

AP Literature and Composition

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Course Overview

AP Literature and Composition is designed to give students who are so inclined the opportunity to read, write, and think on a higher level than that which is offered in most high school classes. It demands students take responsibility for their own learning and rewards them for doing so. Through intensive reading and writing, it teaches students to think differently about the world around them, offering alternate viewpoints and encouraging empathy through immersion in diverse literature.

This is a reading and writing intensive class. Students look at texts thematically, examining diverse texts with similar themes; within cultural context, looking at how the time and place in which an author lived influenced his/her writing; and new critically, looking at a text with no prior knowledge and interacting with it in whatever way presents itself through close reading. Through these various lenses, students learn that there are many ways to read a single text and use their own developing skills to form diverse interpretations of classic and modern literature.

Writing is used as a means of learning and exploration of a text, through journals and short writing assignments, as well as a means of assessment, through formal essays and written examinations. Students write daily, either informally or formally. Sometimes the writing is informal and is a means to develop ideas about a text. Sometimes it is formal and is used as a means of assessing a student's learning. Unless there is time set aside for workshopping and revision, all writing is considered in draft form and is evaluated as such. Writing is mostly reflective or analytical, but there are also opportunities for creative writing and research-based projects. Students also practice writing for the AP exam, using timed tests and sample questions to improve their test-taking skills. Finally, students evaluate their own writing and that of their peers in order to improve as writers, using sample AP responses as benchmarks for effective writing.

Writing Assignments

Throughout all writing assignments in this class, students will work to develop a more sophisticated writing style, including writing with a unique voice; consideration of audience and appropriate register; varied sentence structure; and correct grammar, usage, and mechanics. Students will work on organization through the use of pre-writing organizers, such as essay outlines and graphic organizers. Each time a student writes to defend a thesis, it must be supported with textual evidence, both general and in the form of specific quotations.

- **Timed Tests:** Students will be given prompts from previous AP exams and will be expected to respond to them in class during a 40 minute sitting. They will also look at exemplars of other student responses, benchmarks for high scoring essays, as well as the work of their peers. Together, we will score the work of the class, providing suggestions for improving the lower-scoring writing. Students will improve their own pieces in the same way.

- **Formal Essays:** For cumulative assignments following units, students will write analytical essays that demonstrate their command of the material. These will be written in multiple drafts, with opportunities for peer editing, teacher conference, and revision.
- **Portfolio:** Students will be expected to keep all of their writing over the course of the year. They will use this as evidence of meeting specific standards. Each student will create a digital portfolio, using Blogger. Students will be able to choose their best work as well as that which shows the most growth to demonstrate their learning.

Google Classroom

Many assignments will be made available to students as well as collected through the online Google classroom. This will also be a place for students to collaborate and give feedback to one another, as well as receive feedback from me.

Student Evaluation

All assignments will be weighted by adherence to a points system. This means that larger assignments will be worth more points than smaller assignments. Students will be graded according to the following criteria:

Assessments

These include summative assessments at the ends of units (tests, essays, projects) as well as periodic reading and vocabulary quizzes. These assignments are formative, designed to show that students are keeping up with the heavy reading load, as well as summative, to show mastery of the material or a particular skill. These assignments will be worth the most points.

Formal Writing Assignments

These include any assignments that are expected to be revised and submitted in a final draft form. Since they are supposed to be final drafts, these assignments will be graded as such, with strict adherence to criteria on a rubric provided at the time of the assignment. **Students will not earn an A on a formal writing assignment unless it exceeds the standard; however, they MAY be given the opportunity to make corrections/redo the assignment to improve their grade.** Along with assessments, formal writing assignments are worth a significant amount of points.

Homework/Classwork

These assignments include comprehension questions, vocabulary work, practice AP exams, and any informal writing assignments done to explore content or practice skills (reading logs, response papers, etc.). Since formal writing assignments are graded to a high standard and many AP students are used to getting A's on papers, they may not be pleased with the grades they get on formal assignments. These informal assignments will give students a chance to maintain a high GPA, as some of them are graded for completion and others are graded as an exploration of material, not as mastery of a particular concept or skill. Any classwork/homework that is not completed on time will earn a zero. **I do NOT accept late work. Students are responsible for completing any work they miss when they are absent (assignments will be posted on the Google Classroom and my website).** These assignments will be worth the least amount of points, but there will be more of them during a marking period.

Class Participation

This includes participation in class discussions and group work, as well as being a positive, contributing member of class in general. Students are expected to come to class on time, prepared to learn (with their iPad charged, a writing utensil, and any other materials they will need). Failure to do so will result in a lower participation grade, and may also lead to a phone call home or other behavior intervention. Class participation usually ends up being about 20% of the grade for the marking period. AP students are expected to present as class leaders, taking the initiative to make the class what they want it to be.

Course Planner/Student Activities*

* *Subject to change given time and other variables*

Unit One: AP Literature “Boot Camp” -- Learning to Read and Write about Fiction

Using our core text, *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*, students will:

- Identify the elements of fiction (point of view, characters, setting, structure, tone and style, symbolism and allegory, and idea or theme) and explain how authors use these elements to create stories
- Read various short stories from diverse authors and time periods and apply what they learned about the elements of fiction, describing the author’s use of specific elements in specific stories
- Implement strategies for writing about literature in their own writing throughout the unit
- Produce a polished essay and/or take a cumulative unit test to show mastery of the skills and concepts acquired during the unit

Unit Two: “The Live Poets Society” -- Learning to Read and Write about Poetry

Using our core text as well as supplemental sources, students will:

- Identify the elements of poetry (words, characters and setting, imagery, figures of speech, tone, prosody, form, symbolism and allusion, and myths) and explain how authors use these elements to create poetry.
- Do close readings of various poems from diverse authors and time periods and apply what they learned about the elements of poetry, describing the author’s use of specific elements in specific poems and how such elements contribute to the overall effect and artistry of the poem
- Implement strategies for writing about poetry in their own writing throughout the unit
- Take a cumulative unit test to show mastery of the skills and concepts acquired during the unit
- Present the work of a living poet and explain how specific elements of poetry are utilized in this poet’s work as well as the work of a classic poet from the textbook

Unit Three: Dystopian Literature

Students will read one novel from the list of dystopian literature as a class, review the one they read on their own, read excerpts from others and be able to:

- Discuss the characteristics of dystopian literature and explain how each work studied is an example
- Present independent reading to the class and connect it to class reading.
- Compare each author’s treatment of dystopia in their respective works
- Look at the social and historical context of each work and connect it to the writing of dystopian literature in that context
- Produce a polished essay and/or take a cumulative unit test to show mastery of the skills and concepts acquired during the unit

Unit Four: Shakespeare

Students will read *Hamlet*, Shakespearean sonnets, and excerpts from other Shakespearean works, and be able to:

- Identify and discuss the characteristics of a Five Act Play
- Recognize and discuss the figure of Tragic Hero in literature
- Explain how the social and historical context in which Shakespeare lived and wrote influenced his plays
- Understand and analyze various themes
- Translate important passages and act out various scenes
- Produce a polished essay and/or take a cumulative unit test to show mastery of the skills and concepts acquired during the unit

Unit Five: Wuthering Heights

Students will read *Wuthering Heights* and be able to:

- Discuss the social and historical context of the text and how that influenced its writing
- Identify important themes in the book and connect it to others read this year
- Produce a polished essay and/or take a cumulative unit test to show mastery of the skills and concepts acquired during the unit

Unit Six: British Novel and Drama Comparison

Students will read *The Awakening* on their own and *A Doll's House* in class and be able to:

- Compare their themes
- Discuss the time period in which each was written and the effect this has on how major themes play out
- Produce a polished essay and/or take a cumulative unit test to show mastery of the skills and concepts acquired during the unit

Unit Seven: Research Project

During the period of time after the exam, students will engage in an interest-based research project that will either connect to a class-wide unit of study (i.e. Elizabethan England while reading Shakespeare) or literature in some way (a specific author, genre, time period). Students will be required to do extensive research, seeking primary sources and evaluating their secondary sources. They will pose a research question and find evidence to support a self-generated thesis answering this question.

Ongoing:

Throughout the year, students will also:

- Take practice multiple choice tests and compare answers with classmates to determine the correct answers as well as why they are correct
- Practice writing for the exam and compare their writing with writing done earlier in the year
- Look at benchmark writing samples to see how they compare
- Meet with classmates to discuss ways to improve writing

Exams:

- During midterm week, students will take a practice AP test.
- Students who take the AP exam in the spring will not have to take a final exam.

*** Please sign and return THIS PAGE ONLY ***

I have read and reviewed the syllabus for AP English Literature and Composition with my parent/guardian(s) and understand what is expected of me as a student.

Student Name
Date

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date