

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION



About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] has enabled millions of students to take college-level courses and earn college credit, advanced placement, or both, while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible to receive college credit and/or placement into advanced courses in college. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP English Program

The AP Program offers two courses in English studies, each designed to provide high school students the opportunity to engage with a typical introductory-level college English curriculum.

The AP English Language and Composition course focuses on the development and revision of evidence-based analytic and argumentative writing and the rhetorical analysis of nonfiction texts.

The AP English Literature and Composition course focuses on reading, analyzing, and writing about imaginative literature (fiction, poetry, drama) from various periods.

There is no prescribed sequence of study, and a school may offer one or both courses.

AP English Literature and Composition Course Overview

The AP English Literature and Composition course aligns to an introductory college-level literary analysis course. The course engages students in the close reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature to deepen their understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure. As they read, students consider a work's structure, style, and themes, as well as its use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone. Writing assignments include expository, analytical, and argumentative essays that require students to analyze and interpret literary works.

PREREQUISITE

There are no prerequisite courses for AP English Literature and Composition.

Students should be able to read and comprehend college-level texts and apply the conventions of Standard Written English in their writing.

AP English Literature and Composition Course Content

The course is designed to help students become skilled readers and writers through engagement with the following course requirements:

- Reading complex imaginative literature (fiction, drama, and poetry) appropriate for college-level study¹
- Writing an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of textual details, considering the work's structure, style, and themes; the social and historical values it reflects and embodies; and such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone
- Composing in several forms (e.g., narrative, expository, analytical, and argumentative essays) based on students' analyses of literary texts
- Writing that proceeds through several stages or drafts, with revision aided by teacher and peers
- Writing informally (e.g., response journals, textual annotations, collaborative writing), which helps students better understand the texts they are reading
- Revising their work to develop
 - A wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively;
 - A variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination;
 - Logical organization, enhanced by techniques such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis;
 - A balance of generalization and specific, illustrative detail; and
 - An effective use of rhetoric, including tone, voice, diction, and sentence structure.

1. The selection of literature for the course should consider texts used in students' previous high school ELA courses, so that by the time students finish the AP course, they will have read texts from 16th- to 21st-century American and British literature, along with other literature written in or translated to English. The College Board does not mandate the use of any particular authors or reading list, but representative authors are cited in the AP English Course Description.

AP English Literature and Composition Exam Structure

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION EXAM: 3 HOURS

Assessment Overview

The AP English Literature and Composition Exam employs multiple-choice questions and free-response prompts to test students' skills in literary analysis of passages from prose and poetry texts.

Format of Assessment

Section I: Multiple Choice | 1 Hour | 55 Questions | 45% of Exam Score

- Includes excerpts from several published works of drama, poetry, or prose fiction
- Each excerpt is accompanied by several multiple-choice questions or prompts

Section II: Free Response | 2 Hours | 3 Questions | 55% of Exam Score

- Students have 2 hours to write essay responses to three free-response prompts from the following categories:
 - A literary analysis of a given poem
 - A literary analysis of a given passage of prose fiction (this may include drama)
 - An analysis that examines a specific concept, issue, or element in a work of literary merit selected by the student

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Sample Multiple-Choice Question

Students are given a passage of writing and asked to respond to a set of prompts and questions based on the passage. Below is one example.

The chief effect of the first paragraph is to

- (A) foreshadow the outcome of Papa's meeting
- (B) signal that change in the family's life is overdue
- (C) convey the women's attachment to the house
- (D) emphasize the deteriorating condition of the house
- (E) echo the fragmented conversation of the three women

Sample Free-Response Prompt

Read carefully the following poem by the colonial American poet, Anne Bradstreet. Then write a well-organized essay in which you discuss how the poem's controlling metaphor expresses the complex attitude of the speaker.

"The Author to Her Book"

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,
Til snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true,
Who thee abroad exposed to public view;
Who thee abroad exposed to public view;
Made thee in rags, halting, to the press to trudge,
Where errors were not lessened, all may judge.
At thy return my blushing was not small,
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
Thy visage was so irksome in my sight;
Yet being mine own, at length affection would
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.

I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,
And rubbing off a spot, still made a flaw.
I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet,
Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet;
In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
But nought save homespun cloth in the house I find.
In this array, 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam;
In critics' hands beware thou dost not come;
And take thy way where yet thou are not known.
If for thy Father asked, say thou had'st none;
And for thy Mother, she alas is poor,
Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.
(1678)