

# AP English Literature & Composition Syllabus

## Course Description

This course is designed to engage students in study, discussion, critical analysis, and writing about selections of American and British literature. Works also span the scope of time from early pieces ranging from *Beowulf and Canterbury Tales* to Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. The choice of works is designed and taught by units so selections can be changed and updated yearly when desired. Works attempt to cover a variety of genre, giving students an overview of literature. With each selection, students look and discuss the historical times in which the piece was written, author information, and the social impact of the piece, along with the elements of style, tone, theme, symbolism, imagery, etc. With each selection studied, students write for understanding, explanation, or evaluation either in class or outside class. Culmination of the course comes when students take the AP Literature and Composition Exam given in May. Our goal is to strive to achieve a score of a 3 – 5 on the exam to enable students to be granted credit at most colleges and universities.

The course begins looking at terms used throughout the year in poetry, plays, novels, and the short story. Students also build their writing skills and vocabulary throughout the year with the use of Arp and Johnson's *The Art of Styling Sentences* and Shostak's *Sadlier – Oxford Vocabulary Workshop, Level H*. Learned style and sentence structure, along with new vocabulary, are expected to be used in the students writing. Students practice new skills within the context of their writing assignments.

Students are expected to read each selection in its entirety (except as noted). This course requires more reading than most classes, so students are expected to pace themselves to the rigorous amount of reading required for the class.

## Course goals

- To provide students with a foundation of literature allowing them to understand themselves and others
- To understand how writers use language to provide meaning and pleasure
- To see how authors use a variety of style, structure, themes, tone, figurative language, imagery, and symbolism
- To study works from a variety of genres and time periods ranging from the sixteenth century to current times
- To consider the social and historical value of a selection of literature and application of the effects of that work on today's society
- To write focusing on critical analysis of literature which includes expository, analytical, and argumentative essays as well as creative expressions and to effectively be able to prove one's point with supportive arguments from a selection
- To provide students with a love of the written word

## Required Texts and Materials

Students are provided with a personal copy of each of the texts, novels, plays, short stories, and poems used in this course. Selection of material is based on requirements for this class and what our students have read in their past courses to avoid repetition yet cover as much material as possible. Our school purchases the books for students so each will have the same version. Short stories are accessed on line.

- Arp, Thomas R. and Greg Johnson. *Perrine's Sound and Sense, Volume 10* Boston, MA: Wadsona Division of Thomas Learning, Inc., 2002.
- Shostak, Jerome. *Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop, Level H*. NY, NY: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 2005.
- *The Art of Styling Sentences*, Longknife and Sullivan
- *Metamorphosis*, Kafka
- *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen
- *Beowulf*
- *The Canterbury Tales* (Prologue, The Nun's Priest's Tale, The Knight's Tale), Chaucer
- *Macbeth*, Shakespeare
- *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald
- *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift
- *1984*, Orwell
- *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison
- *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*
- Various short stories and additional poems provided by teacher for each student
- In class handouts

By teaching the class in units based on novels, opportunity is given to add or subtract selections. We have already decided to add Chopin's *The Awakening* for next year.

## Performance Tasks:

- Timed essays based on AP prompts
- Written essays based on critical thinking
- Reading, analyzing, discussing of novels, drama, short stories and poetry from various time periods in history
- Creative and imaginative writing
- Literary analysis papers – expository and persuasive
- Paragraph responses
- Poetry Circle leaders
- Test and Quizzes
- Practice AP tests (3)

All written assignments have a rubric. Requirements for each paper are clearly reviewed before papers are written and submitted for a grade. Teacher feedback, and at times peer feedback, is given. Following feedback of larger papers, revision is expected and a rewritten copy will be turned in to the teacher.

## Course Planner/Student Activities

Writing and vocabulary are incorporated throughout the entire course. Writing assignments, both group and individual, are given with every book we read and discuss. Ample writing assignments of varying types can be seen within the activities for each unit. Also, throughout the year we cover Longknife and Sullivan's book, *The Art of Writing Sentences*. We read and practice two chapters at a time with students writing examples of each type of sentence covered in the book and then incorporating these within their written papers for class.

Students work independently through the vocabulary book, *Sadlier and Oxford Vocabulary Workshop, Level H*, completing assignments involving word use, synonyms and antonyms, word associations, and choice and variances. Quizzes, tests, and practice of learned words follows units. Students are then encouraged to use these words in their papers and discussions.

Topic/Unit: Poetry  
Each Friday

Does this song or piece of poetry honor God?

Is this piece of poetry Christian in nature?

Can one learn anything on morality in this selection?

For the first two months of class I teach poetry every Friday. We do poetry circles where students can face each other for open discussion and reading of the poems. Emphasis is placed upon students to respond and reflect on the poetry read. Figurative language, poetic terms, rhyming patterns, imagery, and interpretation are examined each Friday. Although we use *Perrine's Sound and Sense*, I have collected various poems from past AP tests and classes taken over the years to broaden their sense of types and genres of poems.

In November I then assign each student a Friday to be "Poet Laureate" of the week. They must choose a poem and prepare to lead the class in analysis and discussion. They are expected to know information of the author of their poem and poetic devices used within their poem. Much emphasis is placed on interpretation and devices used by the poet. The students are graded on participation and preparation as well as their skills in finding poetic tone, imagery, etc. "Poet Laureates" are expected to have copies of the poem ready for the class and to turn in a copy to me two days in advance of their presentation. I then have another poem ready for discussion as we try to cover two poems each week. Some poems are dealt with individually while others are viewed in pairs. Throughout the year we write comparison and contrasting essays of poems given the students. Students also write twice on their interpretations of poems in a timed essay asking specifically of the tone, imagery, figurative language used, and symbolism and then of interpretation of author's feelings.

Students are encouraged to write poetry for enjoyment. Some chose to share their works during Poetry Fridays.

Topic/Unit: Summer Reading  
1 – 2 weeks

**Do these selections display any Christian characters?  
What moral or theme pervades in these selections?**

We begin the fall semester with discussion and writing on the summer readings of *Metamorphosis* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Both selections lend well to discussion of themes and author interpretation of people, society of the times, change, and reactions to their fellowman.

- Discussion of change and society ignorance
- Song and-or movie titles that pertain to the books/characters
- Groups of three write and revise papers on points one can prove on the topics of pride and prejudice based on Austen's book

These first two weeks allow students ample time to get familiar with the format of how the class will run in terms of discussion time, writing time, and how to pace oneself for reading and writing the amount of required elements in the class.

Topic/Unit: The Short Story  
2 weeks

**Do these selections show a moral?  
How important is life/death to the characters involved in this selection?  
Have you made a decision to follow Christ?**

- What is the short story?
- Importance of the short story to literature as a whole
- Elements of tone, conflict, theme, character development, emotion, imagery and tradition
- Writing assignments on all short stories based on prompts to get the reader to think and answer critical questions
- Students create multiple choice questions based on word meaning, characters, emotion, tone, and conflict of the pieces read

I assign short stories I have collected throughout the years. These stories work well for one and two day assignments and especially for large group discussion. Some stories such as Cheever's "The Reunion" are read by the class orally as the characters involved in the story plus a narrator. This gives the students a feel for the selection and emotions involved. Stories are chosen based on vocabulary, themes, and authors from both Britain and America.

Topic/Unit: *Beowulf* – the Epic Poem  
3 – 4 weeks

How is Christianity advanced in the story of *Beowulf*?  
Was this selection written by a Christian?

- What is the Epic poem?
- Definition of terms
- Look at Old English
- Genealogies of Danes, Geats, and Swedes
- Emphasis on symbolism, structure, style, irony, and historical value
- Creation of “playdough Grendels” and written descriptions as to how they fit the character
- Look at the role of Christianity in *Beowulf*
- Oral group presentation showing tone, theme, content and conflict of sections portrayed; visual required and evaluation of section by classmates
- Expository paper on student’s choice of historical value to the time or on symbolic elements within the piece

Topic/Unit: *The Canterbury Tales*  
4 weeks

What was happening in Christianity that upset Chaucer?  
Do his characters reflect Christian values?

- Background information on Geoffrey Chaucer
- Look at the role of Chivalry in society
- Look at Medieval England and the church
- Listen to the Prologue in Middle English and Modern English
- Analysis paper of one of the tales showing understanding of the meaning of the tale
- Project with choice of illustrating artistically a tale, writing a new tale from a modern perspective, or written analysis of an additional tale
- Oral project of Prologue character analysis in teams of two covering background, strengths and weaknesses, insight to the soul of the character, irony of employment/profession and actual performance of duties, Chaucer’s tone toward character, and contemporary example of characters presented (each team assigned two character to present)
- Test

In this unit required reading is that of the Prologue and two of the tales as stated above.

Topic/Unit: *Macbeth*  
4 weeks

How do poor motives change people?  
Can bad masquerade as good?  
How do Christians keep their focus on God?

- Author background and video on Shakespeare
- In depth look at the characters, themes, tone, and symbolic use of witchcraft

- Listen to audio version of *Macbeth*, study questions accompany acts
- Look at the elements of tragedy and discuss the importance of the tragic flaw
- Students memorize and recite dagger soliloquy of Macbeth from *Macbeth*
- Informal expository paper on a character in *Macbeth*, appearances may be deceiving and application to how that theme fits, or dealing with evil masquerading as good
- Test and quizzes
- Students made a new movie of *Macbeth*

Between these two units, we start to prepare for the AP Exam by taking the first of three practice exams. Tests were given in segments and discussed in class (4 days of testing with one day for multiple choice followed by the three essays). We also look at how to best prepare for the tests by review of terms, reading what is asked, and going over the results of student performance both as a group and individually.

Topic/Unit: *The Great Gatsby*

4 weeks

How did the focus on materialism of the Jazz age affect Christianity?  
What happens when we remove our focus from God?

- Author information of F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Look at 1920's and a mirror of society in terms of politics, economics, materialism, national issues and post WWI America
- Group character analysis presented orally with collage of their character
- Emphasis on tone, symbolism, syntax, theme, and historical value
- Analytical paper required to explain textual quotes and historical context to the times
- Test and quizzes

Topic/Unit: *Gulliver's Travels* (sections only)

2 weeks (due to time constraints we choose to read sections only of this book and do an overview rather than complete in depth look into this selection)

Is there room for satire in religion?

- Author information on Jonathan Swift
- Emphasis on satire, language, historical and political context to the times
- Video of *Gulliver's Travels*
- Look at modern political satire and political cartoons
- Students try their hand at drawing and writing satire and cartoons

Topic/Unit: *1984*

4 weeks

Is Christianity authoritarian?  
Do politics/government and Christianity mix?

- Author information on George Orwell
- Build historical timeline for the year 1984
- Look at socialism, communism and democracy

- Group work by sections of the book in terms of character, themes, and philosophy with oral presentations
- Discussion of language and vocabulary (Newspeak) and effects of torture on humans
- Timed in class essays to write based on characters and political ideas
- Test and quizzes

We spend another week to a week and a half on preparation and practice test taking for the AP exam where we take both the multiple choice type of timed test and complete three timed writings of essays dealing the a poem, written selection and novel. We also spend time in going over the types of questions, how to eliminate answers in multiple choice tests, and review of tests we take.

Topic/Unit: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

4 weeks

How do we deal with a sinful world as Christians?  
 Can we hide from uncomfortable moral issues in today's society?  
 As Christians how can we change the world?  
 What motivates characters/people to sin?

- Author information on Zora Neale Hurston
- Look at work in terms of themes, symbolism, character development, figurative language, and social issues
- Discussion of effects of powerlessness in any relationship
- Extensive look at social and cultural values
- Create group newspapers (all assigned articles) from the aspect of particular characters in the book; each paper will include an editorial by the group character assigned, information article involving research on theme issue involving the character assigned, informative article involving newsworthy happening to the character, and an article on Zora Hurston. Creativity is awarded for extras such as ads, puzzles, etc. found in a newspaper and relating to the characters.
- Tests and quizzes

Topic/Unit: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

4 -5 weeks

Do Christians allow double standards?  
 Do Christians look at people differently if they come from a poor or wealthy background?  
 How does social status affect people?  
 What do we do if the "church" hurts us in some way?

- Author information on Thomas Hardy
- Look at work in terms of symbols, themes, language, and social status
- Discussion often makes it way to why double standards are acceptable
- Video of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*
- Analytical paper on comparison and contrasting characters

- Essay test and quizzes

A final third practice time for AP exam is given with timed multiple choice test and three essay tests as described earlier with time for feedback on each section.

## Grading

Our year is divided into four 9-week quarters. My goal is for improvement to take place. Motivation, participation, adherence to the reading and discussion are all factors taken into account in grading for this class. Given the unique nature of this class, grading is based on class discussion, participation, written essays, test, projects and other assignments given. Participation and reading are keys. The class is geared for those motivated to take an in-depth look at literature. I am really interested in true learning taking place more than I am grades. I believe this is a demanding class. Just taking it shows the caliber of the student. Expectations for a college level class involve the responsibility of the student accepting the rigor of the work, thinking, and stretching their thoughts on more mature literary works.

Emphasis in grading is based on writing assignments and testing. Rubrics specifically emphasize grammar, vocabulary, specific sentence structure and variety, and content and proof of point.

Course Work	Percent of Grade
In class writings, projects, activities	30%
Tests and quizzes	40%
Out of class writings and assignments (homework and readings)	30%

Numerical Average	Letter Grade
93 – 100	A
85 – 92	B
76 – 84	C
70 – 75	D
Below 70	F
No work submitted	No Credit - 0

