

# AP® English Literature and Composition Syllabus

## Course Description:

AP® Literature and Composition is a class that focuses on close reading and critical analysis of selected texts. You will learn several techniques of literary criticism to apply to the texts we cover. The student's job may seem simple - you will read, think, write, speak and listen - but the reading and analysis will test your mental acuity at every turn. Understanding how and why writers use language to create meaning is at once both grand and simple. If you succeed in this class you may, indeed, call yourself an AP® scholar. I consider it my job as your instructor to give you the analytical tools you need to do justice to these significant works of literature.

Students must take the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition exam at the end of the year. You must actually read all of the texts assigned - Spark Notes just won't cut it. Be sure to block out uninterrupted reading time nearly EVERY DAY for this class.

To understand and bring to focus to these works of literature, you will have writing assignments to complete for each unit. These analytical essays will include but are not limited to the following: interpretative, expository and argumentative. Please think of these assignments as an opportunity to understand the work of literature and to bring your most sophisticated analytical skills to bear upon these great works. We will read aloud in class the masterful analyses, and use these fine examples as a touchstone for discussion and additional writing. I will also use sophisticated sentences/paragraphs from these writing assignments to teach mini grammar/mechanics lessons. Students whose writing is selected for the mini lessons will be excused from the grammar/mechanics quiz on that topic.

All writing assignments will be scored on a scale of 1-9 (similar to the rubric used to score your AP® Exam essays) and works of more than three paragraphs will be kept in your permanent portfolio.

AP® English Literature and Composition is designed to expose you to great works of literature and to test your thinking and writing skills as they relate to the literature. In addition, you will be prepared to pass the AP® exam in May. As you may know, the AP® exam consists of a multiple-choice section and an essay section. There are three essays: one on poetry, one on prose and one "open" question. As we cover each work of literature, I plan to pose an AP® prompt to the class and have you write your answer just as you would on the AP® exam. By the time you take the test in May, you should be completely familiar with the style of question and what it takes to give a cogent answer. We will grade many of these within the class (this will help you focus on what works and what doesn't).

There will be several opportunities for you to write about literature in a non-AP way; that is, not as a timed writing. Micro-fiction, poetry writing, creative writing, process writing, research writing and written projects will round out your writing opportunities.

Literature for the course will be selected from the list that follows. Keep in mind, this includes the summer reading assignments and independent reading that will coincide with the anchor texts we read together. The style and content of each piece is often influenced by the time period in which it was written, so we will study elements of each literary time period. Be aware that most reading will be done at home. Oral and written surveys (quizzes) will be given to assure that you're keeping up. Surveys cannot be taken late. If you have an excused absence and wish to make up the points, you may turn in a one-page (typed) summary of a literary allusion which will be copied and distributed to the class. Everyone will learn by your absence. See me for suggestions.

The AP® test focuses on Literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present. We will read a variety of texts from major American and British authors. All texts are available for check-out here at school, though you may wish to purchase your own new/used copies so you can write notes directly in the text. Post-it® notes will be provided for students who wish to write in the texts that have been checked out from the school.

### **Required Readings:**

Author: Conrad, Joseph  
Title: *Heart of Darkness & The Secret Sharer*  
Publisher: Signet Classic  
Original Publication Date: 1899  
Description: Fiction, 19th Century

Author: Dostoevsky, Fyodor  
Title: *Crime and Punishment*  
Publisher: Bantam  
Original Publication Date: 1866  
Description: Fiction, 19th Century

Author: Ellison, Ralph  
Title: *Invisible Man*  
Publisher: Vintage International  
Original Publication Date: 1947  
Description: Fiction, 20th Century

Author: Miller, Arthur  
Title: *The Crucible*  
Publisher:  
Original Publication Date:  
Description: Fiction, 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Author: Shakespeare, William  
Title: *Hamlet*  
Publisher: Washington Square Press  
Original Publication Date:  
Description: Drama, 17th Century

Author: Shakespeare, William  
Title: *King Lear*  
Publisher: Simon & Schuster, Inc.  
Original Publication Date: 1957  
Description: Drama, 17th Century

Author: Steinbeck, John  
Title: *East of Eden* (to be read over summer break)  
Publisher: Penguin Books  
Original Publication Date: 1952  
Description: Fiction, 20th Century

Vocabulary study is an important part of AP® Literature and Composition. The first nine weeks we will focus on literary terms (from *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) and the second and third nine weeks will primarily focus on sophisticated vocabulary words from several reading sources. The fourth quarter will be words for SAT preparation. Do not be complacent about vocabulary study.

Critical thinking is essential for scholarly work. I can't give you a worksheet a day to complete in order to improve your critical thinking. Reading, by itself, rarely creates a critical thinker. Writing a series of five-paragraph essays will not make you a critical thinker. You must listen to, and participate in, scholarly discussions on a regular basis to become a first-rate critical thinker. Sometimes a classmate (or your teacher) will disagree with your analysis, and you will have to behave in a mature fashion. You might, on occasion, become angry or frustrated or embarrassed. This is part of the scholarly experience.

### **Grading:**

Process- 30% (i.e. classwork, homework, weekly vocabulary, etc.)  
Product- 50% (i.e. projects, presentations, tests, essays)  
Semester Exam- 20%

There will obviously be some overlap in these percentages - you'll read, discuss, write and be tested on various genres of literature throughout the year. For the details of specific assignments and their point values, ask me or check Infinite Campus.

### **Ongoing Assignments:**

#### **Outside Reading**

Each quarter you will read a book of your choice from within a selected category. This reading is in addition to the unit we are working on during class. There will be a writing assignment associated with each book and this assignment will be due at the end of the term, but the assignments tend to be more creative than a typical literary analysis. You might write an ode to your favorite character. You might write the climax of the story as a micro-fiction (250 words or less). How about taking a controversial concept and writing an opinion piece for the school newspaper? I change these every year, but hope you will enjoy the varied choices. The writing assignment options will be given to you at least three weeks prior to its due date.

Outside Reading 1st Quarter: Pulitzer Prize-Winner  
Outside Reading 2nd Quarter: Nobel Prize-Winner  
Outside Reading 3rd Quarter: Booker Prize-Winner  
Outside Reading 4th Quarter: Significant work from a college reading list (see me for approval)

### **Vocabulary**

Each week you will have a graded vocabulary assignment. Multiple encounters with words, in reading, speaking and writing, are the key to a sophisticated vocabulary. Your consistency with vocabulary study will improve your grades in every class, but will have substantial impact on your writing grades in this class.

### **Grammar/Sentence Structure/Mechanics**

With each writing assignment, superior student work (from the current writing assignment) will be posted, read aloud and discussed. Grammar scores are typically given during the first five minutes of class, and there is no opportunity to make up the work if you are tardy. Quizzes will be given on the particular topic, from which the student whose work is displayed will be exempt.

Students with particular writing needs are directed to the following websites:

[www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/writing/](http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/writing/)

[www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar](http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar)

[www.owl.english.purdue.edu](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu)

### **Writing Requirements**

Students will annotate readings and AP literature & Composition essay prompts, essay rubrics, essay samples, and write to each form.

Students will write five in-class timed analysis essays and will conference with the teacher for revision per quarter.

Students will complete one in-class individual conference with the teacher during each unit.

Students will write a research paper which incorporates various sources, genres and perspectives.

Students will compose and present several reader response projects on books which have earned academic merit.

## **Course Outline**

### **Unit One: Critical Literary Theory** (appx. 2 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

The concept of viewing a work of literature through a "lens" as described in Deborah Appleman's *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* is the initial focus of our class and provides the groundwork for the entire year. Throughout the year we will consider the following theories: Reader Response, Marxist, Feminist, Sociological, Psychological and Psychoanalytic, and Historical.

Students write short analyses of works of literature for each lens. We read these aloud and discuss the surprises - what students "see" now that they are considering the text from a different

framework. We decide which lens best explains a work, while recognizing that any lens CAN work.

**Unit Two: *The Crucible*** (appx. 2 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

Students will read the play *The Crucible* and discuss the text using almost all of our literary lenses. Students will examine characterization through archetypes analysis. We will do a timed in-class essay based on a past AP prose prompt. Students will participate in peer revision and writing workshop.

**Unit Three: *East of Eden*** (appx. 4 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

Students will read *East of Eden* and discuss the text using the various lenses. This is our first opportunity to read a novel and clarify the importance of understanding the historical/feminist/psychological context. Students will write sestinas (formal poetry) to show their understanding of themes in the text. We will also practice annotation strategies that will guide us through the course. Students will also write to an open response question which will be conferenced with the teacher and revised using written and conference feedback.

**Unit Four: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest/ Nellie Bly's Ten Days in a Mad-House*** (appx. 5 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments: Research Paper*

Students will read Kesey's novel and Bly's account to analyze how the genre of different texts with similar themes shape meaning and how mental illness is best explored using these texts. Students will write a research paper which addressed mental illness incorporating these texts and online articles. Students will be expected to come to class with a rough draft which will be workshopped by their peers and with the teacher. They will then revise based on these written and conferenced feedback from the teacher and peers. Students complete a substantive research essay and submit in final form for evaluation. Instruction will include the evaluation of web materials, use of internal citations, and an appropriate works cited page. MLA citation will be used. The final product of this unit is included in the student's portfolio.

**Unit Five: Shakespearean Plays (*Hamlet* and *King Lear*)** (appx. 4 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

The Shakespearean plays give students an opportunity to consider the Marxist lens (Who has the power? Who controls the money?) as well as continuing understanding of the historical lens. We'll read these plays quickly and students will write paragraphs explaining how they could use the Marxist lens or historical lens to explain the texts. After the completion of both plays, students will write a final analytical, argumentative essay in which they must draw upon textual

details to make and explain judgments about artistry and quality of the works. We will practice scoring these essays on the 9 point AP rubric.

**Unit Six: *Heart of Darkness* plus the “Graded Edit”** ( appx. 2 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

Students can read *Heart of Darkness* quickly, but we will stop to discuss impressionistic writing. Several different literary lenses may be used to interpret this text (e.g., historical, psychological, or Marxist).

We practice the “killer intro” just prior to the writing of a process paper for this unit. I have collected dozens of introductions to essays on *Heart of Darkness* and, for a quiz grade, students must evaluate the introductions based on a 20-point rubric.

The “graded edit” occurs at the conclusion of this unit. Students will write an analysis of *Heart of Darkness* and one of the Shakespearean tragedies we have covered, viewing the works through a particular literary lens. The papers are turned in without names – only student numbers – and are distributed throughout the other AP® sections. Students have two days to complete an edit (which I discuss at length in class), which I will grade. Students then receive their papers back, with the edit (anonymous) and are given two-three days to rewrite the paper for final submission.

**Unit Seven: Poetry and Poetry Out Loud** ( appx. 3 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

Students read a sampling of poetry from 16<sup>th</sup> century to modern and write short analyses (2-4 paragraphs) of a poem from each of the following time periods: Renaissance, Romantic, Restoration, Victorian and Modern. Students also memorize a poem from each time period and become “masters” of a particular poet. Students write a poem in the style of the poet they have mastered. We review sample poems and questions from *Multiple Choice Questions in Preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination*, Editions 3, 4, and 6.

**Unit Eight: *Crime and Punishment*** ( appx. 4 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

Students read *Crime and Punishment* in order to analyze the text through the literary lenses as well as examine prevalent motifs. They will then complete an expository, analytical essay in which they must draw upon textual details to develop an extended interpretation of the text. We will use these essays in order to conduct individual writing interviews.

**Unit Nine: *Invisible Man*** ( appx. 5 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

Students read the text and we complete graded “fishbowl” discussions (only the small group in the middle is allowed to speak).

We will also complete two in-class writings during this unit. One is styled after the prose question and the other after the “open” question from the AP exam. These essays should be well-written analyses of Ellison’s structure and style as well as motifs and themes. We will look at student samples of high scoring essays based on this text in order to determine opportunities for improvement in our own essays.

**Unit Ten: AP® Test** (appx. 6 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments*

During the six weeks prior to the AP® exam, students practice sample tests daily. Each student has a brief interview with me to “fine tune” any writing/analysis issues that may be of concern. Students will write an essay each evening for classroom evaluation.

**Unit Eleven: Short Stories – Creative Writing The Lifetime Reading List** / (2 weeks)

*Major Assignments and/or Assessments:*

We decompress from the stress of the AP® exam with a creative writing assignment surrounding a variety of short stories. Suffice to say that students enjoy the opportunity to write creatively. Throughout our year, students have read a variety of books beyond the classroom. My hope is that they will learn to make effective selections with the books that they read in the future, and to encourage this they compile a lifetime reading list (two books a year for twenty years – at least). On our last day together they receive laminated copies of their lists.