

Advanced Placement English Literature Syllabus

AP English expands and develops skills in critical reading and writing about literature. Authors are chosen from the AP English Course Description for the English Literature and Composition Exam or from those appearing on previous AP Literature and Composition Exams. Works are at a reading and content level appropriate for college freshmen. The course stresses a critical awareness of genre, theme, and style, focusing on British, American and world literature. Writing assignments emphasize the refinement of personal expression and style at a level equivalent to composition assignments at the freshman college level.

Each unit involves writing exercises, including formal extended analyses, timed in-class responses, microessays which enable students to learn methods of analysis they will use in extended essays, and reading logs. Topics for microessays and timed writings are assigned; given a range of possibilities, students select the topics for their own major essays. They have a week for the first draft, with a required peer edit two days before the draft is due to the instructor. This draft is returned with the instructor's suggestions for revision, which is due a week later to allow for writing conferences. The school schedule includes two conference periods a week, during which students have writing conferences and grammar mini-lessons, with more tutoring available scheduled before and after school. Students may revise multiple times within the week.

Not all writing is analytical. The college essay unit involves a freewriting journal on a variety of prompts similar to college application essay prompts; this journal becomes a resource for students as they revise toward a college application essay. In the modern American novel unit, students keep a reading journal which provides the notes for a graded discussion and the basis for their essays on the novel. Students also reflect upon their own writing process in written self-assessments each semester. Other units a creative responses such as writing a villanelle, sestina or ode; writing an original "Modest Proposal" satirizing a current social or political problem; creating six characters and a script with homage to Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and writing a missing scene from *Twelfth Night*.

Semester I

Poetry Unit I: Review of Poetry

Texts:

Kennedy, X. J., and Dana Gioia, *An Introduction to Poetry*. 8th ed. Harper, 1994.
Perrine, Laurence and Thomas R. Arp, eds. *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. 8th ed. Harcourt Brace, 1992.

Poems:

William Shakespeare ("Sonnet 138," "Sonnet 130"), Petrarch ("Sonnet 219"), William Carlos Williams ("The Dance"), Edna St. Vincent Millay ("I will put chaos into fourteen lines"), Edgar Allan Poe ("The Bells"), John Frederick Nims ("Love Poem"), Seamus Heaney ("Mid-Term Break" and "Digging"), Gerard Manley Hopkins ("Pied Beauty"), Langston Hughes, ("Let America Be America Again"), Allen Ginsberg ("A Supermarket in America,") Derek Walcott ("The Virgins"), W.H. Auden, ("Musee des Beaux Arts"), Andrew Marvell ("To His Coy Mistress") and similar poems.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Read a poem critically, with attention to the poem's theme and the poet's techniques,

Note: The text boxes indicate course requirements which align with the units in the syllabus.

The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students' writing assignments, before and after students revise their work, that help the students develop:

- Appropriate and effective vocabulary,
- A variety of sentence structures,
- Logical, coherent organization,
- A balance of generalization and specific, illustrative detail, and
- An effective use of rhetoric, including tone, voice, and appropriate emphasis through diction and syntax.

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 century to contemporary times.

Poetry Unit I, continued

- Analyze the dramatic situation, structure, line, diction, connotation, sound devices, diction, syntax, mood, purpose, persona, tone and theme of a poem,
- Identify different forms of the sonnet,
- Identify figurative language and syntactical patterns,
- Discuss the theme and technique used in a poem,
- Use the language of the criticism of poetry, and
- Write well-supported analytical essays of poems.

Assessments:

Students will write, peer edit and revise 3 microessays (brief analytical essays):

- Ambiguous diction in Sonnet 138
- Mood and sound elements in “The Bells”
- Diction, paradox and structure in or “Love Poem”
- A timed writing on a poem, using a prompt from a past AP English Literature exam.

Evaluation Criteria:

Six-trait rubric

Evaluation of these essays will include comments and writing conferences addressing grammar and usage, logical structure, levels of generalization,

Length: 4 weeks

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

College Essay

Text:

Bloom, Lynn Z. *The Essay Connection: Readings for Writers*. Lexington, Mass: Heath, 1991.

Model essays from previous years, with the student writer’s permission.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Critically read and discuss sample personal essays by professional and student authors,
- Write journal entries in response to a variety of different prompts on personal subjects, including description, exposition, narration, and reflection,
- Write a personal essay for an academic audience,
- Write in a variety of modes, including description, exposition, narration and persuasion, and
- Revise repeatedly for various audiences and within various constraints.

Assessments:

- Senior Journal of 12 responses to sample college application prompts,
- Peer editing of 3 entries,
- Revision of one prompt into a sample application essay,
- Peer editing of the essay,
- Teacher feedback on the essay, with comments, and
- Revision, including editing of essay for audience and length.

Evaluation Criteria:

Teacher-made rubric for Senior Journal

Six-Trait Rubric for personal essay

Length: 4 weeks, 3 weeks overlapping Poetry Unit I and *King Lear* for at-home journal writing and essay revisions.

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

The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after students revise their work.

Tragedy

Texts: Note that when the texts alternate, the focus is on the title in bold font.

Shakespeare. William. **King Lear**. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New Folger Library ed. Washington Square/Pocket, 1993.

--*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Ed. Cyrus Hoy. Critical Ed., Norton, 1992. Note: The objectives for *Hamlet* are comparable to those for *King Lear*.

Tragedy: *King Lear*, continued

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify the relevance of the Great Chain of Being to the themes of civil disorder and disintegration,
- Identify patterns of development, including character foils and parallel plots,
- Discuss quotations from the text in relation to major themes, including kingship, inheritance, division, justice, parents and children, love, legitimacy, loyalty, hospitality, eyes and sight, madness, civil disorder, religion, nothing, poverty, the elements, nature, truth, guilt, identity, cruelty, fortune, and the worst,
- Gain awareness that the English language that writers use has changed dramatically through history, and
- Engage in thoughtful discussion and writing about the play.

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

Assessments:

- Reading quizzes on each act,
- Microessay: Rhetorical analysis of Edmund's soliloquy in 1.2.1-22,
- Quotation analysis quiz,
- Famous lines test,
- Essay test emphasizing themes and characterization,
- Written or oral rhetorical analysis of two 15-line excerpts from *King Lear* in relation to a theme in the play,
- Formal, revised analytical essay with peer editing.

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

Length: 5 weeks

Satire

Texts:

Voltaire, *Candide, or, Optimism*. Trans. Theo Cuffe. Penguin Classics Deluxe ed. Penguin, 2005.

Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." In Lynn Z. Bloom, ed. *The Essay Connection: Readings for Writers*: Heath, 1991.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify theories of comedy,
- Identify stages of the comic ladder,
- Identify techniques of comedy including irony, satire, hyperbole, wit, epigram, incongruity, inconsistency of character, plot devices, and physical comedy,
- Identify Voltaire's purposes in the context of the *Philosophes* and the Enlightenment, relate those purposes to his comic techniques, and
- Write and present an original "Modest Proposal" on a contemporary issue.

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 century to contemporary times.

Assessments:

- 3 reading quizzes
- Contemporary satire presentation (group, oral)
- Comedy terms identification test

Although critical analysis makes up the bulk of student writing for the course, well-constructed creative writing assignments may help students see from the inside how literature is written.

Evaluation

Teacher-made rubric for satire presentation

Length: 3 weeks

Application of Literary Theories

Texts selected for this unit, which vary from year to year, yield supportable interpretations from a variety of critical perspectives. Texts include Euripides' *Medea* and *Electra*, George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Students are provided with individual paperbacks.

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 century to contemporary times.

Application of Literary Theories, continued

Resources:

Meyer, Michael. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. 3rd. ed. St. Martin's, 1993.

Library and internet resources.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify the differences among literary theories, including formalism, archetypal criticism, feminist and gender criticism, Marxist criticism, psychological criticism, reader-response criticism, deconstructionism, biographical criticism, multicultural criticism, literary history and new historicism,
- Locate literary criticism that represents a specific critical approach to the text and appraise the various critics' views,
- Interpret a text from at least one of these critical theories, with relevant detail,
- Deliver a comprehensive group oral presentation explaining the origins, major critics, and theory of each approach, including an interpretation of the text,
- Synthesize their own interpretation and relevant critical perspectives into an oral analysis of the text, and
- Write, peer edit and revise a documented essay applying one critical approach, with support relevant to the critical perspective selected.

Assessments:

- Group explanation of approach and analysis of text, and
- Individual essay drafts and revisions analyzing the text according to the student's choice of literary theory.

Evaluation Criteria:

Teacher-made rubric for oral presentation

Six-Trait Rubric for essay

Length: 2.5 weeks

British Novel

Text:

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. 4th Critical ed. Norton, 2006.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify the effect of literary techniques such as point of view, structure, frame narration, imagery, figurative language, tone, diction, theme and syntax,
- Question and discuss the author's purpose in relation to the social, historical and political context of the novel's setting and the values of Conrad's times,
- Evaluate the relevance of different critical approaches to the novel,
- Discuss the critical judgments of Conrad's novel as racist, sexist, Eurocentric or imperialist,
- Analyze Marlow in a closed-book group activity requiring specific evidence for their generalizations and insights,
- Develop their own view of the characters and their own interpretations of the novel, and
- Write a well-supported, persuasive analysis of *Heart of Darkness* in class in response to a prompt from an AP English Literature and Composition Exam. Students will have seen possible prompts in advance will be able to use a copy of *Heart of Darkness* while they are drafting in class. They will revise this essay overnight before turning it in as their end-of semester exam.

Assessments:

- 4 reading tests,
- Character analysis (group exercise),

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

Assigned reading should be accompanied by thoughtful discussion and writing about those books in the company of one's fellow students.

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

Assigned reading should be accompanied by thoughtful discussion and writing about those books in the company of one's fellow students.

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

British Novel: *Heart of Darkness*, continued

- 2 graded discussions (fishbowl format), and
- In-class open book timed essay, with revision and self-assessment.

Evaluation Criteria:

Teacher-made rubric for graded discussion

AP English Literature and Composition Scoring Guide for in-class timed essay

Length: 3.5 weeks

Semester II

Poetry Unit II: Poetic Form

Texts:

Kennedy, X. J., and Dana Gioia, *An Introduction to Poetry*. 8th ed. Harper, 1994.

Perrine, Laurence and Thomas R. Arp, eds. *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. 8th ed. Harcourt Brace, 1992.

Poems:

Robert Browning (“My Last Duchess”), Sylvia Plath (“Daddy”), Elizabeth Bishop (“One Art,” “Sestina”), Dylan Thomas (“Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”, “Fern Hill”), William Shakespeare (“The Sunne Rising”), Philip Larkin (“Aubade”), John Keats (“Ode on a Grecian Urn”), Pablo Neruda, (“Ode to My Socks”), Theodore Roethke (“Elegy for Jane”), John Crowe Ransom (“Bells for John Whiteside’s Daughter”), Sherman Alexie, “Elegies,” A.E. Housman (“To an Athlete Dying Young”), Randall Jarrell (“The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner”), Wilfred Owen (“Dulce et Decorum Est”), Dudley Randall (“Ballad of Birmingham”), Anonymous (“The Twa Corbies”) and similar poems.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Read, critically analyze and discuss longer and more complex poetry,
- Read closely, with attention to the relationships between the poem’s theme and its technical elements, especially the relationship of theme to technique,
- Analyze the dramatic situation, structure, line, diction, connotation, sound devices, diction, syntax, mood, purpose, persona, tone and theme of a poem,
- Identify different forms of the lyric poem,
- Identify free verse, blank verse, dramatic monologues and narrative poetry,
- Identify rhetorical devices (schemes and tropes),
- Write and comment on poems using appropriate literary terms, and
- Write a well-supported analytical essay on a poem.

Assessments:

- Frequent brief in-class responses to poetry, including creative writing,
- In-class timed essay on a prompt from an AP English Literature and Composition Exam, and
- Explication of a poem studied in this unit, with peer editing and revisions.

Evaluation Criteria:

AP English Literature and Composition Scoring Guide for in-class timed essay

Six-Trait Rubric for explication

Length: 4 weeks

Modern American Novel

Texts:

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. Vintage International, 1990.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage International, 1990, with comparable objectives in alternate years.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Understand a work’s complexity, to recognize the depth of meaning, and to analyze how meaning is developed in literary form,

Assigned reading should be accompanied by thoughtful discussion and writing about those books in the company of one’s fellow students.

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

Although critical analysis makes up the bulk of student writing for the course, well-constructed creative writing assignments may help students see from the inside how literature is written.

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 century to contemporary times

Modern American Novel, continued

- Consider the social and historical values the novel reflects and addresses,
- Identify and recognize the effect of the techniques of literary artistry,
- Recognize and evaluate the uses of distortion in the narrative,
- Identify variations from traditional characterization and point of view in the novel, with attention to Faulkner's structure, voice, diction and detail,
- Identify common literary techniques, such as imagery, time, repetition, narrative voice, and structure and the purposes of their use in uncommon ways, and
- Write a well-supported documented essay about the development of one major theme within the novel.

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

Assessment:

- Reading quizzes,
- Participation in graded class discussion,
- Reading log, focusing on a literary device (such as imagery),
- Analytical essay draft and revision, and
- 1- 4 in-class essays, depending on the text.

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

Evaluation Criteria:

Teacher-made rubric for Reading log

Six-Trait Rubric for analytical essay

AP English Literature and Composition Scoring Guide for in-class timed essay

Length: 4 weeks

Theatre of the Absurd

Texts:

Ionesco, Eugene. *The Bald Soprano and Other Plays*. Trans Donald M. Allen. Signet Classics, 1998.

Pirandello, Luigi. *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Trans. Eric Bentley. Signet Classics, 1998.

Resource: Teacher-constructed PowerPoint on surrealism

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Recognize the relationships between 20th century theories of art (especially surrealism) and literature and their influence on literature, and
- Identify characteristics of absurdism in a literary work.

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 century to contemporary times.

Assessment:

- Group presentation modeled on *Six Characters in Search of an Author*,
- Worksheet on characteristic of absurdist theater in *The Bald Soprano*, and
- Image log on each play.

Evaluation Criteria:

Teacher-made rubrics for group presentation and image log

Length: 2 weeks

Assigned reading should be accompanied by thoughtful discussion and writing about those books in the company of one's fellow students.

Existential Novel and/or Plays

Texts:

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *No Exit and Other Plays*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert and others. Vintage International, 1989.

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Trans. Matthew Ward, Knopf, 1989.

Alternate texts: (These will be taught with objectives appropriate to the texts.)

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Vintage International, 1989.

Stoppard, Tom: *Arcadia*. In *Plays Five*. London: Faber, 1992.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Read critically to identify the literary techniques such as setting, imagery, characterization, syntax and structure used in the text,

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

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

Existential Novel and/or Plays, continued

- Relate literary techniques to the author's purposes and philosophy,
- Compare the treatment of existentialism in the two genres,
- Compare differing literary expressions of existentialism, and
- Identify elements of absurdism in *The Stranger*,

Assessment:

- Two reading quizzes and final test on *The Stranger*,
- Short-essay exam on *No Exit*,
- Analytical essay draft and revision on *The Stranger*,
- In class timed essay on *The Stranger*.

Evaluation Criteria:

Six-Trait Rubric for analytical essay

AP English Literature and Composition Scoring Guide for in-class timed essay

Length: 4 weeks

Comedy

Text:

Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night or What You Will*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004.

Alternate text for years when *Hamlet* is taught rather than *King Lear*.

Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Grove/Atlantic, 1994.

Objectives:

- Identify techniques of comedy including irony, parody, satire, hyperbole, wit, litotes, wit, incongruity, inconsistency of character, plot devices, and slapstick,
- Identify theories of comedy and read the play critically to recognize their use,
- Recognize the relationship of characterization to different types of comedy,
- Identify Shakespeare's purposes in the context of the social traditions, values, common beliefs and political pressures of Elizabethan England,
- Identify themes such as grief, gender, sexuality, duplicity, loyalty, and love and compare their development through contrasting characters,
- Discuss comic characterization, including the use of character foils,
- Compare the role of the fool in *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night*,
- Analyze the syntax and diction of the main characters, and
- Write a well-supported discussion of comic characterization in *Twelfth Night*.

Assessment:

- Reading quizzes on each act,
- Draft and revisions of a critical essay on comic characterization in *Twelfth Night*, with self-assessment, and
- Timed writing on a past AP English Literature and Composition Exam prompt.
- Students not taking the AP Exam will write a script for and perform a "missing scene" from *Twelfth Night*, including rationales for their choices.
- Students taking the AP Exam will participate in the AP Review.

Evaluation Criteria:

Six-Trait Rubric for analytical essay,

AP English Literature and Composition Scoring Guide for in-class timed essay,

Teacher-made rubric for "Missing Scene" presentations.

Length: 4 weeks (3 weeks for students taking the AP English Literature Exam)

AP Review for students taking the AP English Literature Exam

- Practice Multiple-Choice format and types of questions
- Discuss essay prompt format and types of questions
- Review of texts appropriate for the AP Open Question

Assessment: 3 timed writings to AP Literature Exam prompts

Length: 1 week, overlapping the end of *Twelfth Night*.

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 century to contemporary times.

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

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