

Literature:

Literature will be taught in a chronological fashion, beginning with the earliest American writings and ending with contemporary works. The selections will be taught within a framework of major philosophies, or worldviews, that reflect American thought at different times in our history. Not all of the pieces listed will be taught every year, and other pieces will be added at times.

Unit 1: The Puritans

The Scarlet Letter
The Crucible
Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God
Upon the Burning of Our House
A Narrative of Her Captivity

Unit 2: The Age of Reason

The Declaration of Independence
Patrick Henry's Speech to the Virginia Convention
Franklin's Autobiography
Thomas Paine's The Crisis

Unit 3: Romanticism

Emerson's Essays
Thoreau: Walden, Resistance to Civil Government
Romantic Poets: Holmes, Bryant, Whitman, Longfellow
Poe's Short Stories & Poetry

Unit 4: Realism

The Leader of the People
The Grapes of Wrath
The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass (excerpt only)
Huckleberry Finn

Unit 5: Naturalism:

The Open Boat
To Build a Fire
Barn Burning

Unit 6: Modernism

The Great Gatsby
The Jilting of Granny Weatherall
The Life You Save May Be Your Own
The Fixer
In Another Country
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Other:

Non-fiction essays and articles of various types and from a wide range of American and non-American authors interspersed throughout each unit. These pieces are specifically intended

to prepare students for the AP English Language and Composition Test that they will be taking in May.

Essential Questions

The essential questions which will guide our exploration of American Literature in this course are as follows:

1. How do the texts we read both reflect and contribute to cultural and societal values?
2. What is truth and how is it discovered—or created?
3. What does it mean to be an American, and how has that idea changed over our history.
4. What does it mean to be enslaved, and what does it mean to be free?
5. How does one achieve redemption?
6. What is the relationship between the individual and society, and how has this idea changed over our history?

Writing:

Essay writing of different styles, purposes, audiences, and levels of formality will be the main concentration in this class. All elements of writing instruction will be focused on preparing students to write college level pieces. Students will write the following among other types of pieces:

- literary analyses of fiction
- rhetorical analyses of non-fiction pieces
- persuasive/argumentative pieces
- synthesis pieces
- journals
- in-class, timed writings of various kinds, designed specifically to mirror the conditions and topics for the A.P. exam.

Rhetoric:

The study of rhetoric is an essential element of the course since the A.P. test take by Juniors in May is typically the “Language and Composition” test. A major part of the “language” element is to learn to read and analyze non-fiction pieces for the use and effectiveness of rhetorical devices and techniques. The definition of rhetoric to be used in this class is as follows:

The art of analyzing all of the choices involving language that a writer, speaker, reader, or listener might make in a situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective. It also involves the specific techniques used by writers or speakers to make meaningful, purposeful, effective texts.

A key part of the course will involve learning specific rhetorical techniques, using these techniques in various writing assignments, and spending a very significant amount of time developing the close-reading skills necessary to take apart complex non-fiction to discover how writers make meaningful, impactful pieces. Also, students will be taught to make more mature, conscious rhetorical choices as they write themselves so that they learn to create pieces that are more meaningful and powerful. As part of this, we will also explore rhetorical/logical fallacies to help student recognize lapses in good thinking and to sharpen their own thinking skills.

Grammar/Mechanics/Style

Grammar:

Grammar will not be taught in a systematic way. Rather, the intention will be to aim lessons at specific weaknesses demonstrated in student writing.

Mechanics:

Punctuation: commas, colons, semi-colons, dashes, hyphens

Style:

- Improving word choice especially as it relates to the purpose and audience of a piece.
- Varying sentence structures to create meaning, rhythm, and emphasis
- Becoming more aware of making purposeful decisions in structure, syntax, diction, and rhetoric in order to make writing more powerful and meaningful

Vocabulary:

Vocabulary development will be addressed in a variety of ways:

- Regular units studied from a “canned” vocabulary book
- SAT wordlist
- Words in context from assigned readings

Independent Reading:

I will assign one significant piece of American Literature each quarter, usually a play or a novel, that the student will read on his/her own in addition to other assigned reading done as a class. This is necessary to give the student the breadth of reading necessary for success in college and on the A.P. “Literature and Composition” exam typically taken senior year. On a designated date, the student will demonstrate knowledge of the assigned piece on a test, usually an in-class essay response. The possible titles for this are as follows (note: many of these titles are from the list of literature above):

- The Crucible
- The Grapes of Wrath
- Huckleberry Finn
- The Fixer
- One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest

SAT Test Preparation:

- Vocab study
- Practice SAT questions/strategies: reading comprehension, grammar/mechanics questions, etc. (time permitting)

Advanced Placement Test Preparation:

- In-class writes on typical A.P. writing prompts
- Analysis of anchor essays from previous A.P. tests
- Employing the A.P. writing rubric for evaluation
- Rhetorical analysis, persuasive, and synthesis essays will be practiced
- Taking practice multiple choice tests from previous A.P. exams
- Broad range of reading assignments and practice of deep reading of these pieces
- Learning about and using specific rhetorical strategies and devices

Grading Policy:

Each assignment in this course will be designated as either a minor assignment or a major assignment.

Minor assignments include normal, routine, everyday type assignments such as the following:

- Vocabulary work and quizzes, reading logs, study questions, etc

Major assignments include the following types of assignments:

- Essays, projects, major tests, journals

Major assignments account for 70% of the final grade; there are normally from 10-12 of these in a semester. Minor assignments together make up the remaining 30%.

The grading scale is as follows:

A:	93-100	C+:	78
A-:	90	C:	73
B+:	88	C-:	70
B:	83	D+:	68
B-:	80	D:	60

Philosophy:

I don't see it as my job primarily to prepare students for a single 3-hour A.P. test in May. Essentially, I feel my job is to help students become very effective thinkers by teaching them very high level thinking skills. If I do this, students will read well, they will write well, and they will not only perform well on important assessments like the SAT and various A.P. tests, but they will have developed the skills needed to be very successful college students, to be very successful professionals in their chosen careers, and by far most importantly, to be very successful, well-adjusted citizens, mothers, fathers, husbands and wives. While the A.P test is certainly an important test to perform well on, it is not the end-all and be-all of this course; thus, it seems foolish to me to let this test exclusively dictate what is taught and then measure what students gain from this class. Furthermore, any literature class is intended to broaden the horizons of students by having them read, discuss, and think deeply about issues, ideas, and history so that they can develop a true sense of self, their place in the world, what they hold to be dear and true, and to establish the foundation upon which they will build their lives. These are things that can never be measured by any test, and which may, in the end, be by far the most important part of the class. I look very much forward to leading students on this search for truth, knowledge, and skills. I am certain that no matter how students fare on the A.P. test, they will be much the better for having completed this course.

Common Core Standards:

The curriculum of the course is based on the newly generated Common Core Standards for Washington State. Follow the link below if you are interested in exploring these standards.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>

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