AP ENGLISH
LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTIONS, SUMMER READING, AND COURSE OVERVIEW

Introductions:

Students will be introduced to the class and its expectations. This includes the content we will be studying, which is American Literature, as well as the number and types of assignments that the students can expect from this AP course. During these first weeks of school we will cover the terms that the students are expected to know for class, we will study different areas of composition, and the students will be introduced to the AP practice multiple choice exams and essays that they will be given periodically throughout the school year. Finally, we will spend this time going over their summer reading assignments.

Summer Reading:

The students are assigned two summer reading assignments each year. These change from summer to summer. The first piece is always over the IRT play that the students will be seeing in the fall (This is usually a Shakespearean piece.); the second is either over the IRT play that the students will be seeing in the spring or it will cover a piece of American Literature which we do not have time to cover in our regular curriculum. Examples would be Henry James’s *Turn of the Screw*, Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, etc.

Students are responsible for obtaining their own copies of the summer reading and for having the two pieces read by the first day of school. The first week back students are given a basic 25 question multiple choice exam over each text in order to hold them accountable for the reading. They are also assigned an essay over each. The essays not only test for knowledge and understanding of the reading, but they are also used as a springboard for lessons over composition.

We then thoroughly discuss these summer reading assignments.

Classroom Texts:

The major text for this course is:

Students are also given copies of the following two texts:
All other smaller pieces of literature are copied from another source and distributed to the students. All of the large pieces of literature (novels and plays) are provided for the students (excluding, of course, the summer reading assignments).

Please note that because this course also counts for the students’ American Literature credit, they must be exposed to writers from other countries prior to entering the class. The honors classes (which feed directly into the AP classes offered here) fully prepare students in this area. Prior to entering the AP Literature and Composition course, students have studied such great and classic texts as *Cyrano*, *The Odyssey*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, etc. They have also been exposed to poems from all different places and from all different time periods.

Furthermore, AP Literature and Composition students get a sample of non-American texts in the form of summer reading, as well as in the practice multiple choice and essay exams that we do throughout the school year. Each sample piece is discussed and analyzed thoroughly.

**Grading:**

The largest portion of a student’s grade comes from the writing assignments. However, students are also graded over class participation, small quizzes, and the end-of-the-unit tests.

Although students do a lot of out-of-class and in-class writing, it is obviously impossible for me to be able to grade all of it. Some of the assignments that I choose not to grade are used in class for lessons over grammar or composition. Others are graded by their peers. The peer grading is beneficial on both ends of the spectrum. While they are grading, they are gaining a better understanding of the AP rubric. When they are finished, they are provided with valuable feedback from individuals other than myself. This, hopefully, either reinforces points that I have been making about their writing, or it hits on problem areas that I have not.

**Rewriting:**

Rewriting is a necessary part of the writing process. Therefore, students are often (although not always) given the opportunity to revise their written work throughout the school year. At the very least, students are asked to make corrections to every other graded writing assignment.

**Vocabulary:**

Text: *Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level H*

We cover all 15 units throughout the course of the school year. Students are encouraged to then use these terms in both their everyday lives, as well as in their writing assignments.
Testing over the individual vocabulary lessons consists of students being required to correctly use 10 out of the 20 words in well-written sentences of their own. They are graded on both usage and spelling.

**Reading Responses:**

Aside from the out-of-class writing assignments and the in-class, 40 minute, practice AP essays, students are also frequently asked to complete reading responses over their homework assignments. This is especially true when the students are reading the larger bodies of works – the novels and the plays. Included on the following page is the reading response handout that is distributed to the students.

These small writing assignments are mostly shared by the students during in-class discussions. However, every now and then (and unknown to the students ahead of time) they are collected and graded.
READING RESPONSES

GUIDELINES

The “Topics List” that begins at the bottom of this page gives ways to look into literature.

Each reading response should be a full page, typed, double-spaced, with 12 point Times font and 1” margins. These are not to exceed two full pages in length, each.

Type your name in the top right-hand corner. Under it, type the name of the novel that you are covering. Under that, type the chapters you are covering. Skip two lines and in bold print type the topic (from the list of five below) that you have chosen. Skip two more lines and you are ready to begin. Note that this part should all be single-spaced. Only your actual response should be double-spaced.

When writing each reading response, use only one of the five topics listed below, and narrow your focus to that topic (thesis or main idea). No summaries of the chapters are permitted. Each response should be an analysis of some sort.

For each idea in your response, you are required to provide concrete examples and references by using quotations and citing specific page numbers from the text.

Both your content and your composition skills will be graded, so please think about what you are writing, and proofread carefully. Also note that points will be deducted from your overall score if all of the above directions (type specs., etc.) are not followed.

TOPICS LIST

Values Clarification
List the values you think the narrator/speaker, author, or a character has, and point to a couple of passages that show the values you find. For instance, the narrator or a character may value money or may value beauty. Love may be the most important to a character. A character may value individuality. Point to 3 to 4 places that might show these values.

Character Description
Look at how the speaker or narrator describes him/herself or how a particular character is described. List some descriptions or actions and say what this shows about the person being described. What is he or she like? Do you like him or her? Are there any inconsistencies or conflicts? Sometimes narrators or speakers can be unreliable. Is this speaker reliable? When dealing with poetry, don’t confuse the speaker/narrator of the poem with the author/poet. Point to 3 to 4 passages to support your ideas.
Subjects or Issues Raised
List the issues that the text raises and point to 3 to 4 passages that pertain to these issues. How does your opinion about these issues compare with what the narrator, author, or character seems to think? Does the text give you a different way of looking at an issue or a subject?

Setting/Mood/Imagery
Make a list of images that develop a common feeling or mood. What is the dominant feeling? Are there any tensions or conflicts? What is the dominant impression? Any patterns? List phrases and passages. What feelings or thoughts does the text provoke?

Compare/Contrast
Compare this piece of literature to another that you have read. Look at imagery, themes or issues, values, narrators or characters, etc. Remember to compare like to like, i.e. imagery to imagery, narrator to narrator, etc. List specific phrases, events, etc. to show what you mean.
UNIT TWO: THE PURITAN PERIOD

The goal is for students to leave this unit with an understanding of the historical, literary, and human aspects of this time period. Students will be reading valuable and representative pieces from the time period, they will be reading pieces that are somehow related to the time period, and they will be asked to respond to these pieces of literature in essay form. At the end of this unit, in order to test their knowledge, students will be given unidentified pieces of literature and asked to state whether or not these pieces of literature come from this particular time period.

Texts from the time period:

1. John Smith, from The General History of Virginia (Perkins)
2. William Bradford, from Of Plymouth Plantation (Perkins)
3. Anne Bradstreet, “To My Dear and Loving Husband” and “Upon the Burning of Our House” (Perkins)
4. Edward Taylor, “Huswifery” (Perkins) and “Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold” (Prentice Hall)
6. Cotton Mather, from The Wonders of the Invisible World (Perkins)

Additional texts:

1. Stephen Vincent Benet, “Trials at Salem” taken from We Aren’t Superstitious (Carlsen) and “The Devil and Daniel Webster” (Great American Stories)
2. Arthur Miller, The Crucible (Miller)
3. Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery” (Carlsen)
4. Washington Irving, “The Devil and Tom Walker” (Great American Stories)
5. Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown” (Perkins)

Sources:


Sample writing assignments:

1. Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay comparing and contrasting The General History of Virginia to Of Plymouth Plantation. Such areas as style, purpose, objectivity, accuracy, and content should be considered, and specific examples and passages from
both works must be given for support. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

2. Out-of-Class Essay: The literature of this time period is important because of what it reveals about the lives of the settlers, as well as what it reveals about their attitudes and values. Write an essay in which you discuss the historical significance of early American literature, as well as what it reveals about the lives, beliefs, and attitudes of the people of this time period. Evidence from at least three of the selections read must be used. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

3. Out-of-Class Essay: Bias means “partiality” or an inclination toward a certain position. Although Cotton Mather’s report is supposedly an objective account of the trial, his choice of words makes it clear that in reality his report is written from a biased point of view. Write an essay in which you discuss Mather’s diction, and show how his diction clearly indicates a negative attitude toward Martha Carrier. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

4. Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay in which you discuss the persuasive techniques used in Jonathan Edwards’s “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Then explain why his choices were appropriate for his audience, setting, and purpose. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

5. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: Many times in literature a character is tempted to make a decision that runs counter to his/her sense of morality, loyalty, social position, or upbringing. In Arthur Miller’s The Crucible, there is such a character who is tempted to act against his/her moral, social or spiritual foundation. In a well-organized essay, show what decision the character makes, and indicate how that decision later impacts both the character and the work as a whole. (Prompt taken from Vogel, Richard, and Charles F. Winans. Multiple-Choice and Free Response Questions in Preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination. 6th ed. New York: D&S Marketing Systems, 2001.)
UNIT THREE: THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The goal is for students to leave this unit with an understanding of the historical, literary, and human aspects of this time period. Students will be reading valuable and representative pieces from or related to the time period; they will be focusing on both the recognition and the usage of the following literary terms: metaphor, simile, aphorism, repetition, restatement, parallelism, and rhetorical questions; and they will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge of these pieces of literature in written form. At the end of this unit, in order to test their knowledge, students will be given unidentified pieces of literature and asked to state whether or not these pieces of literature come from this particular time period.

Texts from the time period:

1. Benjamin Franklin, from Poor Richard's Almanack (Perkins); from The Autobiography (Perkins); and “Dialogue Between Franklin and the Gout” (Prentice Hall)
2. Patrick Henry, “Speech in the Virginia Convention” (Perkins)
3. Thomas Paine, “The American Crisis” (Perkins)
4. Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence” (Perkins)
5. St. Jean De Crevecoeur, “What is an American?” from Letters from an American Farmer (Perkins)
6. Francis Scott Key, “The Star-Spangled Banner” (Key)

Additional texts:

1. John Steinbeck, “America & Americans” (Steinbeck)
2. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Paul Revere’s Ride” (Longfellow)

Sources:


Sample writing assignments:

1. Out-of-Class Essay: The Colonial Period is often called the Age of Reason because it was characterized by an emphasis on reason and logic. Write an essay in which you analyze how the process of reasoning was used in at least two of the selections
2. Out-of-Class Essay: “The Declaration of Independence” and “Speech in the Virginia Convention” are both powerful arguments for American independence. In what ways are the two arguments similar? In what ways are they different? Write an essay in which you analyze the similarities and differences in format, content, and persuasive techniques. Passages from both selections should be used to support your arguments. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

3. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: The following passage comes from Michel-Guillaume-Jean de Crevecoeur’s Letters from an American Farmer (1782). Read the selection carefully, and then write an essay in which you analyze Crevecoeur’s attitude toward Europeans and Americans, concentrating on how his diction reflects his opinions. (Prompt taken from Casson, Allan. Cliffs Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Preparation Guide. Nebraska: Cliffs Notes, 1993.)

4. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: The emotional effect a poem or story has on its reader is called mood. Choose and reread one stanza from “Paul Revere’s Ride.” Think about the emotional effect the words have on you; then describe the mood that is created. Discuss what literary elements Longfellow used to create this mood.

Other:

5. Each student must write and present a three to five minute speech titled, “What Is An American?” In this speech students must obviously attempt to define what it is to be an American in modern times. Students are also required to show their understanding of the literary terms studied in this unit by having at least one aphorism, one instance of repetition, one instance of parallelism, one instance of restatement, and one rhetorical question in their speeches. Finally, students are required to incorporate one metaphor or simile into their speeches, comparing an American to something unusual. A visual of this unusual item must be brought in and shared with the class during the three to five minute speech.
UNIT FOUR: ROMANTICISM AND THE NEW ENGLAND RENAISSANCE

The goal is for students to leave this unit with an understanding of the historical, literary, and human aspects of this time period. Students will be reading valuable and representative pieces from the time period, and they will be asked to respond to these pieces of literature in essay form. At the end of this unit, in order to test their knowledge, students will be given unidentified pieces of literature and asked to state whether or not these pieces of literature come from this particular time period.

Texts from the time period:

1. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne); “The Minister’s Black Veil” (Perkins); “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (Perkins); and “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment” (*Great American Stories*)
2. William Cullen Bryant, “To a Waterfowl” and “Thanatopsis” (Perkins)
3. James Fenimore Cooper, from *The Pioneers* and from *The Prairie* (Perkins)
5. Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (Oates); “The Cask of Amontillado” (Perkins); “The Black Cat” (Poe); “The Fall of the House of Usher” (Perkins); “The Oval Portrait” (Prentice Hall); “The Masque of the Red Death” (*Great American Stories*); and “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” (Poe)
6. Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” (Melville) and “Art” (Melville)
7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature* (Perkins); from *Self-Reliance* (Perkins); “The American Scholar” (Perkins); “The Poet” (Emerson); “The Divinity School Address” (Perkins); “The Over-Soul” (Perkins); “Concord Hymn” (Perkins); and “The Snowstorm” (Prentice Hall)
8. Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden* and from *Civil Disobedience* (Perkins)
9. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “The Skeleton in Armor” (Prentice Hall); “The Arsenal at Springfield” (Perkins); and “The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls” (Perkins)
10. Oliver Wendell Holmes, “Old Ironsides” and “The Chambered Nautilus” (Perkins)

Sources:

Scarlet Letter writing assignments:

1. Out-of-Class Essays: Throughout our study of The Scarlet Letter, each student will be asked to pick out an individual passage from each reading assignment and type an analysis of the chosen passage. Students will need to thoroughly discuss the symbolism, etc. that Hawthorne uses in the passage, as well as discuss the importance of the passage to the work as a whole. The purpose of such writing assignments is to get students to slow down and read the text more critically, instead of just reading to find out what happens at the end of the story.

2. In-Class Essay: Read the following passages from The Scarlet Letter carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze both what and who the light might symbolize; do the same of the brook. Be sure to reference the text, as well as pull in previous passages/knowledge of the novel to support your ideas.

3. In-Class Essay: Read the following passages from The Scarlet Letter carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze Hawthorne’s use of symbolism and explain the significance of these symbols to the work as a whole.

4. In-Class Essay: Read the following passages from The Scarlet Letter carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, explain how the “Black Man” being described is all three of the following: Satan, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth. Be sure to reference the text, as well as pull in previous passages/knowledge of the novel to support your ideas.

5. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: In Act III, scene II of Shakespeare’s King Lear, the central character proclaims, “I am a man more sinn’d against than sinning.” In The Scarlet Letter there is a character that seems to be “more sinn’d against than sinning.” Identify the character and, using specific references to the text, indicate the reasons why the character feels this way and whether or not you believe the feeling is justified. (Prompt taken from Vogel, Richard, and Charles F. Winans. Multiple-Choice and Free Response Questions in Preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination. 6th ed. New York: D&S Marketing Systems, 2001.)

Other sample writing assignments:

6. Out-of-Class Essay: The setting is the time and place in which the events in a work of literature occur. Setting may directly or indirectly affect the characters and
events of a piece of literature, and it may be related to the theme, as well. Choose one or both of the Cooper excerpts and write an essay in which you discuss the relationship of the setting to the characters, events, and/or themes of the piece(s). (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

7. Out-of-Class Essay: The Romantics had a strong interest in mystery and the supernatural. Write an essay in which you analyze how this interest is reflected in three of the Poe selections that we have read. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

OR Out-of-Class Essay: The Romantics had a strong interest in mystery and the supernatural. Write an essay in which you analyze how this interest is reflected in the Poe, Hawthorne, and Irving selections that we have read. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

8. Out-of-Class Essay: Although all the writers in this unit were Romantics, they each had slightly different concerns and approaches to writing. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the Poe, Hawthorne, and Irving works we have read, showing the different and similar Romantic qualities of each. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

OR Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay in which you define Romanticism and, using specific examples from the texts we have read, explain what makes the writings of Poe, Hawthorne, and Irving typical Romantic pieces.

9. Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay in which you compare and contrast Poe’s “The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether” to Melville’s “Benito Cereno.”

10. Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay in which you explain what makes the Longfellow and Holmes pieces that we read typical Fireside Poet poems.

OR Out-of-Class Essay: Although the Fireside Poets shared a common purpose, the poems they created were often quite different from one another. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the Longfellow and Holmes pieces that we have read. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)


OR Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay in which you define Transcendentalism and explain how the Thoreau and Emerson pieces that we read are typical Transcendentalist pieces.
Out-of-Class Essay: While the Transcendentalists, the Anti-Transcendentalists, and the Fireside Poets had very different philosophies and concerns, they were all part of the Romantic movement that began in the early 1800’s. Write an essay in which you discuss how each of the three categories listed above still falls under the Romantic movement. Specific examples from the authors and texts that we read should be used as support. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

Other:

The writers of this time period were clearly fond of the allegory. In celebration of this, each student will write an allegory of his/her own to share with the class.
UNIT FIVE: THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD

The goal is for students to leave this unit with an understanding of the historical, literary, and human aspects of this time period. Students will be reading valuable and representative pieces from the time period, and they will be asked to respond to these pieces of literature in essay form. This specific unit will also be focusing on poetry, in general (terms, techniques, devices, forms, etc.). At the end of this unit, in order to test their knowledge, students will be asked to state whether unidentified pieces of literature were written by Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, or someone else. Students will also be tested over their general poetry knowledge.

Texts from the time period:

1. Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address” (Perkins)
2. Walt Whitman, Preface to Leaves of Grass (Perkins); “Song of Myself” (Perkins); “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (Perkins); “There Was a Child Went Forth” (Perkins); “A Noiseless Patient Spider” (Perkins); “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” (Prentice Hall); “I Hear America Singing” (Whitman); and “O Captain! My Captain!” (Whitman)
3. Emily Dickinson, a wide selection of poetry (Perkins)

Sources:


Sample writing assignments:


2. Out-of-Class Essay: Walt Whitman’s use of free verse reflects his belief in freedom, democracy, and individuality. Write an essay in which you analyze the appropriateness of this form of verse in relation to at least two of the Whitman poems that we have read. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)
3. Out-of-Class Essay: A critic once stated that Emily Dickinson’s poetry “is exploration on a variety of levels of the ultimate meaning of life itself and equally important of the depths and heights of her own inner nature.” Using evidence from the Dickinson poems that we have read, write an essay in which you support this critic’s statement. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

4. Out-of-Class Essay: Style refers to the way in which a writer expresses his or her thoughts. Each writer has his or her own distinctive style. As a result, we can often distinguish the work of different writers by examining style. Considering this, write an essay in which you analyze the unique characteristics of Emily Dickinson’s and Walt Whitman’s styles. Examples from the selections read must be used. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

5. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: The following is Emily Dickinson’s “The birds began at four o’clock.” Read the selection carefully, and then write an essay in which you show how the language of each stanza reveals the perceptions and feelings of the speaker. (Prompt taken from Casson, Allan. Cliffs Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Preparation Guide. Nebraska: Cliffs Notes, 1993.)

6. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: The following is Emily Dickinson’s “I never lost as much but twice.” Read the poem carefully, and then write an essay in which you briefly summarize its content and discuss how the diction and imagery reveal the speaker’s attitude toward religious belief. (Prompt taken from Casson, Allan. Cliffs Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Preparation Guide. Nebraska: Cliffs Notes, 1993.)

Note: Other 40 minute, in-class, practice AP, poetry-focused prompts (over poets other than Whitman and Dickinson), taken from various AP prep sources, will be given during this unit.

Other:

7. Students will write and share poetry of their own throughout this unit.
UNIT SIX: THE REALISTS, NATURALISTS, AND REGIONALISTS

The goal is for students to leave this unit with an understanding of the historical, literary, and human aspects of this time period. Students will be reading valuable and representative pieces from the time period, and they will be asked to respond to these pieces of literature in essay form. At the end of this unit, in order to test their knowledge, students will be given unidentified pieces of literature and asked to state whether or not these pieces of literature come from this particular time period.

Texts from the time period:

1. Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (Crane); “Do Not Weep, Maiden, for War Is Kind” (Perkins); “The Wayfarer” (Perkins); “A Man Said to the Universe” (Perkins); “Think as I Think” (Prentice Hall); and “The Open Boat” (Perkins)
2. Jack London, “To Build a Fire” (Perkins)
3. Bret Harte, “The Outcasts of Poker Flat” (Perkins)
4. Mark Twain, “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (Perkins); “How to Tell a Story” (Perkins); “About Barbers” (Twain); “A Literary Nightmare” (Twain); *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain)
5. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (Perkins)

Sources:


Sample writing assignments:

1. Out-of-Class Essay: During the late nineteenth century, writers turned away from Romanticism and began to focus on depicting life as it was actually lived. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast one of the romantic pieces that we read with a realistic piece from this unit. (Prompt taken from *Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

2. Out-of-Class Essay: The conflict of a literary work is often closely related to the theme or general idea. For example, the theme of a story in which the conflict is between
a character and fate might be that people are sometimes unable to control their own destinies. What do you think is the theme of “To Build a Fire”? How is the story’s conflict related to this theme? Write an essay in which you answer these questions by discussing the relationship between the conflict and the theme in this piece of literature. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

3. Out-of-Class Essay: Using the Jack London and Stephen Crane pieces that we have read in class, write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two authors and their works. The similarities and differences in style, theme, characterization, and conflict need to be considered. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

4. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: Injustice, either social or personal, is a common theme in literature. The Jungle is a novel in which injustice is important. Write an essay in which you define clearly the nature of the injustice in The Jungle and discuss the techniques the author employs to elicit sympathy for its victim or victims. (Prompt taken from Casson, Allan. Cliffs Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Preparation Guide. Nebraska: Cliffs Notes, 1993.)

5. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: Oftentimes in literature an ostensibly humorous scene or episode may be underscored by a much more serious purpose. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn has many such scenes or episodes. Pick one of these scenes or episodes and, in a well-organized essay, explain what elements make the scene humorous and show how these elements mask the scene’s more serious message. (Prompt taken from Vogel, Richard, and Charles F. Winans. Multiple-Choice and Free Response Questions in Preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination. 6th ed. New York: D&S Marketing Systems, 2001.)

6. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: Sometimes in literature an unexpected, unsettling, even traumatic experience propels the character who experiences it on a physical or spiritual journey of self-discovery. The Red Badge of Courage is such a piece of literature. In a well-organized essay, illustrate what type of journey the main character undertakes, as well as to what new understanding of self he comes. (Prompt taken from Vogel, Richard, and Charles F. Winans. Multiple-Choice and Free Response Questions in Preparation for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination. 6th ed. New York: D&S Marketing Systems, 2001.)

Other:

7. Looking at the short Mark Twain pieces that we have read, and following his advice in “How to Tell a Story,” each student is to create his or her own humorous short story, complete with exaggeration, regional dialects, etc. These will be shared with the rest of the class.
UNIT SEVEN: THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PERIODS

To finish out the school year, the goal is for students to sample some of the pieces of literature that were written in the modern to contemporary times. Students will be reading valuable and representative pieces from these two periods, and they will be asked to respond to these pieces of literature in essay form. We will study as many pieces from these two time periods as time permits.

An example of SOME of the texts that will be studied from these time periods:

2. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald)
3. Robert Frost, a wide selection of poetry (Perkins)
4. John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (Steinbeck)
5. Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” (Perkins)

Sources:


Sample writing assignments:

1. Out-of-Class Essay: Write an essay in which you compare and contrast Robert Frost’s poetry to the poetry from one or more of the previous time periods we have studied. (Prompt taken from Prentice Hall Literature, The American Experience. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.)

2. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: Many plays and novels that focus upon the courtship or marriage of a man and a woman include a second pair who help to define the central figures. Write a well-organized essay in which you discuss how the secondary man and woman in The Great Gatsby illuminate the central characters of the work. (Prompt taken from Casson, Allan. Cliffs Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Preparation Guide. Nebraska: Cliffs Notes, 1993.)

3. In-Class, 40 Minute, Practice AP Essay: Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. The Grapes of Wrath is a piece of literature in which such a character plays a significant role. Write an essay in which you identify this character and show how this character’s alienation reveals the surrounding society’s