

## English Literature and Composition Course Description

### I. Course Goals

- To learn to think more clearly, to speak and write more effectively, and to listen and read with great understanding.
- To read some of the most accomplished literary works and understand the period in which they were created.
- To encourage a delight of literature that is aesthetically, socially and personally appropriate.
- To engage in critical reading, discussion and written analysis of literature with attention to language, structure, meaning, clarity of thinking, and value.
- To appreciate a variety of texts and genres from many cultures and time periods.
- To develop the ability to write in various forms, including the critical analysis of literature and a senior research paper, which is a requirement for graduation.
- To enhance understanding of the relationship of literature with other forms of art and increase interpretive ability.
- To improve vocabulary.
- To review literary and usage terms.
- To improve speaking skills through class presentations, discussions, and debates.

II. **Content:** This course is designed to comply with the curricular requirements described in the *AP English Course Description*.

**Literature:** Students will read selections of fiction, poetry, and drama written primarily by American and British authors of the past and present including *Beowulf*, *Grendel*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Macbeth*, *Sister Carrie*, *Frankenstein*, *The Dubliners*, and *Native Son*. In addition, students will choose novels from the AP suggested reading list to read outside of class (one per semester) and read selections from *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature, sixth edition*, including poetry, essays and short stories.

**Writing:** During each marking period, students will complete a number of writing assignments which will be examined for effective word choice, varied sentence structure,

effective organization, effectiveness of argument using specific evidence including numerous quotations as proof, in relation to supporting a well developed thesis.

Students will be given frequent opportunities to write and rewrite formal extended analysis and timed in-class responses as well as shorter, more informal assignments, which may or may not be collected, will be used to encourage thinking and class discussion by focusing on specific issues. Students will also receive several options for creative writing.

Each student is required to keep a reading log which will be reviewed each marking period. Peer editing will take place in the classroom. Grammar will be addressed as needed.

The completion of a multi genre research paper is a graduation requirement. All essays written outside of class must follow MLA format (see attached directions).

**Speaking:** Class discussions, panel discussions, presentations and debates will serve as the format for practicing speaking and discussion skills during the year.

**Vocabulary:** Students will compile vocabulary lists based on the literature they are studying in class. Each student is responsible for teaching the class a certain amount of words taken from the previous night's reading. These words must be challenging and an appropriate level for an AP level class. This will count as a homework grade.

## **Course Planner/Student activities:**

### **First semester – Monsters in Literature**

#### **First marking period:**

Review summer reading assignments (readings from literature book and two novels from the book list). Students will turn in two formal analyses based on directions in *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Focus will be on developing and supporting a thesis, organization, writing an effective introduction (great beginnings) and conclusion (great endings). Students will evaluate effectiveness of summer essays based on the above lesson and rewrite essays as needed.

Initial discussion of short stories and the novels from summer reading assignment. Students will learn how to identify theme based on conflict and its resolution (or lack thereof). Discussion of summary vs. analysis, reading fiction responsively, writing about fiction (plot, character, setting, point of view, symbolism, theme, style, tone and irony).

## ***Beowulf*, John Gardner's *Grendel*, and Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market***

\* Discussion and analysis of satire, symbolism, voice, and the anti-hero in *Grendel* /the epic poem and epic hero in *Beowulf*.

\* Students will compare and contrast differing viewpoints through a comparison of *Beowulf* and John Gardner's *Grendel*. Focus on logical organization and coherence through use of repetition of key words and phrases, transitions, and emphasis.

\* Introduction to literary strategies (i.e. formalist, biographical, psychological, literary historical, Marxist, new historicist, cultural, gender, mythological, deconstructionist) through the poem *Goblin Market*. Students will also analyze visual imagery, rhythm, suspense, mood, and depictions of women in the poem as compared with female characters in *Beowulf* and *Grendel*.

\* Students will write an analysis of *Grendel* using a literary strategy of their choice.

\* Students will write an epic that reflects the values and beliefs of modern American society and contains a moral. In their writing, students will focus on organization, diction, and tone. Students will also use a literary strategy to analyze their epic.

## ***Macbeth* and Shakespearean vs. Italian sonnets**

- Discussion of the format of the Shakespearean and Italian sonnets as well as use of literary techniques used including couplet, meter, tone, mood, diction, stanza, controlling metaphor, personification and allusion, in relation to the meaning of the poem as a whole.
- Discussion and analysis of the tragic hero, character development, literary devices, and motifs in *Macbeth*. Is Macbeth a true tragic hero? Is he a victim of fate or free will?
- Students will define 25 literary terms and analyze quotes from *Macbeth* that illustrate each term. Terms to include: allusion, analogy, apostrophe, aside, atmosphere, comic relief, couplet, euphemism, euphony, foil, foreshadowing, hubris, imagery, irony, metaphor, nemesis, paradox, pathetic fallacy, personification, plaint, pun, simile, soliloquy, stream of consciousness, tragic flaw
- In groups, students will trace a word (hands, blood, night, nature) and its different meanings throughout the play in order to understand the use of motifs in literature. Students will analyze what affects each word's meaning.
- Students will analyze the character development of a character of their choice. How does the character change and why? How does this relate to the meaning of the work as a whole? What literary devices are used? They will create a mask using symbols to illustrate this development and write an explanation using quotations from the play as proof.
- Students will write an essay analyzing the timelessness of *Macbeth*. They will explain why one of *Macbeth*'s themes is significant in today's society using direct quotations from the play. As always, students must explain what literary devices Shakespeare uses in the work. Students should focus on using a variety of sentence structures and achieving coherence through repetition of key words, transitions, and emphasis.
- Essay test on *Macbeth* using question from previous AP exam

\* Complete reading log on any book of literary merit. Logs should include title, short biography of author as it pertains to the novel, date published, literary period (including general description of representative literature from this time period), setting, character descriptions, major themes, a significant quotation that illustrates this theme, a journal entry in response to a list of questions/topics provided by the teacher.

## **Second marking period**

### **Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, Coleridge's "*The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*" and other Romantic Poems**

- Students will read and analyze Romantic poetry in relation to the beliefs of Romanticism and literary devices used. Students will focus on voice, diction, connotation and denotation, and imagery.
- Poems include, but are not limited to: "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and "London" by Wordsworth; "The Chimney Sweeper" by Blake; "Ode on a Grecian" and "Bright Star" by Keats; "Ozymandias" by Shelly
- Students will write an analysis of a Romantic poem explaining the use of the above literary devices in relation to the work as a whole.
- Discussion and analysis of *Frankenstein* as a Romantic novel, Victor as a tragic hero (as compared to Macbeth), the effects of the different points of view, the novel's structure, use of allusions, Victor and the creature as a doppelganger, Victor as the Modern Prometheus, discussion of key passages in relation to meaning of the work as a whole.
- Students will write an analysis of a key passage from *Frankenstein* focusing on some or all of the following: mood, diction, patterns, imagery, symbolism, types of writing, paradox, gnomon, point of view, allusions, connotation vs. denotation, the passage as an allegory. Again, students should take care to incorporate effective writing strategies studied thus far, such as writing effective introductions and conclusions, supporting generalizations with specific, illustrative detail and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.
- Students will compare and contrast narrator, structure, setting, theme, and tone in *Frankenstein* and *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*.
- In class essay on *Frankenstein* using question from previous AP exam

\* Complete second reading log.

### **Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Eudora Welty's "Powerhouse", Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" and poetry from The Harlem Renaissance**

- Panel discussion: Students will lead discussion on: **1.** the use of naturalism in the novel **2.** the major characters' views on life including race relations **3.** life in Chicago in the 1930s **4.** the title of the novel and the novel's three subtitles **5.** The significance of the actual cases of Loeb and Leopold, Scottsboro Boys and Robert Nixon **6.** Bigger's relationships with other characters (i.e. Bigger and Bessie, Bigger and his family, Bigger and the Daltons, etc.). Connect to "How Bigger was Born" **7.** The depiction of Communists, white people, black people in the book **8.** Symbols and motifs used in the novel **9.** the tone and mood of the book **10.** the themes found in the novel. Students must refer to specific quotes and passages from the novel and other sources for support.
- Discussion of *Native Son* will also include protest art, character motivation, double consciousness
- Students will read James Baldwin's "Notes from a Native Son," analyze Baldwin's point of view and compare and contrast his views with those of Wright. Whose view do you support? What is the purpose of literature? What is the effect of society on an individual, the effect of literature on society and vice versa? Find examples of Harlem Renaissance poetry and literary protest art to support your views and share in a class discussion. Be prepared to discuss how textual details relate to the piece's meaning as a whole.
- Students will write a formal analysis of a poem from the Harlem Renaissance evaluating the author's purpose and analyzing the effectiveness of the literary techniques used to achieve this purpose.
- Students will analyze Eudora Welty's short story "Powerhouse" and compare/contrast the settings of north vs. south as it relates to the African American experience. How does the setting affect the reaction of the majority to the minority? Students will look at specific scenes, such as the coffee house scene in "Powerhouse" as compared to the restaurant scene in *Native Son*.
- Students will analyze Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." Discuss Dee and Maggie's values. What do the quilts symbolize to each character? What is Walker trying to tell the audience about what is ultimately important in life? Do you think Richard Wright would agree? Support your opinion with direct quotes. What is "Everyday Use" saying about the concept of African American heritage as compared with *Native Son*? How does each work's setting or the time in which each work was published affect this view?
- In-class essay on *Native Son* using question from previous AP exam

**Outside reading/Book conference** must be completed by the end of the first semester: Students will choose a novel from the AP list of suggested titles and prepare for a one on one discussion with the teacher. Students should focus on: conflicts (causes and solutions), setting and its relevance to the novel as a whole, themes, quotations that epitomize these themes, a relevant passage for discussion, the tone, explaining what literary strategy could be used to analyze the novel, literary devices used, diction, how the novel relates to modern life.

## Second semester - Social commentary

### Third marking period

#### Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and Satire

- Students will read and discuss Swift's *A Modest Proposal* as an introduction to satire as a means of social commentary. Students will bring in examples of social satire to share and discuss.
- Discussion of humor in writing. What techniques are used in order to create humor? Students will explain these techniques using their examples.
- Students will each pick a topic from the Middle Ages on which to become an expert such as chivalry, physiognomy, courtly love, Chaucer, King Arthur, etc. They must choose a teaching and testing method for their presentation.
- Discussion of satire, satirical devices, tone, Chaucer's opinion of various aspects of medieval society, types and purposes of tales, literary devices used, author vs. narrator. What morals or lessons is Chaucer trying to impart on his audience? How are these morals relevant to today?
- Students will write a frame story following the format of the *Canterbury Tales*. In it, they must use and explain satirical and literary devices and establish and maintain voice. The tale must also have a moral and reflect the personality of the pilgrim telling it.
- Essay test on *Canterbury Tales*: Show how one pilgrim's description in the General Prologue or Individual Prologue can be related to the story told by the pilgrim. Focus on the character's personality, lifestyle, interests, intelligence, vocation, and attitudes toward life and people reflected in the tale. Consider the following literary elements: diction, imagery, tone, theme and style.

#### James Joyce's *Dubliners* and the poetry of Evan Boland

- Read collection of poems by Evan Boland. Compare and contrast differing styles and structures of her poems, literal vs. symbolic meanings, themes, rhyme patterns, social commentary, syntax, use of inversion and repetition, tone, metaphor, symbolism.
- Students will write an essay supporting a proposal made about Boland as a poet such as "Boland is a confident writer, whose impressive range of theme and subject matter is explored in a calm and assured tone" or "The voice in Boland's poetry is recognizably a female one which charts a woman's relationship with her society and her family." Students must refer to at least three of Boland's poems discussed in class.
- Discussion of the progression seen in *The Dubliners*, Joyce's style, historical context including the role of religion and politics, symbolism of the paralysis of Dublin, motifs, epiphanies.

- Students will write three short stories based on real life observations (just as Joyce did when writing *Dubliners*). They must use progression, repetition, and literary devices. The short stories must illustrate the characters' evolution and illustrate a common theme. Students must demonstrate a specific tone in each story, and establish and maintain voice.

- Essay topic:

In his essay "Walking," Henry David Thoreau offers the following assessment of literature: "In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is but another name for tamedness. It is the uncivilized free and wild thinking in *Hamlet* and *The Iliad*, in all scriptures and mythologies, not learned in schools, that delights us."

Choose one of the stories that shows "uncivilized free and wild thinking" and write an essay in which you explain what constitutes its "uncivilized free and wild thinking" and how that thinking is central to the value of the work as a whole. Support your ideas with specific references to the work you chose. Incorporate analysis of two literary terms within the essay.

\* Complete third and final reading log.

### **Multi-genre Research project**

- Students will begin work on their senior research project. They will develop a research question and thesis to be supported using five different genres based on copious research and parenthetical documentation. Students must fully explain how each genre supports the thesis by using specific examples and details. Students must complete each step of the research process and write a reflection on the entire process.

### **Fourth Marking Period**

#### **Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat", and Victorian poetry**

- Students will revisit naturalism and compare with *Native Son*. Discussion will include effects of industrialism, late Victorian society and its values/morality, symbolism, the idea of the fallen woman, feminist and Marxist literary criticism, growth of characters, themes.
- What is the structure of the novel in relation to the main characters' rise or demise? Contrast Carrie and Hurstwood. Why does Hurstwood fail and Carrie succeed? What lessons, if any, can one learn from their fates? How does economic class govern the individual's relationship to money? What is the relationship between money and sex? What roles do men and women play in this novel and for what purposes? Consider the theme of imitation vs. the genuine. How does society view women? What is Dreiser's view of the American Dream? How is this view illustrated through the characters?
- After reading Hurston's "Sweat," students will compare Delia with Carrie. Compare society's definitions of women in each piece. How do these characters

- cope with society's expectations and limitations? How do they respond to having to play the role of the subservient woman?
- Students may also revisit "Powerhouse" and compare the use of dialect in "Powerhouse" and "Sweat." How is the writer's point of view affected by her race, her sex?
  - Students will write a one page reflection which explains what Carrie, Drouet or Hurstwood's reaction would be to a particular passage from either *Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw or "Idols of the Mind" by Francis Bacon.
  - Students will research Victorian poets and chose one poem that reflects the dilemma of one of the main characters in *Sister Carrie*. Compare literary terms used in both the poem and novel. Are these literary devices more effective in one than the other? How are they used to create the overall themes of these literary works? Explain and support with quotations from both pieces.
  - Students will write a two page analysis that takes one of the points of view from the textbook, *Bedford Introduction to Literature*, pages 1501-1523. Students must use textual details and quotes to support their analysis as well as focus on all aspects of effective writing practiced thus far this year.

### **Contemporary Poetry**

- Students will respond to poetry on a variety of levels including emotional, technical, and analytical. They will pay close attention to textual details, literary devices, and format in relation to the work as a whole.
- Students will compare and contrast contemporary poems with those from other time periods.

### **Specific preparation for the AP Literature Exam.**

- Students will take practice exams and discuss responses.
- Evaluation of past essay responses and their strengths and weaknesses.
- Review of literary terms and strategies as needed.
- Review of Roman and Greek mythology and biblical allusions as seen in the practice exams and other literature studied throughout the year.

### **After the Exam**

Students will participate in a formal debate, including conducting research, writing a brief, and using effective arguments for or against the proposal.

### **Grading Policy**

Students are on a point system. The following types of assignments are evaluated for points: essays, panel discussions, presentations, in class essay tests, journals, vocabulary journals, reading logs, book conferences. Late work will be penalized 10% a day. If a student is in school the day an assignment is due, it must be turned in, whether or not the

student is in class, to avoid a late penalty. Students must also keep a portfolio of their work in order to evaluate strengths and weaknesses throughout the year.