic text may not achieve.

AP TEST PREP (2 weeks)

- Practice Objective Tests: two versions (more available for independent study)
- Review answering strategies

AP EXAM (Thursday, May 10 - 2012)

PUBLIC SPEAKING (3 weeks) (after test through end of year)

- Overview of speaking skills and strategies
- Students will further their speaking skills by writing and delivering speeches from the following categories: impromptu, informational, and reflective
- Final assignment will be a formal speech in front of an audience of classmates and guests.