



AP[®] English Language & Composition

Syllabus

Course Description

Students in AP[®] English Language and Composition study how writers use language to create meaning. Students will read and analyze a variety of nonfiction genres including essays, journalism articles, political writings, science writings, nature writings, autobiographies, biographies, diaries, speeches, history writings, and criticisms. The main focus is on writing expository, analytical, and argumentative essays and analyzing the works of writers who are listed in the AP English Course Description. In addition to writing, students will also study visual rhetoric such as photographs, advertisements, and political cartoons. As suggested in the AP English Course Description, students learn to “read primary and secondary sources carefully, to synthesize material from these texts in their own compositions, and to cite sources using conventions recommended by the Modern Language Association (MLA).” The class is structured around teaching reading and writing skills, honed by the close reading and writing of original student essays, many of which result from several revisions. This content is presented in an online course through which students view lectures from experienced, highly qualified instructors, access nonfiction rhetoric (written and visual), and practice close reading and writing skills with continual feedback from instructors via phone, instant messages, e-mails, discussion threads, and live chats.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Textbooks

Shea, R. et al. (2013). *The language of composition: Reading – writing – rhetoric*. (2nd ed.) Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

This earlier edition of the text is also compatible:

Shea, R. et al. (2007). *The language of composition: Reading – writing – rhetoric*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

Outside Texts

Ehrenreich, B. (2002). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York, NY: Holt.

Krakauer, J. (1996). *Into the wild*. New York, NY: Villard.

McCourt, F. (1996). *Angela’s ashes: A memoir*. New York, NY: Scribner.

Supplemental Websites

<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com> (a compilation of resources, criticisms, suggestions, and texts that are helpful in teaching AP students)

Course Outline

Unit 1 – Introduction to Rhetoric

Topics

- What is Rhetoric?
- Close-Reading Skills
- Argument Appeals and Visual Analysis
- Analyzing Narrative Writing
- The Exam: Writing the Analysis Essay
- The Exam: Close Reading and Preparing for Multiple Choice

Content/Skills

Nonfiction writings from the text *The Language of Composition* are the basis for what is expected in the course, as well as an introduction to rhetoric. Students first study Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle as an introduction to analysis. Assignments based on basic rhetorical strategies accompany the readings. Students study a common strategy, such as diction, and select three passages from the text in which the author has employed specific words to create a specific tone. Citing the text, students write a short essay that explains why the strategy is appropriate for the work. Students are also required to use specific vocabulary employed in the passages in their own essays. Since most students have had little practice with this type of analytical writing, they will revise their essays as they study rhetorical strategies. Students also learn to determine an author’s purpose and succinctly summarize a writer’s main argument through précis writing.

During this first unit, students are introduced to argument appeals and the strategies writers employ in their works to convey meaning and create the appeal. In this introductory period, students will read representative essays that illustrate the appeal being studied. They read and discuss two essays for each appeal, with options for further reading if they would like more practice.

Students use the PATTR graphic organizer to begin evaluating each of the strategies they study:

PATTR

P - Purpose

A - Audience

T - Tone (author’s attitude)

T - Theme (in sentence form)

R - Rhetorical strategy (name of strategy, cite examples from passage)

This structured method introduces students to writing about ways a writer employs a particular device to achieve meaning. The following works help students identify tone and write about devices:

Assignment List

- Précis:

- From “Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau (The Language of Composition) ●
- Optional: From “Nature” by Ralph Waldo Emerson (The Language of Composition)
- Ethos:
 - Alfred Green’s speech to Northern slaves during the Civil War (AP English Language and Composition exam, 2003, question 2)
 - Optional: “A Talk to Teachers” by James Baldwin (The Language of Composition)
- Logos:
 - “The Proper Place for Sports” by Theodore Roosevelt (The Language of Composition) ●
 - “On Dumpster Diving” by Lars Eighner (The Language of Composition)
- Pathos:
 - “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan (The Language of Composition)
 - “Me Talk Pretty One Day” by David Sedaris (<http://www.macobo.com/essays/epdf/Me%20Talk%20Pretty%20One%20Day%20by%20Sedaris.pdf>)
 - Optional: “The Clan of the One-Breasted Women” by Terry Tempest Williams (The Language of Composition)
- Graphics:
 - “We Can Do It!” produced by J. Howard Miller (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/12/We_Can_Do_It%21.jpg)
 - “Migrant Mother” by Dorothea Lange (<http://enticingthelight.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/dorothea-lange-migrant-mother.jpg>)
- Rhetorical analysis:
 - As rhetorical skills are introduced, students graphically organize their analysis under the acronym PATTR. After discussion, teacher review, and practice writing, students revise one PATTR analytical paragraph per week. Each revision is graded and discussed, and the information derived is incorporated into the next PATTR.
- Novel:
 - Students read Angela’s Ashes by Frank McCourt outside class and discuss the author’s purpose for writing this personal memoir. The analysis of this larger piece will be discussed in conjunction with shorter narrative pieces, as students analyze the unique qualities of narrative writing.

Major Assignments/Assessments

- Imitation exercises:
 - After reading several of the essays for the “Introduction to Rhetoric” unit, students pick a passage with personal appeal, regarding content and style. They will copy the passage and then write a passage of their own that imitates the chosen passage and uses the vocabulary of the writer. Students practice imitation exercises with teacher feedback. Students also study peer samples of analytical writing.
- Rhetorical strategies analysis:
 - Rhetorical strategies, the tools of the writer’s trade, are introduced in this unit. Students learn a device and practice analytic and expository writing that explains how a writer employs that device to create meaning. These short writing assignments are used throughout the year to practice writing analysis. The purpose is to teach students how to make logical transitions, integrate quotations, balance generalization and specific illustrative details, and vary sentence structure in well-organized paragraphs.

The assignment includes a paragraph that incorporates the TEAR format (developed by College Board consultant, Linda Davey):

TEAR

T - TAG (title, author, genre) and thematic statement

E - Evidence (incorporate an example from passage into a sentence)

A - Analysis (explain how this strategy contributes to passage meaning)

R - Response (student's response to passage—could include a reference to another work, an observation, or a personal experience)

- Essay:
 - Students write in-class rhetorical analysis essays in this unit. The prompts are taken from the AP English Language and Composition national exams. For the first practice essay, students write a first draft and receive instruction on proper revision strategies. The teacher reads and returns student essays with comments and suggestions for revisions. Students may revise an essay for a second grade. Before writing an essay, students see several essay prompts from past AP national exams. After discussing the prompt and possibilities of organizing an essay, they also see examples of sample student responses before they attempt to write their own essays. For the remaining essays, students are guided through a process in which they read closely, annotate the passage based on the requirements of the prompt, organize their thoughts, and write a cohesive essay within a 40-minute time frame. Students see sample student responses from all levels, taken from past AP exams. The teacher grades these timed essays, supplying comments and helpful advice.
- Novel:
 - Students read *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt. They study a rhetorical strategy McCourt uses to create meaning and fulfill a purpose, explaining his technique and how it contributes to his meaning and tone. Students illustrate this assignment in a variety of ways including graphic representations and PowerPoint presentations.
- Multiple-choice activities:
 - Students learn the basic annotation and close-reading skills necessary for successful completion of the AP English Language and Composition multiple-choice exam. Students practice annotating dense pre- and post-20th century prose to recognize the author's purpose, comprehend difficult language, analyze the author's use of rhetorical strategies to create meaning, and deconstruct common multiple-choice stems. They eventually apply these skills to an actual timed, previously released College Board exam.

Unit 2 – Argument

Topics

- Argument Essays
- The Exam: Writing the Argument Essay
- Analyzing Extended Argument
- Creating Personal Arguments **Content/Skills**
- PATTR:
 - Students continue to practice writing analytical and expository paragraphs throughout this unit with PATTR assignments. The students will base their PATTR assignments on passages that cover a variety of subjects including public policies, popular culture, narratives, and science. The passages are taken from *The Language of Composition*.
- In-class essays:
 - Now that students have been writing analytical and expository short assignments, they begin a new focus on writing timed argumentative essays. They are introduced to argumentative writing by reading essays from *The Language of Composition* and other sources. Because the subjects of this style of writing are usually relevant to the students and because they have a good arsenal of tools, they are generally ready to ease into learning the basics of argumentation. Students learn about the vocabulary associated with argumentative writing: assertions, claims, concessions, fallacies, and appeals. They research

controversial topics and practice writing their own argumentative essays. Students write at least one imitation argument, based on a selection such as “Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau, which they read in the first unit. In addition to learning to write an argument, students also learn how to effectively analyze an argument. The basic tenets of rhetoric that students first analyzed help them structure their own arguments.

- Novel:
 - Students read *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich.

Major Assignments/Assessments

- Since students are beginning to study argumentation in this unit, they use another graphic organizer for analysis called PASAFE (also developed by College Board consultant, Linda Davey):

PASAFE

P - Purpose (writer’s intent)

A - Audience

S - Strategy (one rhetorical strategy the author uses)

A - Appeals (assess an example of pathos or logos)

F - Fallacies (assess a logical, emotional, or ethical fallacy)

E - Ethos (an example of how the author creates ethos)

The assignment includes a paragraph, which incorporates the TARE format:

TARE

T - TAG (title, author, genre) and thematic statement

A - Appeal (noted and explained)

R - Rhetorical (an example of a device used in the passage)

E - Evaluate (why the argument was successful or not, including author’s use of fallacies, if necessary)

- Typical passages that students analyze (taken from *The Language of Composition*):
 - “Education” by Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - “Best in Class” by Margaret Talbot
 - “The Atlanta Exposition Address” by Booker T. Washington
 - “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” by Peter Singer
 - “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read” by Francine Prose • “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Like the PATTR, PASAFE is used to practice reading closely and analyzing argumentation. Argumentation is the emphasis for the rest of the unit.
- Essays:
 - Students write four timed essays in this unit. They respond to a brief quote, an open-ended prompt, a longer passage, and a current debate. Prompts are taken from past AP English Language exams. Students may use the Ruskin prompt to analyze argument and the Milan Kundera prompt to write an argumentative essay. After students have considered the prompt and sample essays, and after reviewing their previous essays with teacher comments, they may revise two of the essays for a second grade. The semester exam is a mini synthesis essay. Students research political cartoons using a website such as Gocomics.com or any reputable newspaper. They choose two cartoons by two different artists on the same subject, and then research the topic using at least two reputable sources. They synthesize the sources into a onepage expository essay

that concludes with their own opinion. Students are required to use the MLA style of documentation to write a works cited page.

- Novel:
 - Students read *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich. After a series of lectures, students are asked to consider the source of Ehrenreich’s ethos as well as her uses of pathos and logos to create her argument about the condition of the working poor. Individually, students find other more recent editorials and essays by Ehrenreich to consider changes in this argument or other issues about which she has similarly passionate views. Students create a graphic representation of their findings in some sort of comparison form (T-chart, etc.). In addition, students find editorials or opinionated essays that oppose Ehrenreich’s view, find strengths and fallacies in those arguments, and present their findings in journal form.
- Multiple choice:
 - Students continue using passages from previously released exams to practice multiple-choice skills and keep a journal of the vocabulary used in the exams. Knowing the format and the language used in multiple-choice exams will help them on the AP exam, as well as on the SAT and the ACT exams.
- Personal argument:
 - Students compose a narrative essay, which is based on childhood photographs. They choose a personal photograph, or series of related photographs, and consider what argument they would like to make about themselves after reflecting on the photograph(s). They work through the process of creating a descriptive narrative to implicitly communicate a specific argument about themselves.

Unit 3 – Synthesis

Topics

- Analyzing Synthesis
- The Exam: Writing the Synthesis Essay
- Writing a Research Paper **Content/Skills**
- Researched argumentative writing:
 - With the inclusion of the new synthesis essay on the national exam, students continue to practice research papers this unit. They begin by analyzing synthesized arguments as a basis for writing their own. Next, they create another synthesis essay like the one they wrote in the second unit, based on outside research. The second synthesis essay is from a released AP English Language and Composition exam. Students consider this prompt via teacher lectures and read several sample student responses, noting in particular how explicit and implicit citations are used. They practice writing the introduction and citing sources into paragraphs. After the teacher provides feedback on these practice exercises, students use the prompt and their notes to write the essay on their own. The teacher reviews the essays and makes suggestions, and students make revisions. The teacher reads the essays again and makes comments, which are incorporated into the next synthesis essay.
- Argumentative, expository, and analytical practice:
 - Students continue practicing reading closely, writing about nonfiction, and analyzing the passages using the PATTR and PASAFE formats. These assignments are done as homework, and are followed up by teacher discussion. Many of the writings are examples of political, science, and nature writings taken from our text, *The Language of Composition*:
 - “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift
 - “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell
 - “Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson
 - “On Seeing England for the First Time” by Jamaica Kincaid
- Essays:

- The synthesis essay is added to timed analytical and argumentative essays. Students write three timed synthesis essays. After discussion and peer review, students receive the teacher’s comments. They may revise two essays to turn in for a second grade.
- Novel:
 - Students read *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer.

Major Assignments/Assessments

- Essays:
 - Students study typical synthesis essay prompts and practice creating thesis statements, analyzing sources, synthesizing source material as part of their larger argument implicitly and explicitly, and using outside examples and experiences appropriately within the timed essays.
- Multiple choice:
 - Students continue using passages from previously released exams to practice multiple-choice skills.
- Mini research paper:
 - Students continue demonstrating their understanding of how to write a synthesis essay by writing a mini research paper. Students research political cartoons or another piece of visual rhetoric, choose two on one subject, and then research an article on the same subject. Using these documents, they synthesize them, with citations, into a cohesive one-page essay that explains each, and concludes with the student’s own opinion on the subject. Students are required to use the MLA style of documentation to write a works cited page. Graphics, including political cartoons, provide the basis for the subject and Internet research provides the text.

Unit 4 – Exam and Grammar Practice

Topics

- Essays
- Multiple Choice
- Narrative Synthesis

Content/Skills

- Review:
 - Students review essay organization and timed essay strategies for annotation, précis, analysis, argument, source assessment, and synthesis writing.
- Review:
 - Students review multiple-choice strategies within time constraints.
- Narrative synthesis:
 - Students revisit their photo memoirs and incorporate sources to establish a more sophisticated and researched argument.

Major Assignments/Assessments

- Review:
 - This final unit is a review of the skills students have learned throughout the year. However, students continue to practice writing and reading nonfiction that focuses on autobiography, biography, diary, and history. The PASAFE and PATTR passages (all from *The Language of Composition*) include:
 - “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” by Henry David Thoreau
 - “The Proper Place for Sports” by Theodore Roosevelt

- “Aria: Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood” by Richard Rodriguez
 - “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau
- Multiple choice:
 - We continue practicing with passages from the AP English Language exams as well as keeping journals of vocabulary and rhetorical devices.
 - Essays:
 - In class, timed essays taken from past AP English Language and Composition exams are written for all three genres: analysis, argument, and synthesis. With each essay, the instructor discusses student responses to these prompts, either before or after students write their essays. The teacher’s comments are included when the essays are returned.
 - Narrative synthesis project:
 - The assignment is to springboard off the photo memoir from unit 2. Students revisit their essays and research a historical event that occurred during the time period, or they select information from primary sources, such as family letters or documents, that will provide background for the paper. Students rework their essays to incorporate that information to argue a point that is based on the graphic and textual sources, and cite the sources implicitly and explicitly. This final essay is a culmination of the writing students have practiced throughout the year.
 - National AP exam:
 - Students are expected to take the AP English and Composition exam, which coincides with the end of the school year.