

AP English Literature and Composition –Curriculum Map

Course Overview

AP Lit. (as our school designates the course as distinct from AP Language and Composition., which is offered in the senior year) is a junior year seminar designed to engage students in becoming more skilled readers of prose texts drawn from a range of periods, disciplines and rhetorical contexts, and to become more accomplished writers who compose for a variety of purposes.

Throughout the year, our efforts to determine what a given text might “mean” are paired with an equal emphasis on determining *how* that text manages to produce that meaning *in language*. Because these readings are intended to inform the students’ own growth as writers, students are encouraged to learn to read with a writer’s eye.

As a college-level course constructed along the guidelines described in the AP English Course Description, students are expected to invest themselves in routine reading and writing assignments over and above the level normally required of high school students (as a rule, students are expected to devote at least an hour to their course work outside of class for every hour spent in the classroom—though student workloads often exceed this ratio).

In an effort to promote their development as active readers, students, who are provided with their own copies of all readings, are expected to annotate their texts thoroughly and to produce informal written responses to them (see annotation guidelines and reading log descriptions below) prior to class discussions.

The course takes an extremely process oriented approach to the instruction of writing, and students are presented with a variety of strategies (which are understood to be recursive) for generating, drafting and revising their formal essay assignments (often, exploratory drafts are posted for peer review on our class blog

<http://lavdawgsaplitblog0910.blogspot.com>).

In addition to creating regular opportunities for peer review, student work is routinely commented upon by the instructor who, on the manuscripts themselves and in extensive endnotes, addresses both larger rhetorical issues (‘macro’ concerns such as audience, purpose, organization and development) and particular, sentence-level matters (such ‘micro’ concerns as diction, syntax, grammar, mechanics and usage). Time is routinely set aside for conferencing with students about their early drafts. Indeed, students are frequently reminded that, despite the heavy reading load, the most important “texts” in this course are the ones they themselves produce. In the case of “informed” essay assignments—those that draw on other authors’ words and views—students are instructed in, and expected to conform to the conventions of MLA in-text citation (Diana Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference* is used as an instructional resource).

Finally, A.P. Literature and Composition is taught in conjunction with A.P. U.S. History (also a junior course). These classes are scheduled back-to-back in order to facilitate team teaching in block-length periods; and while each course is taught largely independently of the other, instructors throughout the year look for intersections between both syllabi and exploit them to the greatest extent possible.

For a much more comprehensive overview of the course, and for a listing of individual assignments, please feel free to review the class website at:

<http://ap-englishliterature.tellurideschool.ths.schoolfusion.us>

Note: Where appropriate, a listing of representative readings is included after each unit. These titles may vary from year to year. An appendix listing instructional resources and including representative assignments and handouts appears at the end of this syllabus and is meant to inform the description of "Instructional Units: that follows.

Standards Addressed:

I. Oral Expression and Language Study

- 1. Oral presentations require effective presentation strategies;*
- 2. Listening critically to comprehend a speaker's message requires mental and physical strategies to direct and maintain attention.*

II. Reading for All Purposes

- 1. Increasingly complex literary elements in traditional and contemporary works of literature require scrutiny and comparison;*
- 2. Increasingly complex informational texts require mature and interpretation and study*

III. Writing and Composition

- 1. Literary or narrative texts develop a controlling idea or theme with descriptive and/or expressive language;*
- 2. Informational and persuasive texts develop a topic and establish a controlling idea or thesis with relevant support*
- 3. Writing for grammar, usage, and mechanics and clarity requires ongoing refinements and revisions.*

IV. Research and Reasoning

- 1. Informational materials, including electronic sources, need to be collected, evaluated, and analyzed for effectiveness.*
- 2. Information from primary and secondary sources is used to establish relevance, significance, and accuracy in answering research questions.*
- 3. Effective problem solving strategies require high-quality reasoning.*

Instructional Units

• Unit One: The Transcendentalists

In addition to establishing individual student's membership in a supportive community of writers, this unit is designed to get students thinking about what it means to be an American by reading a group of writers who are closely associated with the formation of the American character: The Transcendentalist. In addition, this introductory unit is intended to assist students in locating, validating and strengthening their own individual voices. Writing assignments range from relatively informal (a response, in the voice of the Dean, to Emerson's "Divinity School Address"), to exegetical (a close textual analysis of Thoreau's "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"), to 'creative non-fiction' (the personal narrative—"The Transcendentalist Essay"—that is the culminating assignment for the unit. (As a side note

Primary readings include:

Ralph Waldo Emerson,	introduction to <i>Nature</i> "The Divinity School Address" "Self-Reliance"
Luc Sante	"Be Different! (Like everybody else)
Henry David Thoreau	selections from <i>Walden</i> "Civil Disobedience" (with AP U.S.)
Walt Whitman	selections from <i>Leaves of Grass</i>
E.B. White	"A Slight Sound at Evening"
Edward Abbey	"Down the River with Henry David Thoreau"
Jon Krakauer	selections from <i>Into the Wild</i>

Standards Addressed: II & III

• Unit Two: *The Scarlet Letter* / Introduction to Fiction

Hawthorne's novel is used to examine the enactment of Transcendentalist ideals in prose fiction, and to review such central concerns of literary criticism as: symbolism, point-of-view, structure and character development. Reading log prompts (posted to our class blog) are designed to draw attention not just to the novel's thematic content, but in an effort to discern *how* these themes arise from the actual language of the text. Working collaboratively, students are required to introduce and lead discussions of individual chapters. Typically, the major essay—which is taken through multiple drafts—presents students with an opportunity to practice the time-honored pursuit of literary exegesis (typically, through a close textual analysis of a single short passage). Vocabulary is taught in the context of the novel and assessed through regular quizzes.

Primary readings include:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Ancillary readings include:

Nina Baym, "Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*"

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (excerpts)

Standards Addressed: I, II, & III

• **Unit Three: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* / Informed Persuasion**

Our reading of Twain's novel is guided primarily by the opportunity this work gives students to practice informed, persuasive writing. In addition, students are introduced to strategies for integrating another critic's words in amongst one's own language (as well as for properly citing these sources through use of MLA in-text citations). Two central (and related) questions are posed at the outset of the unit: *Is this novel racist?* and *Should it be included in the high school curriculum?* In addition to the novel itself, students read, annotate and discuss a range of critics; and after finishing, they view the PBS *Cultureshock* episode, "Born To Trouble". The culminating assignment is a 7 – 10 page essay in which students, while acknowledging the critical controversy surrounding the novel, advance their own response to the essential question posed earlier.

Primary readings include:

Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Frederick Douglass selections from *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*

Ancillary readings include:

A selection of "Early Reviews"

Lionel Trilling "A Community of Saints"

T. S. Eliot "introduction to *Huckleberry Finn*"

Leo Marx "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling and *Huckleberry Finn*"

Jane Smiley "Say it Ain't So, Huck"

In addition to these common readings, students are asked, based on their argument, to select and read two additional pieces chosen from a long list.

Standards Addressed: I, II, III & IV

• **Unit Four: *Middle Passage* / Race – A Contemporary Perspective**

We conclude our examination of the history of race in America with a quick reading of Charles Johnson's contemporary novel, *Middle Passage*. Students continue to develop their skills as close analytical readers (and adept annotators of texts), and the unit concludes with a major essay, which is taken through multiple drafts.

Primary readings include:

Charles Johnson *Middle Passage*

Standards Addressed: II & III

• **Mid-Year Exam**

Rather than assess students on the instructional content delivered to date, we use the two-hour testing block to have students sit for a partial AP Lit. exam. Drawn from released exams, this end-of-the-semester test generally consists of two multiple-choice sections paired together with two essay questions (one of which asks students to analyze a passage they have not read before, the other of which tends to be more open-ended). After the holiday break, students' performance on all sections of the exam is thoroughly reviewed during class.

Standards Addressed: II & III

• **Unit Five: Holiday Reading Assignment / The Book Review**

Prior to the holiday break, students are presented with a list of recommended works (they may lobby for an alternate title). They choose one, read it, and, upon their return present a formal review of the book to the entire class. Several representative book reviews (drawn from publications ranging from *The New Yorker* to *Time*) are presented to the students, and the organizational strategies of each is examined and discussed. After their presentations, students write and submit a formal review of the book they read over break. (See below for list of titles).

Standards Addressed: II & III

• **Unit Six: Poetry / The Art of Exegesis**

This long unit is devoted to an intensive review of poetry and its practice. Students begin with formal verse (sonnets, odes, sestinas, villanelles) and move into less formal (but every bit as structured verse). Students read from a wide selection of poems (both those included in the primary text, and selections reproduced for discussion in class). Students select a poem, present it to the class, and draft and revise a focused analysis of it. Students are also introduced to (and practice responding to) samples of the poetry free-response question drawn from past AP exams.

Primary Reading:

The Top 500 Poems the Columbia Anthology

Harold Bloom excerpts from *How to Read a Poem*

Camille Paglia excerpts from *Break, Blow, Burn*

Standards Addressed: I, II & III

• **Unit Seven: *The Great Gatsby* / Representations of the American Dream**

While we read this novel primarily as an opportunity to refine students' skill at literary analysis, we also examine—in conjunction with the A.P. U.S. History seminar—the cultural shifts in America that were taking place post-WWI during what Fitzgerald himself termed, "The Jazz Age." Students (again, in coordination with their History class) conduct extensive research on a number of subjects related to the 1920's.

Primary Readings:

F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

Standards Addressed: II & III

• **Unit Eight: *Hamlet* / How Does One Define Madness?**

In addition to reacquainting students with the fundamentals of drama in general (and of the Shakespearean theater and language in particular), we focus on the question of whether or not Hamlet (and others in the play) can be said to be mad. Students read the work aloud in class, and after our reading concludes, we view Kenneth Branagh's film version of the play. Students write yet another cogent and well-developed close analysis of a particular speech or scene.

Primary Reading:

William Shakespeare *Hamlet*

Standards Addressed: I, II & III

• **Unit Nine: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* / Contemporary Madness**

Our quick review of Kesey's contemporary take on madness includes both an examination of the similarities and differences between such characters as Chief, Hamlet, R.P. McMurphy and an overview of the Beat Generation's influence on contemporary American Fiction (our study of the 1950's and 1960's is again augmented by team-taught blocks together with our A.P. U.S. History instructor).

Primary Reading

Ken Kesey *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

Ancillary Readings

Allen Ginsberg	selected poems
Lawrence Ferlinghetti	selected poems
Thom Gunn	selected poems
Jack Kerouac	excerpts from <i>One The Road</i>

Joan Didion

"Slouching Toward Bethlehem"

Standards Addressed: II & III

• **Focused Exam Preparation**

In the weeks immediately after spring break (which at our school falls in April), our focus narrows toward specific preparation for the exam in May. Alternating between sample multiple-choice sections and essay prompts from released exams, students are given ample opportunity to hone their close reading and analytical writing skills familiarize themselves further with the exam format. Ample time is devoted to discussing and scoring sample responses produced by the students and those available at AP Central.

Standards Addressed: II & III

• **Unit Ten: The College Essay**

After sitting for the exam in May, students spend the rest of the week getting a “jump start” on their college essays. Much time is devoted to discussing issues of audience and purpose for this important writing task, and a range of application questions are reviewed and considered. Students complete a self-survey, review past writings (particularly in their journal and reading log entries), and spend time brainstorming possible topics. All students are required to produce at least one draft of an essay and to meet individually with the instructor to discuss it. In addition, students are given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the resources available in the College Counseling Office.

Standards Addressed: II & III

Appendix

Rather than attach samples of course hand-outs (essay assignments, quizzes, rubrics, instructional aids, etc.), I again invite you to visit our class webpage at the address above. There you will find numerous 'artifacts' from the course for your review.