

# AP Literature and Composition Syllabus

## Course Description

The Advanced Placement Literature and Composition course is designed under the premise that “good readers breed good writers.” To that end, we will be reading a vast array of literature of literary merit. We will analyze these works through intense literary discussion and close reading, exhaust their philosophical agenda, and use their contents to craft well thought responses that will prepare us for the AP exam – and beyond. Essentially, this class will become a thinking class – your reading will promote thinking, and your thinking will foster your writing. It is with this attitude that you must enter the class.

Our reading assignments must be handled with care. Each assessment for a longer work will include a test – one generated specifically to test that you read the novel and not merely read a computer site – and will also include an AP question (an in-class timed writing or some other evaluative writing – or rewriting to be completed for homework). There will be constant feedback on writing. Your feedback for the first handful of essays will be focused on structure, coherent and logical organization, and rendering of the question. As the year progresses, your quality of thought, specific analysis, and development of style will be the key to improvement. We will focus on the specific details (i.e., proper citing of text, elegant sentence construction, specific textual examples, worldly thought, persuasive tone, sophisticated and conscious choice of diction, etc.) A rubric generated from AP materials will be used to score your pieces.

## Long Term Assignments:

Each marking period will boast an independent reading assignment. You will be expected to read a novel of literary merit (i.e., a Nobel prize-winning author). These independent studies are meant to expand your literary horizons, inspire your literary exploration, and provide another work to add to your arsenal come exam time. Perhaps you enjoyed Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and want to read *The Bluest Eye*, or maybe you heard that Jose Saramago is an unbelievable author. In addition to a Study Guide, there will be a unique assessment to see that you captured the reading.

## Assessment:

- Writings
  - Some rewrites, some in class, some at home
  - Book assessment, close reading passage response, and poetry response
  - Late points assessed for home assignments
- Reading comprehension
  - Quotation tests, close reading multiple choice tests, True/False tests – everything is fair game
- Study Guides, journals, informal writing/analysis, etc.

The goal of this class is to immerse ourselves into the world of literature. In addition to being prepared for the exam, my aim is for students to gain a lifelong love of literature and an uncanny knack for composition.

## **Unit 1: Existence (4 weeks)**

### **Readings:**

- *Siddhartha*, Hermann Hesse
- *All the Pretty Horses*, Cormac McCarthy
- *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin
- *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac
- Excerpt from *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche

### **Essential Questions:**

- How does one measure progress? How does one know when he or she has progressed?
- Can someone's restless "soul" ever be satisfied? Are challenges infinite? Is happiness and contentedness possible?
- What motivates characters to move toward one direction or the other?

### **Assignments:**

- Prepare two in-class timed responses for the passage-based response. Use Question 2 on the 1999 and 1995 exams.
- Prepare two in-class timed responses for *All the Pretty Horses* and *Siddhartha*. Use Question 3 on the 2000 and 1996 exams.
- Students are required to develop Study Guides for each of the 4 novels that will be used to study for the AP exam. Each Study Guide will be individual to the work, but some uniform qualities such as point of view, structure, symbols, important quotes/quips, and thematic questions will be required.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.

### **Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Preparing the passage response: rendering of the question, close reading, using the text of the passage, insightful analysis, etc.
- Preparing the literature-based response: rendering of the question, using specific textual examples, avoiding plot summary, etc.
- Essay modeling via AP manual student responses, rubric, expectations, quality of thought, etc.

## **Unit 2: The Philosophy of Existentialism (2 weeks)**

### **Readings:**

- *The Stranger*, Albert Camus
- *Notes from Underground*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus

- “Psychoanalysis,” from *Literary Theory*
- Excerpt from *Sula*, Toni Morrison
- Excerpt from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon
- Excerpt from *As I Lay Dying*, William Faulkner

### Essential Questions:

- The Human Condition: Is there a purpose in life? How does one fall into the rut of stagnation? What extrinsic factors play into this condition?
- What is existentialism? Is it an optimistic or pessimistic philosophy, or both?
- Are these characters simply stagnant in the eyes of society, or are they *truly* stagnant?
- What is an anti-hero? Do Mersault and the underground man fall under the category of anti-heroes or are they the common tragic hero?
- Can we refute Camus’s or Dostoyevsky’s philosophies? Is there not some truth to what these authors are commenting about the human condition?

### Assignments:

- Prepare one in-class timed response using *Notes from Underground* to answer Question 3 on the 1989 exam.
- Prepare one passage-based timed response using the 2003 exam.
- Students will view various Question 3s from previous exams in order to gain a working knowledge of the type of questions offered on the exam. We will utilize *The Stranger* and develop outlines that would sufficiently answer these tasks.
- Students are required to develop a Study Guide for *Notes from Underground*. In addition to the previous requirements, this guide should also include a Freudian analysis section.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.

### Other Concepts and Techniques:

- Utilizing Freudian analysis to capture another perspective on a character. In this introduction to Freudian analysis, we will use Dostoyevsky’s underground man and analyze his motivations, intentions, and human instincts in Part II of the novella.
- Mastering the passage and literature-based AP essay responses. More modeling, utilizing students’ responses on previous analyses, more timed writings, etc.
- Development of the close reading skill set. Use excerpts to understand elements of indirect and direct characterization through the use of diction, tone, the foil, and point of view.

## Unit 3: Kafka and the Absurd (3 weeks)

### Readings:

- *Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka
- *The Judgment*, Franz Kafka
- *The Trial*, Franz Kafka

- Excerpt from *The Toughest Indian in the World*, Sherman Alexie
- Excerpt from *The Witness*, Katherine Anne Porter

### Essential Questions:

- What is society's role in the human condition? What factors coerce a character to act in a certain fashion?
- What role does the family play in human development? How is each protagonist motivated, influenced, and affected by their family members?
- What is the absurd? How is Kafka able to utilize the grotesque to capture his view of the human condition?
- How can we apply Freudian analysis to each of the characters, i.e., their motivations, intentions, and causes of/for their behavior?

### Assignments:

- Prepare one in-class timed response using *The Trial* to answer Question 3 on the 2000 exam.
- Prepare a Study Guide for *The Trial*. This should include a Freudian section as well as an Allegorical section.
- Students will take a stance on how *The Trial* can be read/interpreted (using a journal entry format). They might wish to explore a religious interpretation, a societal condemnation, an individual's existential conundrum, etc.
- Students will prepare one passage-based timed response using the 2006 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.

### Other Concepts and Techniques:

- Expanding the scope of Freudian analysis by capturing the family's role in Gregor Samsa's reduction to a bug.
- Defining and understanding the literary device of allegory as it pertains to Kafka's literature.
- Development of close reading skill set. Focus on imagery, review of diction and tone, contrast, social current, irony, and metaphor.

## Unit 5: Satire (2 weeks)

### Readings:

- *Candide*, Voltaire
- Excerpt from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
- *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde

### Essential Questions:

- Aside from the critique of Voltaire's contemporaries, what does Voltaire find absurd about human existence?
- How do Wilde's epigrams and Voltaire's ridiculous ironies of "everything is for the best" create such a biting satire?

- What are the universal truths discovered by these authors? Do they have a pessimistic view of the world, or are their criticisms just?

**Assignments:**

- Students will prepare one passage-based timed response using the 2002 exam.
- Prepare one in-class timed response using *Candide* to answer Question 3 on the 2004 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Understanding the elements of satire, namely tone, overstatement, understatement, irony, social current etc. Students will understand how these elements create satire.

**Unit 5: *Crime and Punishment* (2 weeks)**

**Readings:**

- *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- “Marxism,” from *Literary Theory*
- Excerpt from *The Dubliners*, James Joyce

**Essential Questions:**

- Is man morally wrong if his supposedly heinous act can better society?
- Should punishment even exist? What is due punishment? Is the internal guilt of conscience a fair enough punishment?
- What psychological takes on human nature can you derive from the novel?
- Are morals inherent, or are they created by society?

**Assignments:**

- Prepare one in-class timed response using *Crime and Punishment* to answer Question 3 on the 2003 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.
- Project on inspecting literature through the many different lenses presented in a novel. In this case, individuals will study *Crime and Punishment* through the various other characters (e.g., Sonia, Svidrigailov, etc.) whom also undergo both crime and punishment.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Utilizing Marxist interpretation to capture another perspective on a work. Exploring the historical context that shrouds Dostoyevsky’s Russian society.
- Exploring literature through different lenses.
- Development of close reading skill set. Focus on setting, conflict, symbolism, and societal pressures.

**Unit 6: Introduction to Poetry (2 weeks)**

**Readings:**

- *The Death of a Hired Man*, Robert Frost
- *Home Burial*, Robert Frost
- *The Oven Bird*, Robert Frost
- *My Last Duchess*, Robert Browning
- *The Grammarian's Funeral*, Robert Browning
- *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*, Robert Browning
- *The Hawk*, Robert Penn Warren
- *The Eagle*, Lord Alfred Tennyson
- *Those Winter Sundays*, Robert Hayden

**Essential Literary Terms:**

- This introduction to poetry will focus on the form, purpose, sound, and sense of poetry. Students will generate discussion by means of what they already know. This will begin our literary terminology base.

**Assignments:**

- Prepare one poetry-based timed response using the 1999 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Mastering the poetry-based AP essay responses. Modeling, utilizing students' responses, timed writings, text mark-up, poetry analysis modeling of *The Hawk*, literary term labeling of the thesis statement, etc.

**Unit 7: Introduction to Drama (2 weeks)**

*Please note:* At this point in the school year, poetry will be fused into each unit coupled with the literary terms that accompany each poem.

**Readings:**

- *A Doll's House*, Ibsen
- *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller
- Excerpt from *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams
- Excerpt from *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw
- *Richard Cory*, Edwin Arlington Robinson
- *There Is No Frigate Like a Book*, Emily Dickinson
- *The World is Too Much With Us*, Wordsworth
- *Come Up From the Fields, Father*, Walt Whitman

**Essential Questions:**

- What social factors play into married life? Is it possible to live without secrets, guilt, etc.?

- Are Nora and Linda both heroines? Although they are opposite ends of the spectrum, are they both respectable characters?
- How are Torvald and Willy similar? Can you feel any sympathy toward Torvald? Willy?
- How do the other characters (i.e., Biff, Happy, Krogstad, and Linda) allow for another viewpoint to stir your reaction to the characters?

**Essential Literary Terms:**

- For the poetry exercises, there will be a focus on diction, denotation, connotation, attitude, and tone with definitions, examples, and application.

**Assignments:**

- Prepare one literature-based timed response on drama using the 1995 exam.
- Prepare one poetry-based timed response using the 1991 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Utilizing Marxist interpretation to capture another perspective on a work. In this introduction to Marxist analysis, we will investigate the society pressures that have penetrated the family structures in both *A Doll's House* and *Death of a Salesman*.
- Study of drama and its literary terms and techniques, emphasizing the importance of stage directions, pathos, atmosphere, and mood.

**Unit 8: Metamorphosis (3 weeks)**

*Please note:* At this point in the school year, multiple choice practice will also be fused into our studies.

**Readings:**

- *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde
- *Beloved*, Toni Morrison
- *Calvary Crossing a Ford*, Walt Whitman
- *Sunsets*, Carl Sandburg
- *Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God*, John Donne

**Essential Questions:**

- Can authors effectively use the supernatural in literature? If so, why are we able to suspend our disbelief? How does each supernatural phenomenon create emotional suffering on others? Should we look at these presences as characters or a 5<sup>th</sup> wall?
- How can you apply Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* to Dorian Gray?
- How does Morrison so effectively capture the subtle nuances of slavery?

**Essential Literary Terms:**

- For the poetry exercises, there will be a focus on imagery and figurative language (namely paradox, irony, hyperbole, understatement) with definitions, examples, and application.

**Assignments:**

- Prepare two in-class timed response using *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Beloved* to answer Question 3 on the 2002 and 2001 exams.
- Prepare one poetry-based timed response using Question 1 on the 1995 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.
- First multiple choice trial run: 1982 exam.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Return to a Psychoanalytical investigation of the protagonist, Dorian Gray. Utilize Nietzsche's theory in his *The Birth of Tragedy* to explore Dorian Gray's transformation.
- Return to a Marxist interpretation to explore the how Morrison portrays the subtle nuances of the horrors of slavery.
- Utilize Lens theory to discuss the multiple points of view offered in *Beloved*.

**Unit 9: Tennessee Williams and the Southern Belle Archetype (2 weeks)**

**Readings:**

- *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams
- *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Tennessee Williams
- "Feminism," from *Literary Theory*
- *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost
- *A Noiseless Patient Spider*, Walt Whitman
- *The Sick Rose*, William Blake
- *Acquainted With the Night*, Robert Frost

**Essential Questions:**

- How does Williams effectively create the Southern belle archetype? What similarities can be drawn between Blanche and Maggie?
- Are these women heroines or tragic figures?
- What social factors influence this play? How does Williams denounce the conventions of love and marriage?

**Essential Literary Terms:**

- For the poetry exercises, there will be a focus on symbol and allegory with definitions, examples, and application.

**Assignments:**

- Prepare one in-class timed response using either Williams play to answer Question 3 on the 2000 and/or the 2001 exam.
- Prepare one poetry-based timed response using the 1991 exam.

- Both Study Guides should include a section on Feminism.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.
- Multiple choice practice: 1987 exam. We will break this test down upon completion and students will work in small groups to determine reasoning for some answers.

#### **Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Students will view scenes from the video versions of both *A Streetcar Named Desire* and the *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* production.
- Return to a Marxist interpretation to explore the how Williams portrays the social customs, relationships, and marriage in the South.
- Introduce Feminism as another perspective on literary critique. We will complete an in-depth study of both Blanche and Maggie.

### **Unit 10: Hemingway and the Lost Generation (3 Weeks)**

#### **Readings:**

- *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway
- *A Moveable Feast*, Ernest Hemingway
- *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*, Ernest Hemingway
- *Hills Like White Elephants*, Ernest Hemingway
- *Abraham to kill him*, Emily Dickinson
- *Leda and the Swan*, William Butler Yeats
- *Out, out -*, Robert Frost

#### **Essential Questions:**

- How do Hemingway's novels capture the Lost Generation?
- Is Hemingway chauvinistic? Does he have too much male bravado? What stance can you take on these criticisms using the novel?
- Does Lady Brett Ashley drum up any sympathy?
- How do Stein, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, and the other actors in the Lost Generation influence Hemingway?

#### **Essential Literary Terms:**

- For the poetry exercises, there will be a focus on allusion with definitions, examples, and application.

#### **Assignments:**

- Prepare one in-class timed response using *The Sun Also Rises* to answer Question 3 on the 2005 exam.
- Prepare one poetry-based timed response using the 1998 exam.
- Journals, free-writing, et al will be used for other analytical writing opportunities.
- Multiple choice practice: 1994 exam. We will break this test down upon completion and students will work in small groups to determine reasoning for some answers.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Return to a Psychoanalytical investigation of the protagonist, Jake Barnes. Utilize Nietzsche's theory in his *The Birth of Tragedy* to explore Barnes's tug of war.
- Point of view study using *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*.

**Unit 11: Marquez and Magical Surrealism (2 Weeks)****Readings:**

- *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *Innocent Endira and her Heartless Grandmother*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

**Essential Questions:**

- How does the unique structure allow Marquez to unfold his chronicle? Why does starting with the end work for this particular novella?
- What is magical surrealism? How does Marquez use it to mystify the reader? How is he able to supplant the realism to capture the reader?
- Is Santiago Nasar a tragic figure? Was he guilty of his supposed crime?
- How is society to blame for this? How is Marquez's condemnation of society relative to our world?

**Assignments:**

- Prepare one in-class timed response using *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* to answer Question 3 on the 2000 exam.
- Prepare one poetry-based timed response using the 1985 exam.
- Structural assignment to explore the anachronistic organization that befits *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.
- Multiple choice practice: 1999 exam. We will analyze smaller sections of the exam upon completion and students will work in small groups to determine a logical reasoning for their answers.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Understanding the elements of magical realism and anachronistic structure.

**Unit 12: Language and Shakespeare (4 weeks)****Readings:**

- *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare
- *Othello*, William Shakespeare
- *King Lear*, William Shakespeare

**Essential Questions:**

- Why is Shakespeare so modern? How is he the ultimate human psychologist?

- How is Shakespeare able to capture the nuances of human motivation, ambition, deceit, etc.?
- How does Shakespeare handle the treatment of females in these plays?
- How is the theme of power rampant through these plays?

**Assignments:**

- Students will be responsible for teaching a passage of each play to the class. Their analysis will uncover the language, content, and significance to the play itself.
- Continual exam practice/review. We will refine any writing deficiencies (perhaps add more in-class writings for more exam practice), begin to use our Study Guides to prepare for the Question 3 essay, and review multiple choice literary terminology and poetry/passage questions.

**Other Concepts and Techniques:**

- Return to the Psychoanalytical reading of Shakespeare. Analyze character motivations, intentions, actions, etc.

**Unit 13: School Requirements (Remainder of the school year)**

**Major assignment:**

- At this point, seniors will primarily be working on their Senior Research paper, which is a school requirement. The paper will have a 7 page requirement and be based on a thesis created by the student, inspired by a novel of choice – but could include other novels that we've read. The research and paper will be excellent preparation for college. In addition to the paper, we will tie up any loose ends regarding our school curriculum.

**Other texts used in this course but not mentioned:**

- *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*, Laurence Perrine and Thomas Arp
- *English Literature: Close Reading and Analytic Writing*, Barbara Bloy
- *Essential Literary Terms With Exercises*, Sharon Hamilton
- *English Literature and Composition: Advanced Placement Teacher Manual*, Sally and Thomas Humble
- *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan