

# AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature and Composition

## Syllabus 3

The AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature and Composition course is characterized by all those things you were wishing fervently for last year when you signed up for it: lots of reading from books that will either make your head spin or will clog you up with questions such as: “What was *that* about?” There will be lots of writing, on the average a composition every two weeks; lots of vocabulary; grammar instruction as the need dictates; and practice writing college application essays. We will discuss with verve and insight every provocative question we can come up with and in the third term, we will embark on the Poetry Project, for which you will write five two-page essays in a little over two weeks and then one 10-page essay, all on single poems by an author of your choice. In the final three weeks of the course, we will go over old AP Exams so you will not be surprised when you take the exam in early May.

Your papers will be examined for effective word choice, inventive sentence structure, effective overall organization, clear emphasis, and above all, excellence of argument, including exhaustive supportive evidence (i.e., quotations) and clear, persuasive, elegant connection of this evidence to your overall argument. [C8, C9, C10, C11, C12] Lesser “papers” will be written regularly in class to spur thinking, stimulate discussion, and focus on issues of plot, characterization, and theme. These may or may not be handed in.

You will be asked to keep a notebook (or computer file) for vocabulary, grammar, and class discussion of literature. You will also be asked to read regularly outside of class and to report on that reading in a book report once a semester. The intent of this assignment is to broaden your reading and to improve your fluency.

### Elements of the course:

- Compositions every two weeks
  1. Students will submit drafts to the instructor for comments, as well as participate in peer review. Extended papers will be revised at least once, and the final poetry paper must be revised at least twice, before editing.
  2. Late papers lose one half a grade if handed in the same day, one grade if handed in the next day, one half a grade thereafter up to two grades
- Grammar as problems arise and on your weekly vocabulary quizzes
- Weekly vocabulary!
- Periodic quizzes on reading
- Book reports, one per semester, on AP questions

**C8**—The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after the students revise their work, which help the students develop: a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively.

**C9**—The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after the students revise their work, which help the students develop: a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination.

**C10**— The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after the students revise their work, which help the students develop: logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis.

**C11**— The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after the students revise their work, which help the students develop: a balance of generalization and specific, illustrative detail.

**C12**— The AP teacher provides instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after the students revise their work, which help the students develop: an effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

- Preparation for the AP Literature and Composition Exam
- College application essay practice

## Term 1

### August 22–25

Passage from *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, Oscar Wilde (from 2006 AP exam)

Definition of Irony. Irony in characters, irony in speaker’s voice. Initial exploration of what makes a passage ironic.

### August 28–September 1: Trips Week

#### September 5–7, 11–15

*Major Barbara*, George Bernard Shaw [C1]

Continue annotations with special emphasis on irony, author’s point of view. Analysis of character. What is Barbara’s philosophy? Undershaft’s? What do the various characters at the shelter tell you about the successes and failures of the Salvation Army? In Act III, is Perivale St. Andrews the utopia it seems? How is this possible? [C5]

Discussion of genre. What is gained by telling this story as a play rather than a novel?

Students choose their own paper topics. On this paper and all papers in the course, they must support their arguments with copious quotations, carefully tying them into the discussion. Topics could include the following:

- Is Barbara a saint?
- What is the function of a minor character in the play?
- How valid is the ending? Does it work or is it forced? [C7]
- Shaw says in his preface: “If (the whole world) acted and believed as Undershaft acts and believes, the immediate result would be a revolution of incalculable beneficence.” Do you agree or disagree?
- What hole or holes do you detect in Shaw’s argument? In the process, state his argument clearly: give him the benefit of the doubt, then make your own argument. [C7]
- Compare/contrast one or more of Barbara’s and Undershaft’s beliefs. [C6]
- What does the play teach about the cultural and social values of English society at the time Shaw wrote the play? Are these values universal or are some of them bound by the historical context of the play? [C7]

**C1**—The course includes an intensive study of representative works of both British and American writers, as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth century to contemporary times.

**C5**—The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. The course requires writing to understand: informal, exploratory writing activities that enable students to discover what they think in the process of writing about their reading (such assignments could include annotation, freewriting, keeping a reading journal, and response/reaction papers).

**C7**—The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. The course requires writing to evaluate: analytical, argumentative essays in which students draw upon textual details to make and explain judgments about a work’s artistry and quality, and its social and cultural values.

**C6**—The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. The course requires writing to explain: expository, analytical essays in which students draw upon textual details to develop an extended explanation/interpretation of the meanings of a literary text.

**September 18–22, 25–29; October 2–5, 10–13, 16–20**

*All the King's Men*, Robert Penn Warren [C1]

After a class oral reading of the first page, students freewrite on the following ideas. Examine Warren's style. What do you notice about his use of language, his syntax? Any suggestions about character? Any possible symbols, foreshadowing? Tone? Mood? [C5]

Continuing reference to most recent works on Hughie Long.

Continuing freewrite topics include: What is gained by the flashbacks, by the stories within the larger story? Close reading of difficult passages. Continuing analysis of poetic devices, metaphor, imagery, and symbolism as used in prose. Once again the topic of irony will come up, in Jack's tone. What is gained by this voice? Who, ultimately, is the main character? Whose novel is it? [C5]

Examine Willie's fall; Jack's discoveries; the roles of Judge Irwin; Anne and Adam Stanton; Sadie Burke; the functions of minor characters. Spend time on humor, an elusive subject.

Students select one of the following paper topics for an extended, processed essay.

- One of the topics we have been discussing in class: Brass-Bound Idealism, the spider, the Great Twitch, the Great Sleep, Truth, Responsibility, Time History, Life, Direction—Movement Is All, Moral Neutrality
- A provocative section: Cass Mastern, the Case of the Upright Judge
- A motif: cars, eyes, lips, luna moth
- A character: the Scholarly Attorney, Judge Irwin, Sugar Boy, Sadie Burke
- A provocative line, such as the conclusion: "I could now accept the past which I had before felt was tainted and horrible." [C6]

**Term 2**

**October 23–27, 30; November 3, 6–10, 13–17**

*Sent for You Yesterday*, John Edgar Wideman [C1]

Careful analysis of another complex narrative. A good deal of time is spent unwrapping the various timelines. Why is the narrator (Doot) telling the story in this intertwined way? What do we discover about the interrelationships of the various eras, the various characters? Analysis of a different racial point of view from the earlier selections. What are the ultimate themes of the novel? Discussion of motif: e.g., how does the motif of music/piano playing contribute to the novel?

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**C6**—The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. The course requires writing to explain: expository, analytical essays in which students draw upon textual details to develop an extended explanation/interpretation of the meanings of a literary text.

Paper topics include:

1. Select one motif from the novel, examine its various appearances in the book, quote liberally, and explore what insights into the novel, the characters, the themes, and perhaps life itself (!) these appearances of the motif provide. Especially: drinking, body color, sex, sanity versus insanity, music, trains, hats, fire . . .
2. Study one chapter or one section of the novel and discuss the insights it provides into the work as a whole.
3. Explain the title of the novel.
4. How/why does Brother die? Significance?
5. What insight does the novel provide into one element (e.g., war, living conditions, jobs, family, alcohol, drugs, children, relationship with whites) of the black experience? [C2]

**C2**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the work's textual details, considering: structure, style, and themes.

### **November 20–21, 27; December 1, 4–8**

*Faust*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe [C1]

This second “play” is, in fact, rarely performed. It is as much a work of poetry as drama. Discussion again of genre: What is gained by presenting the work in this form? Considerable discussion of ellipses: major portions of the plot are missing or only implied; educated guesses about what has happened in the gaps. Freewriting and in-class timed writing will be incorporated into these discussions.

**C1**—The course includes an intensive study of representative works of both British and American writers, as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth century to contemporary times.

What is established in the Prologue in Heaven? Once again, irony/sarcasm in the voice of Mephistopheles. Comparison to the Book of Job. Careful analysis of Faust's character, his needs in the beginning. Continuing discussion of Romantic values by contrasting Wagner and Faust, by looking at the attitudes of the townspeople on Easter Day “Outside the City Gates.” What exactly is the deal struck with Mephistopheles? What is it, precisely, that Faust, at this stage, says he wants from life? Examination of the contribution of Margareta to the play. What happens to Faust at the conclusion of the play? To Margareta? What is the message here?

Paper topics include:

- What is the function of the Walpurgis Night scene?
- What is one lesson Faust appears to learn by the end of the play?
- Would you classify this play as a tragedy? If not, why do you suppose Goethe left his conclusion ambiguous?
- What is the importance of Gretchen to the play?
- How do ideas in “Outside the City Gates” get picked up later in the play?
- “Cynicism is the only sin”: explore the extent to which this statement applies to Mephistopheles.

- Define Romanticism and show how Faust develops one or more Romantic values. [C3]
- Mephistopheles is a more interesting character than Faust . . . or Faust is a deeper character than Mephistopheles.
- Compare and contrast Goethe's nineteenth-century concept of the Romantic hero to Milton's seventeenth-century portrayal of Satan in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost*. Considering each author's use of irony, how has the concept of the hero changed from Milton to Goethe? [C3]

**C3**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the works textual details, considering: the social and historical values it reflects and embodies.

### December 11–13, Review

### December 14–15, 18–20, Final Exams

## Term 3

### January 3–12

Writing period. A break to do some creative writing: fiction, poetry, personal narrative.

### January 14–19, 22–26, 29; February 2, 5–9, 19–23

Poetry Project (see enclosed): Among the poetry studied will be works by Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth, Bradstreet, Browning, Tennyson, Dickinson, Yeats, Eliot, Frost, Rich, and Dove.

*Sound and Sense*, Laurence Perrine, Thomas Arp, Greg Johnson

This is a monthlong exploration of poems technique, from denotation and connotation to imagery, metaphor, symbolism, paradox, allusion, tone, and musical devices such as alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm.

A constant theme of this unit is that merely identifying these techniques is irrelevant. What we want to try to explain is how each technique contributes to the purpose of the poem.

Students choose individual poets and write a series of six papers on the following assignments:

- Choose three or four poems by this poet and discuss, in a 2- to 3-page processed paper, what poetic techniques this author uses consistently. [C4]
- Using the same poems as above, compare and contrast the author's themes. [C2]
- Using the same poems as above, consider the historical, cultural, or social setting of their construction. What meaning do these poems have for readers of today? [C3]

**C4**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the works textual details, considering: such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone.

**C2**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the works textual details, considering: structure, style, and themes.

- Analyze one additional poem by this author in the context of the three papers above. What techniques does the author use; what are the themes; what is the social, historical, or cultural context? [C2, C3, C4]
- Using and revising material from the papers already completed, add research about the poet's life to complete a 10-page processed paper on the style, themes, and importance of this poet and this poet's works. [C6]

**C2**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the works textual details, considering: structure, style, and themes.

## February 26–March 2; March 5–8, 12–16

*Arcadia*, Tom Stoppard [C1]

Our third play is closer to contemporary, but interrelated with earlier themes as well. The topic of Romantic values is picked up again, as is irony. What is gained by setting the two time sequences against each other? How does this genre support Stoppard's purpose?

**C3**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the works textual details, considering: the social and historical values it reflects and embodies.

As this is near the end of the year and the exam is coming up, the assignment for this play attempts to tie in to more learning styles:

**C4**—The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of the works textual details, considering: such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone.

Capture some element of *Arcadia* in an artistic way (collage, drawing, music, video, play. . .). Then write a *small* (about one page) paper in which you explain the connection between your work and Stoppard's play.

Suggestions:

- Romanticism versus the Enlightenment
- Garden styles (formal English versus romantic Italian)
- Mathematical formulae. Iterated algorithms. Fermat's theorem.
- The perils of academic research
- Architecture of the period

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## Term 4 (truncated)

### March 19–23, 26–30; April 9–13

*The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James [C1]

A return to nineteenth-century syntax, vocabulary, and convolution as a final preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam. Analysis of narrative technique. What is gained by the stories within the story? What is some of the foreshadowing about the governess's character? Who is the speaker? What do we gather about the children as the story progresses? Discussion about the significance of narrator, about an unreliable narrator.

**C1**—The course includes an intensive study of representative works of both British and American writers, as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth century to contemporary times.

Paper topic:

Because the AP Exam is approaching, I use a question taken from an old exam and have the students respond to it with no books, in class, in 40 minutes (1988):

Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot. [C6]

Extended, processed essay assignment: James's style and syntax strike the modern reader as elaborate and cumbersome. If the work were simply a superior ghost story, would it still be included in required academic readings today? How does James's style contribute to the work's artistry and quality? [C7]

### **Exams: April 16–19**

Explicit Review for AP Exam: April 23–27, April 30–May 4

Review of texts covered this year. Three or four students report on each work.

Multiple-choice and essay questions practiced, essays written every night or two, returned the next day with comments but no grade (I've found the grade can shake their confidence). Students then rewrite the essay based on the comments. Each subsequent essay must incorporate practice in specific skills in which students have demonstrated weakness.

**C6**—The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. The course requires writing to explain: expository, analytical essays in which students draw upon textual details to develop an extended explanation/interpretation of the meanings of a literary text.

**C7**—The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. The course requires writing to evaluate: analytical, argumentative essays in which students draw upon textual details to make and explain judgments about a work's artistry and quality, and its social and cultural values.