

# Advanced Placement English 12—literature and composition

## Course Overview

Because of the nature of our curriculum and its structure, AP English 12 is a one-year chronological survey of British literature. There is considerable emphasis placed on drama, poetry, and the novel. The historical context of British literature is a constant throughout the year as students are continually asked to recognize the world from which the literature originates. Students also work to develop their analytical writing skills through many essay assignments requiring pre-writing, drafting, peer and teacher editing, and rewriting. The goal of AP English 12 is the improvement of student skills in close reading, precise thinking, and logical writing about literature.

AP English 12 has a summer reading and writing assignment and a suggested reading list. Last summer students read *Jane Eyre*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. Their written essay addressed the ways in which imperialist attitudes are expressed in the novels. The essays looked at concepts such as structure, style, theme, and tone, among others. Summer reading this year will include Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*.

## Texts

*The Language of Literature* McDougal-Littell 2002 (primary text)

*England in Literature* Scott-Foresman 1976 (secondary text)

*Sound and Sense* Arp and Perrine (8<sup>th</sup> edition)

*Story and Structure* Arp and Perrine (8<sup>th</sup> edition)

*Othello*

*Macbeth*

*King Lear*

*Hamlet*

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* Tom Stoppard

*The Genius of the Early English Theatre*

Novels from a continually changing list (2 or 3 depending on time)—novels such as

<i>Brave New</i>	1984	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
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<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>
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<i>Jude the Obscure</i>	<i>Return of the Native</i>	<i>Waterland</i>
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*Flaubert's Parrot*

MLA Handbook

## Supplemental texts

*The Conscious Reader* Allyn & Bacon 2001 (8<sup>th</sup> edition)

*Literature: Options for Reading and Writing* Harper & Row 1985

*Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* McGraw Hill 2002

*Literature and Interpretive Techniques* Harper & Row 1986

*A Short Guide to Writing about Literature* Barnett, and Cain

## Sequence of chronological content

### The Anglo Saxon and Medieval Periods

1. *Beowulf*—Students read Kevin Crossley-Holland's *Beowulf* as well as portions of *Beowulf* by Burton Raffel and Seamus Haney and write an essay comparing the three transliterations. The paper focuses on such ideas as figurative language, imagery, and tone.
2. selected portions of *Grendel* by John Gardner
3. Everyman
4. Anglo-Saxon lyric verse
5. Chaucer—the Prologue, the Wife's Tale and the Pardoner's Tale  
Students write an essay on Chaucer. Students select their topics from a list of options they are given. (The list is below.)

a. Discuss the Chaucer's view of the medieval clergy as revealed through the poet's religious pilgrims.

b. "The Pardoner's Tale" qualifies as an allegory, a story in which abstractions such as death appear as characters or personifications. Does Death actually appear in the story?

c. One of Chaucer's strengths is his ability to draw enduring portraits of human nature. What universal characteristics do you see in his portraits of the three young men? In what ways do you suppose readers might be expected to identify with these three rioters?

d. The old man in the story has fascinated many readers. What do you think is his function? In what ways does he appear to be a mythic or archetypal character? What is the meaning of his plea, "dear, Mother, let me in...?"

e. "The Pardoner's Tale" appears in a sermon preached against familiar sins, especially gluttony and avarice. Do you think the story is particularly Christian? Does the tale present religious values or social values? What is the difference?

f. Look at the appropriateness of a tale to the teller of the tale. Analyze the Wife of Bath's tale and examine the Wife's views on the topic of "sovereinitee" (or dominance) in marriage as revealed in her Prologue. Then look at how her opinions on the subject influence her tale. Consider the Wife's creation of the old woman and the importance she places on female sexuality as the main tool for gaining power, or "sovereinitee," in marriage. Does the Wife reveal her fear of growing old and losing her most powerful weapon through the character of the old woman?

6. medieval ballads
7. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—In class timed essay comparing/contrasting the epic of the Anglo-Saxons and the romance of the middle ages. Student papers examine character, setting, and motivation for action.

(If time allows, students read *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, *The Second Shepherd's Play*, and selections from Margery Kempe's journals.)

#### The English Renaissance

1. Elizabethan sonnets and lyric verse
2. *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*  
Students write an 8-10 page essay discussing the great philosophical question of the Elizabethan world—the conflict between passion and reason--through a close reading of the four Shakespearean plays.
3. Milton—selections from *Paradise Lost*
4. selections from Addison, Steele, Defoe, Swift, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sam Johnson, and James Boswell.

#### Pre-Romantics and Romantics

selections from William Blake, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, John Keats

#### The Victorians

selections from Tennyson, Browning (Robert and Elizabeth), Arnold, Hopkins, Hardy, Housman

#### Early Modernism

selections from Yeats, Lawrence, Auden, Spender, Thomas, Brooke, Sassoon, Orwell

#### Contemporary writers

selections from Lessing, Spark, Heany, Hughes, Stevie Smith, Gordimer, Achebe, Wolcott, Rosencrantz and *Guildestern Are Dead*

### **Non-chronological areas of study**

#### **Unit on poetry**

*Sound and Sense* is the foundation for the poetry review, and we focus on these areas.

1. how to read a poem
2. denotation and connotation
3. imagery

4. figurative language
5. tone
6. meter

### **Research paper**

Choose any novelist, poet, or playwright, and by a careful study of the works and of the time period, show how the writer holds up a mirror to his age.

This assignment will necessitate reading works of the writer you select as well as researching the time period. When you are ready to discuss your choice, please be prepared to talk about the works you will be reading, an overview of the historical research you are considering, and a general idea of the angle from which you will approach your subject. Remember that in making your decision you must have adequate support for your thesis.

If you wish to branch out from the British literature reading list and explore the world, here are some other possibilities.

Gustave Flaubert	Franz Kafka	Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Fyodor Dostoevsky	Anton Chekov	Nadine Gordimer
Henrik Ibsen	Milan Kundera	Moliere
Emile Zola	Herman Hesse	Chinua Achebe
Frederico Garcia Lorca	Gunter Grass	

### **preparation for AP exam**

1. timed writing