

## AP ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABUS

As an AP Literature student you will be asked to perform at a consistently higher level in reading, writing, and thinking. You will be expected to show consistent improvement in those three areas. My job is to supply the materials, feedback, instruction, and ample opportunities to strengthen your ability to read and understand challenging literature as well as effectively and expertly communicate that understanding to a variety of audiences.

Although the course interweaves reading, writing, and thinking, for the purpose of explanation I will now separate the syllabus into these components.

### Reading

Every year the reading list in this class changes. The basis of the course-reading list comes from the *AP English Course Description* “Representative Authors” section (which you are free to borrow and read). Not everything we read this year is by an author on that list, but nearly everything will be in the same quality range as the work that those authors write. If we do read something that is overly simplistic or just plain bad, I will expect you to analyze it with the same effort and enthusiasm that you would any of the classics. Recently one of the greatest violinists in the world went down into the subways of Washington, D.C. He played for a little less than an hour as over a thousand people walked by . . . and nobody noticed. If you see great writing written on the bathroom wall, I want you to have the skills and confidence to recognize it as such.

This can be especially challenging when it comes to reading and analyzing poetry. I have heard many intelligent, baffled students utter, “I don’t get it” time and again when confronted by poetry, simply because they do not have the techniques, tools, and terminology. This course will give you the three “T’s” and plenty of opportunity to practice them.

We will also read essays, short stories, speeches, and other short prose works. The selections vary greatly each year. Most likely some of the material that we read in this shorter prose category has not yet been written.

## **Writing**

We will write nearly every class. (80 minute classes every other day) In class essays may address specific or general topics. They may be creative writing assignments that help you understand a point of view, a style, a tone, or some other literary element. Some will be passed in and graded for content and mechanics, some will be peer reviewed, and some will be read aloud and/or discussed by you or a classmate. At the end of a two-week period, you and I will discuss your essays and decide together which one you should revise into a full-length essay. The due date for the reworked essay will be set during our conference. After that essay is read and graded, you may be given another chance to make it even better. We will use Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* (Third Edition) as our mechanics and usage guide.

## **Thinking**

Although it is impossible for me to crawl inside your head with my grade book and check for any activity, the more you think, the better you will do in class. "I have never thought about that before" beats "I don't think like that" every time.

In class discussion provides a great opportunity to toss around new and different ideas. I consider a great class one in which I throw out an idea or topic and sit back for the rest of the block and listen to the lively conversation that ensues.

## **Other**

If the discussion lags or the quality of the in class writings lead me to doubt whether the class is keeping up with the reading, quizzes announced or unannounced will become necessary.

Vocabulary will be from the texts we read. The vocabulary will consist not only of words taken directly from the texts, but also ideas that are raised by the texts, and literary terms that fit the text.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

### *Drama*

Shakespeare. By the time you finish this course you should have a strong command of at least four Shakespeare plays. We will read two as a class and two you will already have read before the class starts. This year the four plays are *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.

### *Poetry*

Poems will be assigned from the *Norton's Introduction to Literature (Eighth Edition)* and also handouts. I like to study them in reverse chronological order, so we will read the more modern ones first quarter and work our way back through time until we finish up in the sixteenth century. Poets we will read this term may include Seamus Heaney, Maya Angelou, Bob Dylan, Marge Piercy, Derek Walcott, and Adrienne Rich.

You will subscribe to "The Writer's Almanac" online newsletter. Read or listen to the daily entry. Unlike the poetry we will read from *Norton's*, some of the poetry selections are of questionable merit. Do not be afraid to say a poem is flawed if you are able to substantiate your opinion.

### *Writing*

You will have to answer in class essay questions about Shakespeare's plays. The test questions attempt to copy the form and substance of the AP Test essay questions.

In class, you may be asked to convert a passage from Shakespeare into prose. You may also be asked to take a prose passage and convert it into iambic pentameter.

Written reactions to the poems we read will start as open-ended assignments but then become more specific. For example, at the beginning of the year I may ask you how you feel about Seamus Heaney's "Mid-Term Break." A few weeks into the class I will ask you what the tone of the poem is. A few months later, I will ask how the poet establishes the tone through diction and imagery and ask you to support your answer with specifics from the poem.

Three of those written responses will become longer, take-home essays.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter**

### ***Novels***

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison

*All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren

### ***Poetry***

Poets we will read this term may include Dylan Thomas, William Butler Yeats, E. A. Robinson, and W. H. Auden.

### ***Writing***

Some past essay topics are\*:

1. Choose one passage from *Beloved* and one from *All the King's Men* and compare the authors' use of concrete and abstract language to establish tone.
2. Jack Burden tells the narrative of *All the King's Men*. Analyze Robert Penn Warren's choice of narrator with respect to tone, style, and diction.
3. Rewrite a passage from Toni Morrison in the style of Robert Penn Warren or vice versa.

\*There will be many others.

Three of those written responses will become longer, take-home essays.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter**

### ***Novels***

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

*Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie

### ***Poetry***

Poets we will read this term may include Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth, and Christina Rossetti.

### ***Writing***

Some past essay topics are\*:

1. Compare the styles of Rushdie and Garcia Marquez.
2. Select two American poets we have read this year and compare their work to that of two British poets we have read.
3. You are a detective assigned to the murder case of Jose Arcadio.

Using only clues from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, common knowledge, and logic, tell me who the murderer is.

\*There will be many others.

Three of those written responses will become longer, take-home essays.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Quarter**

#### ***Reading***

(Texts in Translation)

*Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse

*The Stranger* by Albert Camus

*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

By reading texts in translation, many interesting didactic questions arise. Gabriel Garcia Marquez said he preferred the English translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to his original Spanish. Not all authors are that happy with their translators. These shorter texts give us a chance to look at different possibilities of translating, interpreting, and, ultimately, reading texts. The shorter reading assignments also allow us time to prepare for the upcoming AP Exam.

#### ***Poetry***

Poets we will read this term may include Alexander Pope, John Dryden, John Milton, and John Donne. This will be the most challenging poetry of the year, but at this point you will have the critical fortitude to analyze this material.

## ***Writing***

Some past essay topics are\*:

1. Over the course of the year, other students or I have read your material aloud in class. Were you happy with our “translations” of your work? What specific literary challenges were met or became problematic in our interpretation of your work?
2. In Milton’s “Lycidas,” tell how the language and imagery reveal the poet’s view of death.
3. Write a short play set in a jail cell with Meursault, Siddhartha, and Ivan Denisovich as cellmates.

\*There will be many others.

Three of those written responses will become longer, take-home essays.

## **AP Test Prep**

Throughout the year we will be preparing for the test. I will have you write your own AP-type objective questions over the material we read, and then have your classmates evaluate the questions with respect to difficulty, fairness, and feasibility. I will give you objective questions from old tests, have you do them, and then have you debate with your classmates as to who has the best answers. You will be given an online account with [apexvs.com](http://apexvs.com) to practice on your computer. I won’t teach to the test, but you should not be surprised by anything that comes at you on that day in May.

Grading:	Tests	30%
	Homework/In Class Reading/Writing	30%
	Class Participation	20%
	Quiz	10%
	Projects	10%

Class Expectations: Bring your book, something to write with, a notebook, and a charged laptop.