

Salem High School
Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition 2010-2011
Lisa Boyd, instructor

COURSE DESCRIPTION

AP English Literature and Composition is a year-long college-level course designed to engage students in close reading and critical analysis of rich literary texts as outlined by the *AP English Literature Course Description*. The course is reading and writing intensive. Throughout the year, students will develop skills in various forms of written expression and will prepare extensively for the AP exam in May. Participation in class discussion and learning activities is vital for learning, and each student is expected to come to class each day prepared to contribute.

In their interaction with literary texts and during instruction, students will learn literary terminology and wide-ranging vocabulary (including but not limited to words from literary texts and AP-exam questions) as well as acquire the necessary critical reading and writing (style and conventions) skills to interpret complex works, to write insightful compositions, to develop their own writing style, and to gain proficiency in AP test-taking skills.

An inherent part of the course is timely and detailed feedback from the teacher on writing throughout the writing process and opportunities for revision to aid students in their textual analysis and interpretive skills as well as in the cultivation of their own style of writing. Based on the teacher's assessment of individual student and whole-class weaknesses, instruction will be provided in

- apt use of diction to convey ideas,
- command of syntax (specifically the effective use a variety of sentence structures, including coordination and subordination),
- development of voice and tone in writing,
- organizational patterns and strategies that correspond to purpose and audience, and
- successful defense of interpretations and ideas (especially balancing concrete detail from the literary text with commentary on that detail).

READING ASSIGNMENTS

The teacher will select British and American works from a variety of genres and time periods ranging from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries, acknowledging both the depth and breadth of the course and building upon the literary base of the students from their previous courses. Because the students enter AP English Literature from courses that have focused solely on American literature, the texts chosen are predominantly British. During the summer and academic year, students will have the opportunity to read novels or plays, short prose, and numerous poems in each thematic unit.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

In this writing intensive course, students write and revise at least once a week to develop their control over the elements of effective composition, skills in various forms of written expression, and ability to read and think critically. Students will write about literary works in ways which include but are not limited to the discussion of a work's structure, style, and themes; the evaluation of the impact that social and historical values have upon a work; and the analysis of a writer's use of devices such as figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone to reveal meaning.

GRADING POLICY

Students' grades are determined by points accumulated for assignments throughout the semester with the percentages as follows:

- 30% Reading and Literature: Novels & Plays
- 20% Reading and Literature: Poetry & Prose
- 20% Writing: Timed
- 20% Writing: Process
- 5% Speaking & Listening
- 5% Vocabulary & Terminology

Colleges consider your taking AP courses to be much more indicative of success than a high GPA, but I understand that your GPA is important to you and to your college applications. Thus, at the end of each semester, I will add 10 points to your final grade, the purpose of which is to make your grade more equal to what you might have earned if you had not taken the more rigorous and challenging AP English Literature and Composition course—in other words, the ten points is not a gift; you will earn it.

Reading Goals (from College Board Course Description)

R1: The student reads works from several genres and periods—from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century.

R2: The student understands a work's complexity.

R3: The student analyzes how meaning is embodied in literary form.

R4a: The student engages in close reading involving the experience of literature (precritical impressions and emotional responses).

R4b: The student engages in close reading involving the interpretation of literature (analysis to arrive at multiple meanings).

R4c: The student engages in close reading involving the evaluation of literature (assessment of the quality and artistic achievement as well as consideration of their social and cultural values).

R5: The student makes careful observations of textual detail, establishes connections among observations, and draws from those connections a series of inferences leading to an interpretive conclusion about a piece of writing's meaning and value.

R6: The student demonstrates an understanding of Biblical and Classical mythology and how the concepts and stories have influenced and informed Western literary creation.

Writing Goals (from College Board Course Description)

W1: The student produces writing that focuses on the critical analysis of literature and includes expository, analytical, and argumentative essays.

W2: The student composes pieces in response to well-constructed creative writing assignments that allow students to see from the inside how literature is written.

W3: The student develops and organizes ideas in clear, coherent, and persuasive language.

W4: The student attends to matters of precision and correctness in writing.

W5a: The student produces writing with stylistic maturity, characterized by a wide-ranging vocabulary, using words with denotative accuracy and connotative resourcefulness.

W5b: The student produces writing with stylistic maturity, characterized by a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordinate and coordinate constructions.

W5c: The student produces writing with stylistic maturity, characterized by logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques of coherence such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis.

W5d: The student produces writing with stylistic maturity, characterized by a balance of generalization with specific illustrative detail.

W5e: The student produces writing with stylistic maturity, characterized by an effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, maintaining a consistent voice, and achieving emphasis through parallelism and antithesis.

W6a: The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that is informal and exploratory and that allows students to discover what they think in the process of writing about their reading.

W6b: The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that involves research, perhaps negotiating differing critical perspectives.

W6c: The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that entails extended discourse in which students develop an argument or present an analysis at length.

W6d: The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that encourages students to write effectively under the time constraints they encounter on essay exams in college courses in many disciplines.

W7: The student prepares for the essay questions of the AP English Literature exam through exercises analyzing short prose passages and poems and through practicing with "open" analytical questions.

Note: With each major literary work we will study this year, we will also study thematically related poetry, short fiction, and non-fiction. In addition, each semester you will read one novel (chosen from a list of apt texts) independently and complete an assignment based on that novel.

Unit 1

Facade: What Lies Beneath the Surface

Essential Questions:

- What is concealed beneath the façade of perfection in societies and individuals?
- In societies that strictly categorize people, how do individuals define and/or maintain their identities?
- How do authors emphasize duality and contrast within characters and their settings?
- What techniques do authors use to create the impression of reality within fictional works?

Major Texts:

- *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood); *Snow Falling on Cedars* (Guterson); *Life of Pi* (Martel)

Unit 2

Quest for Identity: the Individual Defined in Society

Essential Questions:

- Is identity innate or created?
- How does an individual transcend society's expectations?
- How does social class affect a person's identity?
- How do authors effectively express a character's internal conflict?

Major Texts:

- *Pygmalion* (Shaw); *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare); *Emma* (Austen)

Unit 3

Destiny: the Individual Shaped by Heredity and Environment

Essential Questions:

- Is a person's identity limited by birth and experiences of the past?
- Does the world around a person determine identity?
- How does the past determine an individual's future?
- What force has a greater effect on the creation of identity: nature or nurture?
- How do authors convey the impact of external conflict on internal conflict?

Major Texts:

- *Song of Solomon* (Morrison); *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë)

Unit 4

Truth and Lies: the Thin Line Between Civilization, Savagery, and Hypocrisy

Essential Questions:

- Why is civilization important, and what factors support or destroy its fabric?
- In the face of the savage reality of human behavior, why do people continue to pursue the concept of civilization?
- Do absolute or universal truths exist? How does perspective shape or alter truth?
- Why are human beings hesitant to face the truth?
- How does the individual face his or her own savagery and hypocrisy?
- What is the truth of the darkness at the heart of civilization and the civilized human being?

Major Texts:

- *The Misanthrope* (Molière); *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad)

Unit 5

Family, Sanity, & Sacrifice: Connection and Isolation between the Self and Society

Essential Questions:

- Why is conflict an inevitable part of familial and societal relationships?
- In a world of fragmentation and absurdity, can individuals ever truly connect with one another?
- What are the boundaries of love and sacrifice, and where does one draw the line between them?
- What are the factors that move individuals, communities, and nations to great sacrifice, and what are the consequences?
- Can the sacrifice of an individual lead to the salvation of a diseased whole?
- How does society define and regulate sanity and normality in the individual?

Major Texts:

- *As I Lay Dying* (Faulkner); *Hamlet* (Shakespeare); *The Poisonwood Bible* (Kingsolver)