

AP English Language and Composition Syllabus

COURSE OVERVIEW

In AP English Language & Composition, we will read many pieces of significant writing and will have open class discussions about them. In our discussions, we will critique literature in a mature way, delving beyond their surface meanings. Through the works of such significant authors as Plato, Sophocles, Dante, and Kingsolver, we will identify and evaluate the thread of humanity and its universal themes: survival, competition, perceptions of good/bad (i.e.: morality); perceptions of spiritual/religious existence; war; love; justice; fate; etc.

There will be frequent timed writings, many of which will be previous AP test questions; group projects will be part of some units; and we will continually review AP vocabulary and rules of grammar, especially those that will move students beyond competent writer to exceptional writer. Ideally, student writing will be succinct, lacking clichés, and will always have a point (aka “thesis”). Students will also engage in journal-type free writing, which will not be graded.

CLASS UNITS: READING/WRITING ASSIGNMENTS & CLASS PROJECTS

OUTSIDE READING

In addition to regular class reading assignments, students are expected to read an outside book each marking quarter. In total, students must read 1,000 pages per year of outside reading material. Students can choose how they wish to divide this (ex: four 250 word books, one per quarter; two 500 page books, one per semester; etc.)

Those taking the AP Exam are not required to read the 4th quarter outside reading, therefore making their outside reading requirement 750 pages per year.

I will give 5 points extra credit for each 100 extra pages read. You can carry pages over from one quarter to the next. At least one outside book must be in the genre of non-fiction (ex: history, philosophy, science, select autobiographies).

Students must select outside reading texts from the AP list (I’ll approve one off the list if it has literary merit).

SUMMER ASSIGNMENT: Epic Tale

READING: Students will read Homer’s *The Odyssey* over the summer.

REVIEW: With *The Odyssey*, students will be introduced to the epic poem and its elements: hero and heroic deeds; narrative structure; traces of the oral character; the stirring of the warrior spirit; the use of repetition and other traditional verbal formulas; and the represented union between mortal and divine. Also students will define allegory

and allusion, finding examples of each within *The Odyssey*. We will review all of this in the fall.

WRITING: A timed write + short quiz on *The Odyssey* will be given during the second week of school, worth a total of 100 points.

SEPTEMBER: Mythology Overview

READING: Edith Hamilton's *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* and Hesiod's "Works and Days."

REVIEW: We will review the stories in *Mythology* and talk about key themes of Greek myths: oral traditions, 'might over right,' playing people as pawns, early religion & connections with nature, war, etc. With "Works and Days," we will review mythological characters and their impact on the masses and review social class- and work-value systems of the time (8th/7th-century B.C.).

WRITING: The exam on these texts will include a timed write, as well as short answer questions.

CLASS PROJECT: In small groups, students will perform a creative interpretation of one or more mythological stories found in *Mythology*. Presentations must include the following:

- **class performance** equaling 2-4 minutes per group member or a previously-recorded performance equaling this time;
- a 1 page **written overview** of the project, including the names of the group members;
- a **visual**, ex: poster board, art work, etc. Note: power point slides can count as the 'visual' element only if they are not part of the performance. (You'd have to add something to the end of the slide show to count it as the visual.)

AP REVIEW: We will review AP Language vocabulary/terms and apply them to *The Odyssey* and "Works & Days."

EARLY OCTOBER: Ancient Greek Tragedy & Democracy

READING: Aeschylus *The Orestia* + Sophocles *Oedipus the King*. Solon's Laws vs. Draco's Laws.

REVIEW: Early Greek tragedy influenced nearly everything that came after. Here there is high drama at its best: family feuds; quests for money & power; lovers' quarrels; betrayal; murder; and more. Also, there is often a seamless format to these Greek

classics. Elements of the early Greek tragedy's format include imitation, rhythm, melody, and, if it is truly great, catharsis.

We will also review the early evolution of the theatre and the emergence of Athenian democracy. We will evaluate Solon's laws vs. Draco's laws, as well as early Athenian democracy vs. modern U.S. democracy.

WRITING: There will be a journal entry on thoughts of Athenian vs. American democracy and one on Solon's vs. Draco's laws (these writings will be used as starting points to classroom conversations on the topics).

There will be a comprehensive examination, including a timed write, on ancient Greek tragedy, theatre & democracy. Homer and Hesiod will be on this examination.

LATE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER: The Ideal Republic

READING: Parts of Plato's *Republic* and Simon Blackburn's *Plato's Republic: A Biography*. We will also read small pieces by/about Aristotle, Epicurus, and others.

REVIEW: Plato's ideas have been heavily criticized. For one, he wished to banish poets (for the good of State). To deconstruct Plato's State one must evaluate justice, good/evil, religion, freedom, community, and relationships. Also, whether or not Plato's ideas of State ought to be taken literally is a question that must be addressed.

Class discussions will be plentiful and lively and will focus heavily on ideas of justice, humanity, spiritual/religious perspectives of the time, and society.

WRITING: There will be a journal entry concerning Plato's ideal Republic. There also will be an exam on Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and others that will include a timed write and short answer questions.

AP REVIEW: We will take a section of a previous AP exam (multiple-choice) together, as a class, and then review the answers.

DECEMBER: From Greek to Roman

READING: Virgil's *The Aeneid* (book 6) and Dante's *The Inferno*

REVIEW 1: Students will evaluate Roman myths (comparing them to Greek myths) and re-visit the epic poem. We will use *Mythology* and *The Odyssey* in our review.

PARTNER PROJECT: Using Hamilton's *Mythology*, *The Odyssey*, and the Internet, students will deconstruct *The Aeneid's* mythological characters and representation of the afterlife.

WRITING 1: Students will write journal entries comparing/contrasting Greek and Roman epic tales, mythological understandings, and beliefs in the afterlife.

REVIEW 2: Dante's *Inferno* brings out questions of religion, politics, and love. Students will evaluate these elements. The origins of Christianity will be evaluated from an academic, non-denominational perspective. We will also discuss the Middle Ages.

CLASS PROJECT: In small groups, students will give presentations on one of Dante's circles of hell. Presentations must include the following:

- **class presentation** equaling 2-4 minutes per group member or a previously-recorded performance equaling this time;
- a 1 page **written overview** of the project, including the names of the group members;
- a **visual** (ex: poster board, art work, etc. Note: power point slides can count as the 'visual' element only if they are not part of the performance. You'll have to add something to the end of the slide show to count it as the visual).

AP REVIEW: We will review old and new AP vocabulary terms, applying them to all we have read so far.

JANUARY: End of Darkness, a Rebirth Occurs

READING: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (sections of) + Shakespeare's *Othello*.

REVIEW I: Each student will read a story or two (depending on length) of *Canterbury Tales*. Discussion will be centered on similar themes we discussed with Dante: religion, politics, love (and human nature). Also, the Middle Ages will be discussed in greater detail.

WRITING I: As a class, we will look at a piece of *Canterbury Tales* written in Middle English. Individually, students will interpret the piece on paper, and then share with a partner. Partners will combine their interpretations to create a final interpretation, and then share with the entire class. Last, students will receive a published interpretation of the piece, comparing it to theirs.

INDIVIDUAL PROJECT: Students must hand in a 1 page summary of the tale they read, and share the story with the class (without using notes).

REVIEW II: As a class, we will read *Othello*. Meanwhile, we will heavily review Shakespearean vocabulary, with regular vocabulary quizzes. The transformation from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance will also be covered.

WRITING II: There will be an exam, including a timed write, for *Othello* and the emergence from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

AP REVIEW: Students will pair up and take a section of a previous AP exam (multiple-choice) together; we will review the answers as a class.

EARLY FEBRUARY: Practicality versus Sentimentality

READING: Parts of Voltaire's *Candide* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as well as a sample of Enlightenment and Romantic essays.

REVIEW: There will be a focus on The Age of Enlightenment versus the Romantic Period. While even a first kiss is described in a systematic way in *Candide*, the most routine activities are often described with great sentiment by Romantic writers.

LATE FEBRUARY: A Brief Look at Transcendentalists

READING: Students will read a sample of transcendentalist work, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Peabody.

REVIEW: We will fully define transcendentalism and utopia. Conversation will include contrasts to Industrial Age thinking, as well as comparisons/contrasts to Plato's ideal republic.

WRITING: Students will write journal entries on transcendentalism and utopia. There will be a timed write based on a previous AP exam that looks at any of the philosophies we have studied so far.

AP REVIEW: Students will take sections of previous AP exams on their own, and grade themselves.

MARCH: Becoming Visible

READING: Alex Haley/Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

REVIEW: We will review the American Civil Rights movement, comparing different approaches to overcoming racism. We will read MLK's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," watch parts of *Eyes on the Prize*, and talk about existentialism and the Beat Movement. We will read a part of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and watch the 30-minute video, *Becoming Visible* (Oregon Public Broadcasting), which highlights existential writers, including Ellison. We will also spend time reviewing all of the pieces of literary history we have studied so far (from ancient Greeks to existentialism), and discuss major themes of these times.

WRITING: There will be an examination with a timed write and short answer questions.

AP REVIEW: We will review old and new AP vocabulary terms, applying them to all we have read so far.

APRIL-MAY: Modern Interpretations of Ancient Cultures

READING: Barbara Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible* and Debra Magpie Earling's *Perma Red*.

WRITING: All writing will be directly relevant to preparing for the AP Language exam.

REVIEW: For both books, we will look at such themes as imperialism, domination, coming of age, humanity, religion/spirituality, etc. We will also take sections from the Old Testament and compare them to the sections and content of *Poisonwood Bible*. For *Perma Red*, we will read historical information about Native Americans, and in particular, about the Flathead Indian Reservation.

AP REVIEW: There will be practice AP exams, peer-editing, and rewrites.

JUNE: Short Stories/Contemporary Essays

READING: Various pieces by contemporary short story writers (Lorrie Moore, Elizabeth McCracken, Richard Russo, etc.) and essayists.

REVIEW: AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION EXAMINATION

While we will spend some time every month reviewing for the AP exam, we will spend the final month of class reviewing heavily. Our review for the exam will consist of the following:

- Reviewing the major literary historical moments: students will be expected to know the general date of major writers and the literary moments in which they existed. In this unit, we will look at the following literary moments:
 - Greek
 - Roman
 - Middle Ages
 - Renaissance
 - Age of Enlightenment
 - Romantic Period
 - Transcendentalism & Realist/Naturalism
 - Modern Period (including existentialism)

As students will have read from most of these periods throughout the year, they should have direct familiarity of each.

- Reviewing the evolution of rhetoric. In this unit, we will deconstruct the rhetorical devices of the writers we've studied throughout the year. We'll also review AP vocabulary.

- Practice previous AP exams.
- When students take timed writes during this month, they'll workshop each others' essays each time.