



AP English Literature and Composition Summer Syllabus

A book is a part of life, a manifestation of life, just as much as a tree or a horse or a star. It obeys its own rhythms, its own laws, whether it be a novel, a play, or a diary. The deep, hidden rhythm of life is always there, that of the pulse, the heartbeat.

-Henry Miller, American author

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 drawn from classical and contemporary canonical literature. Students will gain strategies to help them navigate, comprehend, annotate, interpret, and analyze texts. 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, drama, and short fiction.

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.

Summer Objectives

The summer unit is designed to help students begin their journey as literature scholars through reading, writing, and discussion. Therefore, they will be expected to engage in each of these endeavors in a focused way over the summer. By the end of the summer, AP English Literature and Composition students should be able to demonstrate their ability to...

- Interpret thematic and symbolic threads within a literary novel.
- Formulate and support an argument about a literary novel.
- Communicate questions, reactions, and theories about literature with other scholars.

Assignment Schedule

There are four components to the summer assignment: (1) Reading *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas Foster. (2) Reading a canonical novel chosen from the provided AP summer reading list. (3) Writing an essay that creates and supports an argument about the choice novel, implementing the knowledge gained through the reading of the Foster text. (4) Communicating via email or written letters with your instructor at least twice over the summer.

○ Part I. Reading *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas Foster

Either check out a copy from the Sheboygan Falls High School library or, if you prefer to annotate right in your text, purchase your own copy of the book. This book is a beginner's guide to looking beyond the obvious and truly seeking the deeper meaning of a text. Read it carefully. Make notes to yourself along the way about realizations that you come to, tips that seem helpful to have in your back pocket, and topics to investigate further. You may write notes on a word document, in Google Docs, in a notebook, or on post-its that you stick to the pages of the book. Use the method that is most comfortable for you. Keep these notes somewhere safe—they'll be helpful throughout the summer and beyond. [*Suggested deadline: End of June.*]

○ Part II. Reading a canonical novel chosen from the provided AP summer reading list

The list below includes books that have been commonly seen on the AP test in years past. However, more than that, they are also complex, moving, incredible pieces of literature. Select one of these to read and study. As you read, struggle and grapple with the text—resist the temptation to check out a film adaptation or skim over some Sparknotes, as a true scholar draws from his or her own fresh, unadulterated interpretation. Each night when you read, jot down or mark things that seem important or puzzling. You can find many of these titles at SFHS or local libraries. Most of them can also be found on Amazon.com for less than \$5.00 used. If it's within your means, buy a copy, so you can write in it! [*Suggested deadline: End of July.*]

–AP SUMMER READING LIST –

<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> by Oscar Wilde	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> by Zora Neale Hurston
<i>Beloved</i> by Toni Morrison	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood
<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> by John Steinbeck	<i>Our Town</i> by Thornton Wilder
<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> by Tennessee Williams	<i>Othello</i> by William Shakespeare
<i>Frankenstein</i> by Mary Shelley	<i>The Fountainhead</i> by Ayn Rand
<i>Tracks</i> by Louise Erdrich	<i>The Road</i> by Cormac McCarthy
<i>The Color Purple</i> by Alice Walker	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen
<i>The Things They Carried</i> by Tim O' Brien	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> by Joseph Conrad

○ **Part III. Writing an essay that creates and supports an argument about the choice novel, implementing the knowledge gained through your reading of the Foster text**

Once you have read, considered, and made notes on your choice novel, write a formal essay which discusses the way in which a particular character, symbol, motif, or aspect of the plot reveals/illuminates a thematic statement that can be gleaned from the novel that you chose.

Requirements for this essay are:

- Paper is an example of literary analysis, not summarization.*
- Shows implementation of interpretive strategies showcased in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*.*
- Demonstrates insightful thought, clear argument, and adequate textual support.*
- Written in standard MLA style, length of 3-5 pages, and pristinely proofread and edited.*

Your essay, as well as all essays throughout the year, will be scored according to the same rubric used by the College Board to assess test essays. (See page 4.) It is a holistic rubric, meaning the essay is taken into consideration as a whole when scoring, instead of giving individual scores for specific skills. All elements—from word choice to argument to grammar to voice—factor into the final score. This is your instructor’s first chance to get acquainted with you as a writer, and to gauge what areas of success you can build on, or which areas of weakness should be addressed throughout the year.

Submit your essay as a file attachment to [REDACTED].k12.wi.us.

[Required deadline: Friday, August 24th, 2011, by 11:59pm.]

○ **Part IV. Communicating via email or written letters with your instructor at least twice over the summer.**

A vital part of being a successful scholar is an ability to share knowledge, bounce ideas off of others, make personal connections, and communicate in a mature, clear, consistent way. To offer you an opportunity to practice this, as well as to become comfortable approaching me as your instructor and mentor in all things literary, you are required to write me two informal letters over the course of the summer. You will submit these messages by e-mail or, if necessary, you may send them to the school via traditional mail service. Include whatever you deem useful, whatever you need to ask or bring up that relates to your success in this class. My recommended approach is...

Letter One *[Written in late June or early July]*- Who are you as a writer and reader? What should I know about you as a student? What do you fear/hope for/aspire to as far as AP English Lit & Comp goes?

Letter Two *[Written in Late July or Early August]* Which choice novel did you select? What are some of your reactions to it? What are your plans for the essay?

AP Literature and Composition Essay Rubric (Holistic)

9-8

These well-focused and persuasive essays address the prompt directly and in a convincing manner. An essay scored a 9 demonstrates exceptional insight and language facility. An essay scored an 8 or a 9 combines adherence to the topic with excellent organization, content, insight, facile use of language, mastery of mechanics, and an understanding of the essential components of an effective essay. Literary devices and/or techniques are not merely listed, but the effect of those devices and/or techniques is addressed in context of the passage, poem, or novel as a whole. Although not without flaws, these essays are richly detailed and stylistically resourceful, and they connect the observations to the passage, poem, or novel as a whole. Descriptors that come to mind while reading this essay include: mastery, sophisticated, complex, specific, consistent, and well-supported.

7-6

These highly competent essays comprehend the task set forth by the prompt and respond to it directly, although some of the analysis may be implicit rather than explicit. The 7 essay is in many ways a thinner version of the 9-8 paper in terms of discussion and supporting details, but it is still impressive, cogent, and generally convincing. It may also be less well-handled in terms of organization, insight, or vocabulary. Descriptors that come to mind while reading these essays include: demonstrates a clear understanding but is less precise and less well-supported than a 9-8 paper. These essays demonstrate an adherence to the task, but deviate from course on occasion. The mechanics are sound, but may contain a few errors which may distract but do not obscure meaning. Although there may be a few minor misreadings, the inferences are for the most part accurate with no significant sustained misreadings. An essay that scores a 6 is an upper-half paper, but it may be deficient in one of the essentials mentioned above. It may be less mature in thought or less well-handled in terms of organization, syntax or mechanics. The analysis is somewhat more simplistic than found in a 7 essay, and lacks sustained, mature analysis.

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These essays may be overly simplistic in analysis, or rely almost exclusively on paraphrase rather than specific, textual examples. These essays may provide a plausible reading, but the analysis is implicit rather than explicit. These essays might provide a list of literary devices present in the literature, but make no effort to discuss the effect that these devices have on the poem, passage, or novel as a whole. Descriptors that come to mind when reading include: superficial, vague, and mechanical. The language is simplistic and the insight is limited or lacking in development.

4-3

These lower-half essays compound the problems found in the 5 essay. They often demonstrate significant sustained misreadings, and provide little or no analysis. They maintain the general idea of the writing assignment, show some sense of organization, but are weak in content, maturity of thought, language facility, and/or mechanics. They may distort the topic or fail to deal adequately with one or more important aspects of the topic.

Essays that are particularly poorly written may be scored a 3. Descriptors that come to mind while reading include: incomplete, oversimplified, meager, irrelevant, and insufficient.

2-1 These essays make an attempt to deal with the topic but demonstrate serious weakness in content and coherence and/or syntax and mechanics. Often, they are unacceptably short. They are poorly written on several counts, including numerous distracting errors in mechanics, and/or little clarity, coherence, or supporting evidence. Wholly vacuous, inept, and mechanically unsound essays should be scored a 1.