

Hamilton High School
Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition
Course Description 2011-12

AP English Lit and Comp is a yearlong class designed to help you become better at two of the most important skills you need in order to survive in the world today: reading and writing. Hence, the primary goals of this class are to engage you in a careful study of literature and to help you learn how to knowledgeably write in response to that literature.

This class, however, goes a step beyond the typical high school English class as it is designed to demand of you what a college-level English class would demand. In addition, another major goal of this class is to give you the ability and confidence to perform well on the national AP English Literature and Composition exam in early May of 2012.

Reading:

C.S. Lewis once said, “Those of us who have been true readers all of our life seldom fully realize the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors. We realize it best when we talk to an unliterary friend. He may be full of goodness and good sense, but he inhabits a tiny world...The person who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is in prison. My own eyes are not enough for me; I will see through a thousand and yet remain myself...I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, I transcend myself...”

The works we will read are your teachers. I’ll try to “open them up.” If you give any literature a chance, it just might make you think in a way you haven’t thought before; it might open your mind to new insights. Let it.

Part of my job is to keep good literature alive. It is “good” not just because it entertains us (although it might). It is good because it captures history and culture, lets us travel to places we’ve never been, lets us laugh or be bothered, lets us meet people we’ve never heard of, and lets us think thoughts that have never occurred to us before.

Writing:

Through the materials covered in this class, you will become a better writer. I don’t assume we all start at the same place; I don’t assume we’ll end up with similar talents. I can only take you along a bit. That “bit” might only be a bunt, it might be a Texas-leaguer, or it might be a line shot off the wall, but my positive expectation for you is that you will improve.

The writing we do will be inspired by the literature we read. We’ll respond personally, critically, factually, creatively, and intellectually.

Outcomes:

What are the outcomes we want to attain? Through this class I'd like you to become a better communicator (of written and spoken English), a critical thinker, a collaborative contributor (working with others productively), a creative producer, a problem solver, a goal setter and pursuer, and a conscientious achiever. In the end, the key is that you come to see reading and writing as worthwhile, pleasurable, lifelong activities. Obviously, in addition to all that, I'd like you to feel prepared and confident as you approach the AP English Literature and Composition exam.

Overall AP Goals:

All of your Hamilton High School AP teachers met this past summer to discuss what our overall goals should be in teaching AP courses. Here is what we agreed upon:

- * We should encourage as many students as possible to take AP classes.
- * We should strive to make each course the best possible college-level class for students, so that whether they do well or they do poorly on the actual AP exam, they still have had a challenging but worthwhile classroom and educational experience.
- * We should encourage all AP students to actually take their respective AP exams in May.
- * We should help as many students as possible to achieve a score of a 3 or better (out of 5) on any AP exams they take.

Exam Preparation:

We'll work on "direct" exam preparation an average of about one class period per week. Dissection of past AP exams, timed answering of multiple-choice samples, timed "unseen" essay writing, and test-taking tips and suggestions will be the core of our direct exam preparation. That means we'll spend about 80% of our time reading, discussing, and writing about literature (which is, of course, also exam preparation) and about 20% of our time directly gearing up for the AP exam itself.

Calendar:

We'll have several "experiences" as we go through our year together. They will include the following:

First Trimester

I. The Introduction Experience (a class period or two)

Why do this AP stuff?

What does the exam look like?

What if I do well on the exam in May?

What if I don't do so well?

return of summer AP reading and writing opportunities

- II. The Revolutionary Experience (about 20 class periods?)
 - historical background
 - A Tale of Two Cities -- Dickens
 - written response via “thought questions” project and sharing assessment
 - AP exam practice

- III. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
 - Sound and Sense Chapters 1 and 2
 - “poetry group” work

- IV. The Becoming a Person Experience (about 15 class periods?)
 - historical background
 - A Lesson Before Dying -- Gaines
 - written response via “thought questions” project and sharing assessment
 - AP exam practice

- V. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
 - Sound and Sense Chapters 3 and 4
 - “poetry group” work

- VI. The Greek Experience (about 15 class periods?)
 - historical background
 - The Odyssey -- Homer
 - written response via “thought questions” project and sharing assessment
 - AP exam practice

- VII. Exam preparation and administration

Second Trimester

- VIII. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
 - Sound and Sense Chapters 5 and 6
 - “poetry group” work

- IX. The Moral Experience (about 15 class periods?)
 - historical background
 - Macbeth -- Shakespeare
 - written response via “thought questions” project and sharing assessment
 - AP exam practice

- X. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
Sound and Sense Chapters 7 and 8
“poetry group” work
- XI. The Mental Health Experience (about 17 class periods?)
historical background
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest -- Kesey
written response via “thought questions” project and sharing
assessment
AP exam practice
- XII. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
Sound and Sense Chapters 9 and 10
“poetry group” work
- XIII. The Atonement Experience (about 17 class periods?)
A Thousand Splendid Suns -- Hosseini
historical background
written response via “thought questions” project and sharing
assessment
AP exam practice
- XIV. Exam preparation and administration (a few class periods)

Third Trimester

- XV. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
Sound and Sense Chapters 11 and 12
“poetry group” work
- XVI. The Coming of Age Experience (about 12 class periods?)
The Catcher in the Rye -- Salinger *or* Angela’s Ashes -- McCourt
historical background
written response via “thought questions” project and sharing
assessment
AP exam practice
- XVII. The Poetic Experience (a few class periods)
Sound and Sense Chapters 13 and 14
“poetry group” work

- XVIII. The Book Club Choice Experience (as in select a small group of people and then pick a book from a list I will give to you)
or The Rewind Experience (as in revisit one of three classics from your past in preparation for the AP exam [To Kill a Mockingbird, or The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn or Lord of the Flies])
written and verbal response
teach us/remind us about an author and her/his novel or play(?)
- XIX. The Poetic Experience (a class period)
Sound and Sense Chapter 15
“poetry group” work
- XX. The American Values Experience (about 12 class periods?)
The Great Gatsby -- Fitzgerald
written response via “thought questions” project and sharing
assessment
AP exam practice
- XXI. The Advanced Placement Exam Review Experience (about 7 class periods?)

(Post-AP Exam...)
- XXII. The Research Experience (a few days)
background
read about writing a social research paper and look at student
samples
- XXIII. The Graduation and Getting on with Real Life Experience—late May 2012

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(times I'm available to help/ talk to you _____)

(P.S. Although this reading list and the order we will follow is pretty well set, it is possible that a title or two of the literature listed above may be replaced by another of equal literary merit. You may also be asked to read other pieces of literature outside of class *in addition to the piece we are reading together.*)