

AP Literature and Composition

Course Overview and Syllabus

Mrs. Lisa Cheney

Seymour High School

Seymour, Connecticut

2015-2016

Course Design

“Why read literature? To many of us, that question seems as strange as asking ‘why breathe?’ Literature has been part of our life, family, school, and community for as long as we can remember. Of course, there are those who argue that what today’s students need is preparation for the ‘real world,’ but in the push for practical university and workplace preparedness we sometimes overlook the importance of educating student’s imaginations. Literature offers windows to worlds outside a student’s experience as well as mirrors into the world they already know. Literature also prepares students for the personal challenges and formal dilemmas they are likely to face. Literary analysis is an intellectual discipline that hones student’s thinking by requiring them to probe a text deeply and analyze the means that writers employ to achieve their effects. Along with preparing students for the rigors of an Advanced Placement exam, learning how to analyze text and articulate a perspective prepares student for life, both in academia and in the workplace.” (Preface, Literature and Composition, Bedford/St Martin’s, 2011)

This course will require that students exercise a patient, close scrutiny of texts. They will know or know better what it feels like to practice literary criticism. In this class, which relies heavily on discussing and writing about literature, students will become familiar with a number of different literary forms and critical approaches. Students will be expected to prepare for each class by reading the assigned work *alertly, curiously, and critically* – that is, in a way that generates meaningful questions and ideas about the reading that they will bring to class in the form of a reader-response journal and make a part of class discussion.

Students will use an AP workbook to practice for the multiple choice and free response portions of the AP exam administered in May. This practice will become more intensive as the year progresses. Students will need to incorporate their understanding of literary terminology in their analytical and evaluative writing, recognizing literary techniques that authors use.

Each unit also incorporates an extension text for students who are interested in extending their understanding of the thematic concept that arches over the reading and writing in each unit. These text are not required but are offered for the student who wants more. The writing assignments for each unit incorporate the extension texts and those students who take this opportunity will be graded accordingly. The extension texts are intended to be experienced independently and integrated by the student (where indicated) into final written assessments common for all students.

Required Texts:

Literature and Composition Reading Writing Thinking (Bedford / St Martin's 2011)

The Elements of Style (Strunk and White)

How to Read Literature Like a Professor (Thomas C. Foster 2003)

The Critic as an Artist (Oscar Wilde)

Heart of Darkness (Joseph Conrad)

Antigone (Sophocles)

Hamlet (William Shakespeare)

Extension Texts:

The Great Gatsby (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

The Awakening (Kate Chopin)

The Poisonwood Bible (Barbara Kingsolver)

The Scarlet Letter (Nathaniel Hawthorne)

Daisy Miller (Henry James)

Writing Expectations

Writing is an integral part of the AP English Literature and Composition course and exam. Writing assignments in this course will “focus on the critical analysis of literature and include expository, analytical, and argumentative essays. Writing instruction includes attention to developing and organizing ideas in clear, coherent, and persuasive language. It includes study of the elements of style ... and emphasis is placed on helping students develop stylistic maturity. ... The writing that students produce in this course reinforces their reading, since reading and writing stimulate and support one another” (2006 The College Board course description 46 and 47).

Students will write for a variety of purposes and in different modes. In most cases, students will have ample opportunity to practice the writing process, focusing on revision and editing in workshops designed to involve the students in collaborative peer editing as well as instructor mentoring. Some classes each quarter will be devoted to writing skill reinforcement, using our writing style manual and the student's own writing as teaching tools. Informal writing assignments will include reader-response journals, small-group expository or analytical collaborations, comparative pieces analyzing author's styles, themes, language choice, etc., and argumentative pieces using secondary sources to encourage divergent critical thinking.

Students will also write 40-minute, in-class essays in response to AP prompts to become more comfortable with the time constraints of the AP exam. They will be allowed and expected to take their essays home and type them, revising for grammar and mechanics, only. They will submit the original in-class text, along with the typed revision, the next day. Essays will be scored with an appropriate AP rubric, and discussed in a workshop format designed to generate

further analysis of the literary work in question and to evaluate student's interpretive skills. Finally, students will write longer (3 – 5 page) analytical and/or argument essays that extend their interpretation and that may include further research and/or comparison with other texts we have read or extension texts that students read on their own. These assignments allow for a broader topic choice than above assignments, require at least one rough draft, include a peer and instructor –editing workshop, and are annotated and grade by the instructor. Rewrites are encouraged. These essays count as a test grade.

Course Syllabus

Unit One: Introduction to Critical Strategies for Reading Six Weeks

Texts: **Literature and Composition**, Bedford/St Martin's, 2011; **The Critic as an Artist**, Oscar Wilde; **How to Read Literature Like a Professor**, Thomas C. Foster

Extension Text: **The Great Gatsby**, F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Critic as an Artist by Oscar Wilde – students will read and record their responses to this text to begin a reader-response journal that will be kept all year. We will use discussion of this text as a spring board for our year long exercise in understanding “many elements, such as criticism as an art form, the true definition of a critic, criticism's value over art, and more.”

Literature and Composition – This will be our primary text for the class and we will move through the first four chapters of this text activating prior knowledge and setting the stage for success in the class through exercises that will build the skills necessary to analyze poetry, fiction and drama. Students will experience Chapters One (Thinking about Literature); Two (Close Reading); Three (Elements of Fiction and Drama) and Four (Entering the Conversation- using multiple text). This section of the book both introduces and reinforces the skills students will need to meet with success in this course.

Writing:

1. Students will create a compare and contrast essay analyzing the resources of language used by the poets William Stafford in “Traveling through the Dark” and “Woodchucks” by Maxine Kumin.
2. Students will write an interpretive essay using “One of These Days” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez; “Seeing Eye” by Brad Watson; *Andre's Mother* by Terrence McNally or *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell.
3. Students will write an essay in response to this prompt:
“In ‘The New Colossus,’ Emma Lazarus welcomes those seeking freedom and opportunity to come through ‘the golden door’ of America. Has the United States lived up to this promise? Discuss by referring to a minimum of four texts.” Include **The Great Gatsby** if you have read this novel.

Unit Two – Home and Family Six Weeks

“Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way”–Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina

Texts: **Literature and Composition**, Bedford / St Martin's Press, 2011;

Extension Text: **The Awakening**, Kate Chopin

The readings in this unit explore the theme of home and family within a broad range of contexts. Authors include: James Joyce (The Dead), August Wilson (Fences), F Scott Fitzgerald (Babylon Revisited), Tillie Olsen (I Stand Here Ironing), and Helana Maria Viramontes (The Moths). Many poets are represented including Anne Bradstreet, Langston Hughes, Theodore Roethke, Sylvia Plath, Mary Oliver and Li-Young Lee among others. Students will read and discuss the literature both fiction and poetry that represents the

themes of home and family. Collaborative work will allow them to explore the writers', their own and their peer's reaction to these themes.

Writing: Students will write essays in response to the following prompts over the course of the unit:

1. Select three texts from this chapter (add **The Awakening** if applicable) that you found particularly memorable, and in a well-organized essay, analyze how the writers have explored the theme of home and family.
2. Compare and contrast how two of the poets in this chapter have used resources of language such as diction, syntax, and imagery to express their ideas regarding the theme of home and family.
3. Choose one of the following quotations, and explain why it fits your beliefs about family in general or your family in particular. Use at least three of the texts from the unit in your response adding **The Awakening** if you have read these:
 - a. "Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. With no relatives, no support, we've put it in an impossible situation." – Margaret Mead
 - b. "If the family were a fruit, it would be an orange, a circle of sections, held together but separable – each segment distinct" – Letty Cottin Pegrebin
 - c. "Important families are like potatoes. The best parts are underground." – Francis Bacon

Unit Three – Identity and Culture Six Weeks

Texts: **Literature and Composition**, Bedford / St Martin's, 2011; **Heart of Darkness**, Joseph Conrad

Extension text: **The Poisonwood Bible**, Barbara Kingsolver

"No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true." – **Nathaniel Hawthorne**, **The Scarlet Letter**

What make us who we are? While our identity is shaped by our interests, personality, and talents, much of how we define ourselves is dependent on the culture that surrounds us. Gender, race, age, religion, national allegiance, geography, language, class, and ethnicity all play a role. In this unit, the readings explore the many different ways that culture influences who we are. In addition, many of the readings explore identities that are not shaped by culture but that are in conflict with it, from Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Apology," to Mahmoud Darwish's "Identity Card." Some, such as Gary Soto's "Mexicans begin Jogging," confront stereotypes that resist positive ethnic identities; others, such as Nathalie Handal's "Caribe in Nueva York," celebrate the polyglot world of a big city where multiple cultures coexist – sometimes without conflict.

Writing: Students will write essays in response to the following prompts over the course of the unit:

1. Choose one of the following tensions in **Heart of Darkness** and write an essay that traces its evolution throughout the novel: appearance vs. reality, primitivism vs. civilization, light vs. dark, or innocence vs. experience.
2. The complex narration is a distinctive quality in **Heart of Darkness**. Write an essay explaining how this narrative strategy reflects the theme(s) in the novel.
3. Many of the texts you've read in this chapter explore the dissonance that results from cultural clashes, particularly the conflicts experienced by those who are moving – by choice or by coercion – from one culture to another. Discuss the nature of that clash by focusing on three different texts including a fourth: **The Poisonwood Bible** if you chose to read this novel.
4. Most Americans believe that they are the master of their own destiny – and their own identity. Anyone can create and re-create him- or herself. To what extent do you believe that identity is the result of free choice rather than something determined by factors out of our control, such as race, gender, and ethnicity? Include references to at least three of the texts studied in this unit in your response.

Unit Four – Conformity and Rebellion

Six Weeks

*“Not all those who wander are lost.” – J.R.R. Tolkien, **The Lord of the Rings***

Texts: **Literature and Composition**, Bedford/St Martin’s, 2011; **Hamlet**, William Shakespeare

Extension Texts: **The Scarlet Letter**, Nathaniel Hawthorne; **Daisy Miller**, Henry James

The texts in this unit present the ongoing struggle between the inertia of conformity and the challenges and promises of rebellion. The question of rebellion is explored in Shakespeare’s classic play **Hamlet**, as the cost of conformity in Edwidge Danticat’s modern story “The Book of the Dead.” In “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” Herman Melville demonstrates one man’s rebellion against the expectations of others. Poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley and Dudley Randal address political conformity and rebellion, while a poem by Lucille Clifton celebrates the delights of audacious behavior. In both of their poems Wallace Stevens and E.E. Cummings consider the power that imagination has to transform the drabness of the mundane.

Writing: Students will write essays in response to the following prompts over the course of the unit:

1. Recognize the immense importance of diction in **Hamlet** by making note of each instance of certain kinds of words. First, note words having to do with *appearances*, such as *play, act, seem, assume, show, reveal, appear, form, shape, and like* (for comparison), as well as references to *pictures, images, mirrors, faces* and the like; then note references to clothing and fashion, such as *investments, trappings, suits, and fashion*, as well as references to *watching and spying* throughout the play. Through diction and the imagery it creates, trace the contrast between appearance and reality throughout the play, and write an essay explaining how that motif contributes to the meaning of the play as a whole.
2. “What is a rebel? A man who says ‘no,’” says Albert Camus. Among those who say no in this unit are Melville’s Bartleby; Adichie’s Grace (or Afamefuna); Vonnegut’s Harrison Bergeron; W.E.B. in Dudley Randall’s poem; the speakers in the poems by George Herbert, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Dylan Thomas; and of course Hamlet. What is the significance of Camus’s question and answer? Consider how at least two of the characters or speakers in the unit say “no,” (adding Hester Prynne or Daisy Miller if you have read either of these novels) and write an essay in which you compare and contrast their rebellious actions or words, and draw conclusions about the consequences of their rebellion.
3. Enjoining his listeners, singer Bob Marley proclaims, “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery / None but ourselves can free our minds.” Similarly, the speakers of the poems by Shelley, Dickinson, Thomas, Hikmet, and Ginsberg address the reader directly, stating an imperative. Compare the ways that two of these poems enjoin the reader to actions. Refer to the texts of the poems to support your answer. Consider both style and content as you write your essay.

Unit Five – War and Peace

Six Weeks

*“Do dreams offer lessons? Do nightmares have themes, do we awaken and analyze them and live our lives and advise others as a result? Can the foot soldier teach anything important about war merely for having been there? I think not. He can tell war stories.” - Tim O’Brien, **If I Die in a Combat Zone***

Texts: **Literature and Composition**, Bedford/St Martin’s, 2011; **Antigone**, Sophocles

Extension Text: **The Things they Carried**, Tim O’Brien

In this unit, we will read classic war stories and poems from Homer and Shakespeare as well as those inspired by Wilfred Owen’s experience in World War I and if you chose to Tim O’Brien’s in Vietnam. We will read an ancient postwar story by Sophocles in addition to more modern ones: Herman Melville responding to the U.S Civil War, and Bharati Mukherjee and Wislawa Szymborska to contemporary terrorism. We will read stories and poems not directly about war itself but about its motivations and repercussions and consequences those by Luigi Pirandello, Cynthia Ozick, and Randall Jarrell regarding

World War II; Robert Southey's look back on the sad wastefulness of war; and William Shakespeare's look ahead to its glories. Finally we will read selections that consider war's aftermath and the attempt to establish peace. Throughout the unit, you will view both war and peace from a variety of perspectives: that of the warrior and the witness, the poet and the citizen, the sufferer and the survivor.

Writing: Students will write essays in response to the following prompts over the course of the unit:

1. On November 11, 1985, Siegfried Sassoon was among sixteen Great War poets commemorated on a stone unveiled in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. The inscription on the stone was written by friend and fellow poet Wilfred Owen. It reads: "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity." Write an essay that supports Owen's statement about "the pity of war" as expressed in at least three of the texts in this unit adding The Things They Carried if you read it.
2. Consider this statement from Chris Hedges.

"The enduring attraction to war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living. Only when we are in the midst of conflict does the shallowness and vapidness of much of our lives become apparent. Trivia dominates our conversations and increasingly our airwaves. And war is an enticing elixir. It gives us resolve, a cause. It allows us to be noble."

Write an essay that compares and contrasts the views expressed in the literature in this chapter with the view expressed by Hedges in this quotation. Refer to at least three required texts for support.

3. Each of the following quotations addresses the nature of war and peace. Select one that interests you, and use it to develop a thesis for an essay. Use several selections from the chapter to support your thesis.
 - a. *There is nothing easier than lopping off heads and nothing harder than developing ideas.* – Fyodor Dostoevsky
 - b. *People sleep peaceably in their beds at tonight only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf* – George Orwell
 - c. *We know how to organize warfare, but do we know how to act when confronted with peace?* – Jacques-Yves Cousteau
 - d. *Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that end.* – Martin Luther King Jr.
 - e. *Of course the people don't want war ... that is understood. But voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. This is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.* – Hermann Goering
 - f. *The first casualty when war comes is truth.* – Senator Hiram Johnson
 - g. *The nation that makes a great distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards, and its fighting done by fools.* -Thucydides