



COVINGTON LATIN SCHOOL

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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

Texts:

- The *Odyssey* (Robert Fagles' translation)
- Shakespeare's "Hamlet"
- Sophocles *The Theban Plays*
- Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*
- Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*
- Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say, I Say*
- Various poems, short stories, essays and articles (online)

Prerequisites:

Admission into AP study.

Course Description:

AP Literature & Composition is designed to develop and formulate the student's own understanding, interpretation and evaluation of the literature. The Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition course involves reading and writing and thinking and imagining: a cycle of individual reading and study, group discussion, culminating in various modes of writing. We read selected texts--poetry (epic and lyric), drama, the novel, short story and the essay--from the Ancients through the twentieth-first century: Greek, Roman, British, American, and various translations of modern works from around the world. As the student masters the basic elements of figurative language (the tropes, imagery and tone), structure, style, and theme will be discerned in our selected works of literature. Reading will lead to writing. The AP English Course Description tells us how "close reading involves the following elements: the experience of literature, the interpretation of literature, and the evaluation of literature." Our goal is to read accordingly and then to respond to the literature through various modes of writing. Our aspiration is to learn the energizing relationships between reading and writing, between literature and the human experience, between singular and collective readings. In the midst this cycle of reading, speaking and writing, creative exercises, designed to stimulate the sense of play (imagination) the study of literature evokes, will be experienced.

Course Objectives:

- to understand the fundamentals of reading
- to read literature and comprehend, interpret, and evaluate
- to perform literary analysis on works of literature in various genres
- to understand and apply the writing process
- to write the AP style "fifty minute" essay
- to maintain Reading Guides: the objective dimension of reading
- to record a Reading Notebook: the subjective dimension of reading
- to be able to discuss our readings and responses to the literature
- to know the difference between "answer" and "response"

- to learn the basic elements of argument
- to encounter the art of persuasion
- to learn the steps and aspects of research
- to engage the literature in a creative manner

Course Goals:

- to sense the wonder involved in the literary experience
- to experience how “the old” illuminates “the new”
- to sense how discussion enhances the singular reading of literature
- to discover and enhance one’s own writing “voice”
- to encounter the interplay of intellect and imagination
- to experience the thrill and promise of entering “the great conversation”
- to become better readers and better writers

Course Sequence:

Quarter 1

I. Summer Reading & Introductions

- Syllabus presented: reading and writing schedule situated
- Evaluation: each student will write an in-class essay on a given theme in Graham Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*
- A close consideration of the AP Exam: format and content

II. The *Odyssey*

- The Epic: Beginnings, Permutations and Disappearance
- The History of the Trojan War
- The *Iliad*: Source and Prequel
- The Culture of Homer: The Dark Age
- The Homeric Question
- The Homeric Style
- Homeric Motifs
- The Epic Simile
- Explication
- Appreciating “the Greekness” of the Epic
- Reading Homer in the Twenty-First Century
- Dreaming the Myth Onward: Archetypal Contemporizations of the Epic
- Banquet and Revealing Speeches

Quarter 2

I. The Senior Thesis

- The Process & The Product
- Research: The Process
- Discerning a Topic
- The Working Bibliography
- Focusing a Topic into a Working Thesis
- Taking Notes and Annotation
- The Fundamentals of The Argumentative Research Paper

- H. The Preliminary Outline
- I. The Detailed Outline
- J. Gleaning Major Quotes from Sources
- K. The Templates in *They Say, I Say*
- L. The MLA Format
- M. The Works Cited Page
- N. Documentation
- O. Citation
- P. Proofreading
- Q. Celebration

II. Poetry and Poems

- A. Poetry's Beginnings
- B. The Poem as a Speech Act
- C. First, Read/Hear what the Poem Says
- D. Second, Figure out What the Poem Means
- E. Meaning = Metamorphosis
- F. The Structure of the Poem
- G. The Concrete and the Abstract
- H. Various Figures of Speech
- I. Various Tropes
- J. Who is the Speaker of the Poem and What Prompted the Speech Act?
- K. Image and Imagery
- L. Seeking Patterns and Discerning Exceptions
- M. Tone
- N. Explication
- O. The Types of Lyric Poems

Quarter 3

I. Tragedy: Greek Origins

- A. Aristotle on Tragedy: Necessary Aspects
- B. "Oedipus Rex"—view film
- C. "Antigone"—read play and view film
- D. The Religious Origins of Drama and Tragedy
- E. Augustine's Dismissal of Drama
- F. What is Catharsis?

II. "The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark"

- A. Shakespeare: The Man and His Times
- B. The Theatre Shakespeare Experienced in Avon and in London
- C. 1588, the Armada Year: Shakespeare in London
- D. "A little Latin and less Greek": Shakespeare and the Classic Tragedies
- E. Distinguishing the "Tragic" and "Tragedy"
- F. Elizabethan Cosmos and World
- G. Elizabethan Drama
- H. Elizabethan Tragedy
- I. Shakespeare and Innovations in the Act and the Scene
- J. Poetry and Prose in the Plays
- K. What Shakespeare Brought to Drama
- L. Shakespeare and the Refinement of Monologue and Soliloquy

- M. Shakespeare's New Villain
- N. The Tragic Vortex
- O. Hamlet and "Momento Mori"
- P. Tragedy and the "fusion of grief and joy" (George Steiner)

Quarter 4

I. *Things Fall Apart*

- A. Review of basic history of the Colonization of Africa
- B. Chinua Achebe
- C. African Literature and its British/European "beginnings"
- D. Achebe's perspective on African Literature before *TFA*
- E. Achebe's perspective on African Literature after *TFA*
- F. The critical reception of *TFA*
- G. Realism
- H. The Novel
- I. Igbo Cosmology
- J. Igbo Society
- K. Patriarchal or Matriarchal?
- L. The Narrator: Basics and Permutations
- M. Image and Imagery
- N. How an Image Becomes a Symbol
- O. The Structure of *TFA*
- P. Tragedy or Tragic?
- Q. African Literature after *TFA*

II. *Heart of Darkness*

- A. The Novel from 1800 to 1880
- B. Joseph Conrad: The Man and His Times
- C. Introduction to Modernism
- D. The First Person Narrator
- E. Nietzsche & "Civilization" and "The Civilized Man"
- F. Conrad's Prose Style: Reading "the Surface"
- G. How and Image Becomes a Symbol, Part II
- H. The Meaning of the Absurd
- I. Conrad's Depiction of Africa & Africans
- J. Marlowe and the "Undiscovered Country"
- K. Cf. Marlowe and Hamlet
- L. George Steiner's "The Death of Tragedy"
- M. Postmodern Tragedy?

Grading:

Grading consists of reading guides, the notebook (writing while reading), in-class writings (usually reading guides will be used), in-class essays, essays, tests and creative responses. For the Senior Thesis, both process (various outlines) and product (the research paper) will be graded.