

Advanced Placement Literature and Composition

Summer 2008

Course Overview and Summer Assignment

Welcome to the world of AP English!!

The Advanced Placement Literature and Composition course is an in depth analysis of the elements of fiction and literary critique utilizing adult level fiction from several periods and genres. Throughout this course we will study plot, character, setting, theme, point of view and other aspects of fiction paying specific attention to the author's purpose and the rhetorical strategies he or she employs to achieve that purpose within the writing. We will also enhance our knowledge of literary terminology, its application and effect, through daily creative presentations.

This year the course has been changed to one and one half semesters allowing time for greater depth of study as we proceed through each unit, and also allowing more time for test preparation as the course culminates in May's Advanced Placement Literature and Composition exam administered yearly by the college board. The exam affords students the opportunity to earn college credits and be excused from the equivalent college core course (a great financial benefit). Of course, colleges and universities also look highly upon candidates earning high scores on AP exams. As the exam tests the same areas covered in a college literary interpretation and analysis course, this course is, too, designed as a college course.

Students taking this course should be aware that the workload is much greater than in other courses and students will be expected to meet deadlines. Following each unit of study—a unit will be covered each two to three weeks—students will be required to write an analytical essay ranging from three to eight pages in length. Papers must be passed in by midnight of the due date; those that are not will receive no credit, unless there are extenuating circumstances approved by the teacher. Late papers will not be accepted. During the course of covering a unit, students will complete weekly timed writings; one will be teacher generated and specific to the work being studied, and one will be a released AP prompt specific to the literary element concentrated upon for the unit. As the third AP essay exam prompt is always an open ended one, requiring students to use a work of literary merit to respond to a question regarding a literary element, students will write the second timed writing on a work of his or her choice; and, therefore, are expected to have extensive knowledge of a wide variety of literature. It is recommended that students choose at least one novel of literary merit to study for future use on these timed writings. In addition to this, one student each day will also be required to give a creative presentation of a literary term. The expectation should be to spend a minimum of one to two hours nightly on homework for this course. It is a lot but the rewards in GPA points and possible earned credits far outweigh the ardor of work.

The first unit being covered in the course is plot. Students must read and complete a writing assignment using the Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex by Socrates, and the very English gothic romance Turn of the Screw by American, Henry James. The writing assignments will be reviewed and collected on the first day of class.

Have a great summer and be ready to work hard in the fall.

Mrs. Worster

SUMMER 08

PLOT

The first unit to be covered in AP literature will be an in depth analysis of plot in a play from almost three thousand years ago and a ghost story from much more recent times, the nineteenth century. The plot of one, however, was highly influential to the other. You will consider this in the second of your two writing assignments.

Plot is the sequence of events that make up a narrative. It is necessary that the sequence of events outlined in the plot be logically connected and plausible. The most important element of plot is conflict. Conflict can be external (i.e. man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. society) or internal (i.e. man vs. self). The moment of highest emotional intensity of the plot is the climax. Following the exposition in the introduction, the plot is developed to a climactic point during the rising action. After the climax has occurred, the plot turns toward a resolution of all elements.

There are several questions one may pose while reading to discover ideas about plot:

1. Who are the protagonist and antagonist, and how do their characteristics put them in conflict? Keep in mind that the antagonist may still be something other than another human. How would you describe the conflict?
2. How does the action develop from the conflict?
3. What problems does the major character (or do the major characters) face? How is the major problem dealt with?
4. In the conflict stems from contrasting ideas or values, what are these, and how are they brought out?
5. How do the major characters achieve (or not achieve) their major goals? What obstacles do they overcome? What obstacles overcome them?
6. At the end are the characters changed or unchanged? How has the resolution of the major conflict produced these results?

To organize your essay about plot (**or in this case, comparing and contrasting plots**):

Introduction: After you refer to the principal characters, circumstances, and issues of the plot in both works, **be sure that your thesis sentence includes the topics to be fully developed. Your thesis must be a statement that compares (tells what is alike) and contrasts (tells what is different) about the CONFLICTS faced by the protagonists of the two works.**

Body: Stress the major elements in the conflicts brought out in the works. Rather than describing everything the character does, focus on his or her conflict. In addition, the plot may be analyzed more broadly in terms of impulses, goals, values, issues and historical perspectives. This should be done separately for each work studied. The body should then include a portion that states the comparisons and contrasts that can be found between the two works; base this comparison and contrast on the information previously mentioned about each work.

Conclusion: The conclusion may contain a brief summary of the points you have made. It is also the fitting location for a brief consideration of the effect or impact produced by the conflict. Additionally, the writer may comment upon whether the author has arranged ideas and dialogue to direct the reader to favor one side against the other, or on whether the plot is possible or impossible.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR ASSIGNED WORKS

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. Sophocles is considered the greatest dramatist of the ancient world and the origin from which all great drama comes. His play, *Oedipus Rex*, is the most famous of his Oedipus trilogy. It is a tragedy that tells the story of a man cursed by the Gods but whose own failings lead to his downfall. (Remember the definition of tragedy) Oedipus is sent away with feet bound to be left to die in the hills outside his home city by his real parents because the gods had prophesied that he would murder his father. The shepherd, pitying the child, gave him to shepherd from a neighboring country to raise as his own. This shepherd then gives the baby to the king and queen who raise it as their own. And, so Oedipus was raised as a prince until another prophesy drives him away from his country. This leads him to a crossroads where he unknowingly fulfills the prophesy by killing his biological father. Another series of vents leads to him unwittingly marrying and having children with his biological mother, a fact that he is unaware of until he searches for and finds the truth. The truth is the last thing he sees.

The tragedy is written in five acts with a chorus. It employs many poetic structures and initiates many themes that became universal in literature over the course of the nearly three thousand years since it was written. Many of you may recognize types of metaphor and imagery that are used in Shakespearean tragedies; these forms are as appropriate in modern literature as they were in the Renaissance and as they were when first introduced during the Golden Age of Greece.

The Turn of the Screw by Henry James. Henry James is a unique writer who allows us to experience Gothic Romance popularized by German writers, written in the ornate style of English Victorian writers,

but with a distinctly American tone. This is accomplished through James's bi-continental upbringing. The son of a wealthy New York physician, James spent many summers in Europe—England, in particular—and was able to meld together his American perspective with the European one to which he had been acclimated. James is also thought to be the master of psychological realism; in other words, he writes realistically, including all flaws, about the human psyche.

The Turn of the Screw is a ghost story, of sorts. James frames the novel with a gathering at Christmastime during which the entertainment is the telling of ghost stories (a scenario that has resulted in the creation of many famous works, such as Shelley's *Frankenstein*). The narrator sends for a journal that had been given to him by his governess; the body of the work is the story of the then twenty-year-old governess's experience during her first job at the eerie Bly Mansion.

From these brief overviews, you may already have guessed that these works (a tragic drama and Gothic Romantic novella) will be replete with conflict. This will make your life easier.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

WRITING COMPONENTS

WRITING COMPONENT ONE: The first of your two required writing assignments is to complete an informal journal that traces the plots of each of the assigned works. For EACH work, you should have journal entries of half a page (word processed in twelve-point font, double-spaced) for each of the following:

- 1. Introduction:** In a paragraph summarize the introduction to the plot. What conflict is introduced and what action introduces it?
- 2. Rising Action:** What important events are leading to a climax in the conflict, and how are they doing so? What motivates these events?
- 3. Climax:** Summarize the climax of the conflict. What emotions are at their highest level of intensity?
- 4. Falling Action:** What events stemming from the conflict are leading to a resolution? How have the protagonist and antagonist changed as a result of this climax?
- 5. Resolution:** Summarize how the conflict has been resolved and what the resolution is.
- 6. Critique:** Is the plot plausible? What feelings about the protagonist and antagonist have you, the reader, been left with?

WRITING COMPONENT TWO:

Using your journal entries from writing component one, write a well-planned, well-organized essay that compares and contrasts the conflicts faced by the protagonists of *Oedipus the King* and *The Turn of the Screw*.

Be sure to refer back to the organization of essay section of your handout. Use sophisticated sentence structure and diction choices as this is considered a college course. Be sure to use textual support in the form of direct quotes and paraphrases[cited correctly!!!! In this case you must cite by author's name and page number. For example: (Sophocles, 36) or (James, 107)].

RECOMMENDED LENGTH: 4-5 PAGES (THOUGH THERE IS NO LENGTH REQUIREMENT TO BE MET, THIS IS THE MINIMUM LENGTH THAT I FEEL IS NECESSARY TO FULLY ADDRESS THE PROMPT). Papers must be word-processed in twelve-point common font, double-spaced.

REQUIREMENTS:

Title- your essay must have a title and the title must be correctly formatted.

Pagination- Please add pagination to the upper left hand or lower left hand corner

Textual support- There must be a minimum of one direct quote, cited correctly, taken from each of the works. It is expected that there may be more than one quote or several correctly cited paraphrases that are aptly chosen and support your previously stated assertions.

DUE DATE:

BOTH WRITING COMPONENTS WILL BE DUE ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS. THE MIDNIGHT DEADLINE DOES APPLY TO THIS ASSIGNMENT ALSO; HOWEVER, IT IS EXPECTED THAT YOU WILL HAVE A COPY OF A DRAFT TO HAVE IN CLASS DURING THE FIRST DAY'S REVIEW OF THE MATERIAL.

SCORING:

THESE ASSIGNMENTS, UNLIKE THE OTHERS THAT WILL BE GIVEN THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER, WILL BE HOLISTICALLY SCORED (THERE IS NO RUBRIC). I WILL BE USING THE ESSAY GRADING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED AND WILL BE REVIEWED AGAIN ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.

THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS WILL BE SPENT REVIEWING THE SUMMER READING AND ADDING INFORMATION TO IT. STUDENTS WHO WISH TO REWRITE PAPERS AFTER THE REVIEW WILL BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO. THE REWRITE WILL ALLOW STUDENTS TO IMPROVE SKILLS AND TO EARN ADDITIONAL POINTS ON THE PAPER GRADE.

GOOD LUCK!! I HOPE YOU ENJOY THESE TWO SHORT WORKS. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME AT SCHOOL (668-5291) OR AT HOME (668-4414) AS WELL AS AT ANY OTHER PLACE YOU MIGHT SEE ME. I WILL BE IN TOWN MOST OF THE SUMMER.

