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“Lasciate ogni speranza / Voi ch’entrate”

The AP English Literature and Composition course is offered for high school students who wish to gain college credit by exam. The exam tests your ability to recognize stylistic elements of literature, and assess the effectiveness of literature. It tests your ability to write clear and organized standard essays in a limited amount of time. The AP Literature class is also a place for you to think about literature as an art form, and as such, how it reflects the spirit of the times in which it was created. With this in mind, I will be spending some time with you examining the historic zeitgeist of a particular time. Also, I hope that you also observe literature as a reflection of human life, and seek to increase your own self-awareness, and awareness of the world around you: The timeless themes apply heaviest in times of transition—Who am I? Will I make a difference in the world? Where am I going? What do I seek? How will I bear loss? Where will I find joy? As seniors, these questions inevitably weigh upon you as you start your life journey away into the world.

Book List and Other Readings

The AP draws from English literature throughout the ages, from Old English works through modern literature. During class time we will focus mainly on older English literature, literary movements in historical context, and elements of drama and poetry, with the expectation that you will read and analyze more accessible novels works on your own. Some the year’s reading will include the following books, although I might throw something else at you from time to time.

- Selections from the Bible: Job; Song of Songs; Psalms; The Book of Matthew
- Greek Classical plays: *The Birds or Lysistrata*; *Agamemnon or Prometheus Bound*; *The Oedipus Plays* of Sophocles; *The Heracleidae or Hippolytus or Iphigenia in Aulis*
- Old English and Medieval works: *Beowulf*; *Everyman*; *Canterbury Tales*; *The Inferno*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
- Renaissance plays: *Hamlet and other plays of Shakespeare*; *Edward II or Faust: The Misanthrope*
- 18th century novels: *Moll Flanders or Candide*
- 19th century novels: *Pride and Prejudice*; *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*
- Modern short stories, novels, plays: *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*; *The Sound and the Fury*; *Seize the Day*; *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*; *Death of a Salesman*; *Heart of Darkness*; *Huck Finn*; *To the Lighthouse*; *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; *The Thief and the Dogs*; *A Farewell to Arms*;
- Massive, Massive Poetry Unit

General Course Requirements: Complete all assignments! I don’t drop a grade!

- Two Papers: One examining the work of an author from a particular literary age or literary school, analyzing theme and style, and one analyzing the works of a poet. (MLA Style with Citations)
- Group Projects on various works. Group analysis on works in class.
- Standard essays on works read: About two per month
- Essay exams in class: About two per marking period
- Homework: Reading. Analytic literary questions; generating effective plot summaries
- You must take the AP exam in May.

“No doubt the world is entirely an imaginary world, but it is only once removed from the true world.”

Materials Needed:

You'll need a binder to take notes and jot down your literary observations, to store various handouts and a folder to save your papers. Separate your binder into four categories: 1) Grammar, Poetry and Literary Terms 2) Narrative Elements 3) Rubrics and AP Study Guides 4) Novels and Plays. You should take notes during class discussions and lectures, and while reading as this material will be needed for writing assignments and exams. *Your papers must have specific evidence from the text, so you must keep track of citations.*

Areas of Study: AP Literature: I expect you to be able to effectively organize your time to get your work completed by the end of each marking period. It is expedient for you to learn to pace yourself and keep up. By law, I must keep track of attendance, and follow the school's attendance rule of loss of credit—keep that in mind as you take time off to look at colleges and when spring arrives, and senior slide seriously sets in.

WRITING**The Essay**

- Parts of the Essay
- Types of Essays
- Organizational Methods

The Research Paper

- MLA Format
- The Writing Process
- Taking Notes
- Rough Draft/Final Draft

Creative Writing

- Satires
- Adopting the Tone and Syntax of an Author
- Writing in Poetic Forms
- Developing Voice

Prose Writing

- Writing Literary Critiques
- Writing Opinion Pieces
- Comparing Film and Book

GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY: As Needed and From Text**READING COMPREHENSION**

- Understanding Nuances and Drawing Inferences
- Drawing Comparisons to Life Issues
- Taking Notes on Texts
- Understanding Themes and Motifs
- Thematic Comparisons between Literary Works
- Critical Thinking

LITERATURE

- In-Depth Knowledge of Literary Terms and Poetic Devices
- Using this Vocabulary to Analyze Literary Works
- Historical Context: Authors and Literary Movements; Connections to Visual Arts and Music
- Reading Literary Criticism

Summer Assignments AP Literature and Composition

Due the First Day of School

During the first weeks of school, we will be discussing and writing essays for the poem *Chicago*, *The Great Gatsby*, and the play, *Othello*. Essay length should be at least 750 words. Use *many* examples to prove your points in each paragraph, and take time to analyze all your examples. Consult your AP essay rubrics.

1. Everyone must read *Othello* and *The Great Gatsby* and complete the template for each.
2. Read a work from list of American Literature novels and complete the template below.
3. Write a Poetry Essay for *Chicago*

Template for AP Literature: Brief enough so that you can remember it, but detailed enough to write an essay!

Novel or Play _____

Author _____

Historical Era / Significance to theme: _____

1. **Plot Summary List:** Write a summary of the plot of your novel or play. This will help you later on, when you are studying for the AP exam, and need to remember these plot elements to support your statements. This doesn't need to be chapter by chapter, but should list in detail about ten important events that move the plot along or affect character development. For narratives that are episodic in nature, make list of important scenes.
2. **Analyses of Main Characters:** Describe, briefly, the persona (personality) of the main characters, supported with evidence from the plot.
3. **Use of Setting, Symbol, Narrative Voice, Plot Structure, Tone:** Or other literary device that makes a strong statement for the theme of the novel.
4. **Conflict / Theme:** Describe the main conflict or dilemma that the main character faces, how it is resolved or not, and explain how this relates to the **theme**, that is, what the story tell us about human nature. What might be some supporting or subordinate themes? How does the novel or play reflect a theme from the era in which it takes place?
5. **Essay Prompt and Introduction Paragraph for Essay:**
 - Choose an essay question from the **list of AP Open Response Questions** on the website: <http://www.absasso.com/APLiterature.html> —or construct a similar one yourself! (Look on the right, under AP Information.)
 - **Introduction Paragraph:** Write your introduction paragraph for this essay, making sure that you **indicate clearly what your paragraph topics will be:** characters, character development, plot elements, setting, symbol, tone or other **elements of fiction. (Check your list!)**

Poetry Rough Draft Essay: We will begin with a class discussion of this poem.

Read the following poem carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you state the poem's purpose or theme and then analyze how the poet uses stylistic or poetic tools to help convey this theme. See list of definitions for poetry terms.

The above essay question is a sample from an AP Exam. Let's see how well you can do! **Be sure you state clearly in your thesis what you believe to be the poem's purpose or meaning.** Focus on the types of literary or *poetic tools the poet uses to heighten the emotional content of the poem.

*These include figurative language—metaphor, simile, personification, apostrophe, symbol, irony, paradox, hyperbole—imagery, sound, syntax, form, perspective, meter, and more!

See Link to *Poetry Terms and Definitions* at:
<http://www.absasso.com/APLiterature.html>

CHICAGO

by Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:
They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I
have seen your painted women under the gas lamps
luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it
is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to
kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the
faces of women and children I have seen the marks
of wanton hunger.
And having answered so I turn once more to those who
sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer
and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing
so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on
job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the
little soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning
as a savage pitted against the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,
Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with
white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young
man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has
never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse,
and under his ribs the heart of the people,
Laughing!
Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of
Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog
Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with
Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

AP Literature and Composition
Miniature Unit: Ten Themes in American Literature

Summer Reading Assignment

Contact Information for Ms. Sasso:

absasso@snet.net Contact me and let me know which book you're reading! Also, feel free to email me with questions. Find this form and a list of definitions for Poetry Terms and Definitions at <http://www.absasso.com/APLiterature.html>. Look on the right, under AP Information.

Literature often expresses themes that reflect the spirit of the times, or *zeitgeist*. America, because of its symbolic place in Western history is very weighty in *themes*, and American literature, perhaps more than literature from other places, is particularly shaped by its role in history.

Even before Jefferson, echoing the philosophy of John Locke, penned the opening paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, marking America as the incarnation of Enlightenment ideals, America had already been born and reborn as a symbol, all of which have permeated our national identity, from the formation of our government and the assemblage of the world's peoples on our shores, to the developments of science and technology that took us to the moon—from the abasements of slavery and genocide of Native Americans, to the abysmal arrogance and barrenness of spirituality criticized in our modern consumer culture. I have listed, very briefly, some of the common themes associated with America.

This is an especially important unit for those of you who haven't taken Honors English (American Literature) in your junior year, and who will effectively miss an important foundation, especially if you intend to become literature or history majors in college.

1. The New World

To quote Miranda in *The Tempest* (5.1.182-185):

O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't!

For those of you who are clever, you recognize this quote as dramatic irony, for Miranda herself is of the new world, and those she regards are citizens of the European world she's forgotten. This encounter between the primal wilderness and Western civilization, so far removed from Eden, is America's first theme.

2. The Independent Spirit

America, during the colonial period, and through the American Revolution, comes to represent innovation, independence, self-reliance, and rebirth for those who arrived here in search of redemption or escape from persecution. It shapes and embodies Enlightenment views on human equality and human potential. The American colonies also become an arena where traditional concepts of God are challenged as theocracies established—paving the way for the first sentence in the Bill of Rights.

3. A New Awakening

The Romantic era is reflected in the American Transcendental movement, where the power of nature and natural forces, the natural passions of humans and the power of the individual find a particularly fertile ground for expression, some of it within newly formed revivalist Christian practices. This strong spiritual sense born prior to the Civil War also helps to stir the Abolitionist movement into a tempest.

4. Civil War: A Nation Divided / The Human Race Divided

There are cynics among you who will claim that the North declared war on the secessionist states of the South to maintain political power rather than in the interest of abolishing slavery. There is truth to this, but it's like arguing that an iceberg didn't sink the Titanic. Issues surrounding race, equality and segregation come to a climax here, setting the stage for future conflicts and reconciliations worldwide and at home. Other, subliminal themes that arise from this war are: the question of survival of democracy in the world, the brutality of a war fought on the homeland, and the divide that civil conflict invariably causes in a nation and among families.

5. Reconstruction: The Death of a Fallen Society

We will consider this theme in American literature in class next year as we read *The Sound and the Fury*, which is mainly from the perspective of the fallen plantation owners. However, you might want to consider reading—or rereading—novel or plays that express this period from the perspective of impoverished, disenfranchised and segregated African Americans left behind to face the rising threat of the KKK.

6. The Pioneer Spirit, the Journey into the West, Genocide of an Indigenous People

The story of the settlement of the last frontier of the American West is perhaps the second most powerful of all the American themes. It has touched something so deep in the human soul that it has birthed its own myth. Certainly the story of a massive human journey into unknown and dangerous places filled with violence and hope, must itself touch a primal chord of human evolution. Making a quest of life consuming dimensions to an end that could never equal the journey is an allegory of life itself. Pioneers voyaged to places where unreal landscapes unfolded to an ever-receding horizon, the infinite sky opened up a boundless soul, and emptied the pilgrims into a place where Death was manifest, and desperation blurred the boundaries between good and evil. From a Native American perspective, this frontier was the final shore, from which they would defend their entire existence and way of life.

7. The Gilded Age / Immigration and Urbanization / Industrial Barons

The huddled masses cram American cities as the promise of the American Dream ascends. From the end of reconstruction to the turn of the century are years of rising economic and international power and the rise of the sleaziest political corruption America has ever seen, until maybe now. It was also a time of hope as hundreds of thousands of poverty-stricken people of Europe swarmed here, hoping for a better life for themselves and their children. In America, it was believed, class barriers didn't exist and with enough initiative, there were no boundaries for success. Even a poor immigrant like Andrew Carnegie could become the richest man in the world. The newly arrived, however, didn't always find the streets paved with gold, and the newly rich didn't always remember their humble roots, nor did they always find themselves happy.

8. World War and Plague / The Roaring Twenties / The Great Depression The Rise and Fall of the American Dream

The century begins with a world war that, by the grace of a shooting advance in technology, becomes the “war to end all wars” in its horrific level of devastation and destruction. The global plague that follows on its heels, felling people in the prime of life and causing even more death than the war itself, surely portends the Apocalypse. After the war, there was a sense of spiritual devastation, as well, manifested in the ex-patriot writers who chose to live abroad. Meanwhile, back home, the Roaring Twenties attempted to drown out the vapidness of spirit with illegal alcoholic beverages, and unhealthy business ventures, as global economic collapse looms at the close of the decade. In the lull, however, there is a surge of creativity, especially in music and art in Harlem, where briefly African Americans live the American Dream, newly migrated to work in Northern factories away from the continuing oppression and violence in the South. The lull is brief, however. The perfect storm for even greater violence, bloodshed, and the brink of a very real Apocalypse, of our own making is developing, worldwide. The bloodiest century in human history has only begun, and the American Dream ends in this nightmare world.

9. World War II: The U.S. as Savior of the Free World / The Atomic Age

Catastrophic political disasters in Germany and Japan and the new Soviet Union bring humanity to the brink of self-destruction, as three human devils take power: Hitler, Hirohito, and later, Stalin. America secures its super-hero status, with its soldiers fighting and dying valiantly in two theaters of war, while using its own ingenuity and immigrant geniuses to create the *uber-waffe* of all times, the Atomic Bomb. We paradoxically became the saviors of the free world by developing and deploying a weapon that could kill every living creature on the entire planet. The Beat Generation of the generally conformist 1950's recognizes this.

10. The Civil Rights Movement / The Peace Generation / Changing Views of America

After fighting Hitler in a segregated U.S. Army, African Americans returning from the war to discrimination and racial violence weren't about to wait for the next genocide. The Civil Rights movement is launched in full force as a reaction against unequal treatment in housing, jobs, education and under the law. On the coattails of this movement rides the Women's Liberation movement and later movements demanding equal rights for religious, cultural and sexual minorities as well. The antiestablishment wave stemming from the Beat Generation to the Hippies, explodes in fierce opposition to the Vietnam War, to social and sexual mores, and to corporate disregard for the health of the planet and the spiritual health of humans living here.

Suggested List of Books: The numbers are corresponding to Ten Themes in American History

NOTE: Don't leave high school without reading the ones that are starred.

1. Billy Budd: Herman Melville*
1. Moll Flanders: Daniel Defoe (Might read in class)
1. The Last of the Mohicans: James Fenimore Cooper
2. The Crucible: Arthur Miller*
2. The Scarlet Letter: Nathaniel Hawthorne*
3. The Blithedale Romance: Nathaniel Hawthorne
3. Walden: Henry David Thoreau
4. Red Badge of Courage: Stephen Crane*
4. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Mark Twain*
4. Cold Mountain: Charles Frazier
5. Beloved: Toni Morrison* (AP Lang.)
5. Their Eyes Were Watching God: Zora Neale Hurston*
6. Blood Meridian: Cormac McCarthy
6. My Antonia: Willa Cather*
7. Call It Sleep: Henry Roth
7. Maggie, a Girl of the Streets: Stephen Crane
7. Ragtime: E.L. Doctorow
7. The Jungle: Upton Sinclair
7. Washington Square: Henry James
8. The Grapes of Wrath: John Steinbeck*
8. A Farewell to Arms: Ernest Hemingway*
9. Catch-22: Joseph Heller*
9. Hiroshima: John Hersey
9. Wise Blood: Flannery O'Connor
10. Invisible Man: Ralph Ellison*
10. Bless Me, Ultima: Rudolfo Anaya
10. Howl: Allen Ginsberg (A long poem. Initially, it was banned for obscenity.)
10. The Things They Carried: Tim O'Brien (AP Lang.)

Elements of Fiction and Definitions of Stylistic Terms:

*A narrative story generally involves three basic elements: A character encounters a conflict and through a series of actions, either internal or external, either resolves the conflict—or not. Keep this simple formula in mind when organizing your literary essays: **character + conflict + resolution = theme.***

Diction: Word choice (formal, colloquial, alliterative, etc.) is part of syntax. Study both the dialogue and narration. Does it change in different parts of the work? How does the author use words for effect? How does diction help set tone?

Character or Persona: Often the author chooses to speak through a character, and sometimes there are multiple people. Often the main character's persona is described so that the conflict is particularly difficult—for example, an orphan without much self-esteem is called up on save the world. How does the character change along this journey? How do his character flaws (hamartia) contribute to his or her choices, and his or her outcome?

Setting: Time and place, but look beyond time and place. . How and why does the writer jump from setting to setting? Consider how the prejudices, lifestyles, and idiosyncrasies of a time period have an impact on how and why the characters act as they do. Consider factors particular to the multiple settings in works and connect these factors to symbolism, character development and theme

Plot and Plot Structure: The framework and organization of a work. How does the author choose to unfold the story? Consider the organization of chapters, time sequences, chronological or not, use of flashbacks, story within stories, invasion of memory or thought, stream-of-consciousness, framed stories, blending reality and illusion, use of conversation and narration. Consider if a plot is dynamic or episodic. How do these contribute to the overall purpose or theme of the work?

Symbol: A type of figurative language where an object represents not only itself, but something else as well, and lends an extended meaning to it. Theorize why, for example, a character is always described by the color green, or with shining light, or by a certain sound or smell, and draw interpretations around these references that contribute to the theme of the overall work.

Syntax: The arrangement of words into sentences and paragraphs. Consider the author's general style: sentence structure and length, complexity; patterns such as sentence, phrase, or word repetition. (Look up syntactical inversion and parallel syntax.) Explain how unusual syntax might contribute to the overall purpose or theme of the work.

Tone: The works' overall *attitude*. This comes through voice, character interaction, word choice, use of hyperbole, understatement, timing, dialect and slang, and syntax. Adjectives to describe tone include: condescending, smug, lulling, sarcastic, unflappable, indifferent, bereft, isolated, hysterical, enraptured, playful, strident, depressing, contemptuous, etc. Consider how tone is created, and then how it affects the theme of the work. **Mood:** This is the *atmosphere* of the work, which is often determined by imagery and tonal qualities of dialogue or narrative.

Narrative Voice: Why does the author choose this particular character as the narrator? Often the narrative voice is NOT the main character. If so, analyze how the narrator's personality contributes to the overall purpose or theme of the work. Analyze character flaws and strengths in the narrator, and consider the element of time if the story is framed, and the narrator has had time to consider the effects of his or her actions. Consider diction and dialect. How does voice affect character, tone, and theme?

The Heart of an Effective Literary Essay: Conflict, Theme and Thesis Statement

Conflict: Narrative fiction doesn't exist without conflict. Other types of literature certainly do. But a story has no backbone without a conflict, either internal or external. Often the conflict is unresolved, and perhaps within the scope of human existence, it can't be resolved. Often, in facing a conflict, characters make bad choices with noble intention – in tragedy, for example.

Theme: When you examine the conflict in a story, you should be able to see **thematic** elements that rise out of the elements of the narrative, and encompass more universal aspects of human life: Death, War, Love... These broad themes mark the work as universally appealing, so even if you yourself never actually floated down a river with an escaped slave, you can still appreciate the theme of individual against society when you defiantly stash your i-Pod into your backpack and head through the metal detectors.

From Theme to Thesis Statement:

A good thesis statement makes a qualifying declaration about a main theme of a work. It is not a declaration of the theme of the work, or of the conflict in the work. It most certainly ISN'T a "Where's Waldo" approach: "I found Love in this story" or "I see conflict—I'll show you where" or "I see an individual struggling against society". While this might work well for a book review, it has no place in literary essays.

Literary essays are meant to show how the author enriches our view of our own life. A good literary essay, therefore, is mainly analytical. It analyzes the how compelling plot elements of the story move the characters into making formidable choices, or recognizing truth—remember, a story is like a piece of someone's life—and your essays should reveal the interaction between a conflict and a character's reaction to it. Good essays involve probing psychological analyses of the main characters, and an understanding of why humans might make the choices that they make.

Good essays also MUST discuss the resolution of the narrative in terms of how the character's actions elicited this outcome, and what this tells us about humanity. Good essays also should include the BIG EVENTS of the novel! (Darcy's bad proposal; the Lydia Fiasco...) These tend to be extremely revelatory to both character development and the outcome of the novel!

Your thesis statement, therefore, must express YOUR particularly biased, qualitative, and judgmental view on what the outcome of the narrative reveals to us as a truth about human nature. Your thesis statement should make an opinionated statement about why the tragedy happened. If the story turned out favorably for the characters, your thesis statement should explain why it did.

Exercise: You all know *Romeo and Juliet*. So what are the external conflicts? What are some internal conflicts? What happens as the characters try to grapple with these conflicts? What do they do? Write a good thesis statement!

AP Open Ended Prompts:

*1980--A recurring theme in literature is "the classic war between passion and responsibility." For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive may conflict with moral duty. Choose a literary work in which a character confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibilities. In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its **significance to the work**. Avoid plot summary.*

*2000: Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery. In these works, **the solution to the mystery may be less important than the knowledge gained in the process of its investigation**. Choose a novel or play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery. Then write an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain of the investigation illuminates the **meaning of the work as a whole**. Do not merely summarize the plot.*

In more recent times, the AP Open-Ended prompts have become more difficult, and perhaps, more compelling in their wording. Rather than *lead* young writers, as the 1980 prompt does, the newer prompts mandate that you already understand the workings and purpose of literary analysis of narratives.

So in responding to the 2000 prompt, your goal is to explain how the mystery creates conflicts and moves the protagonist to new understandings beyond the crime itself. This is true for all of the oddball focuses of recent AP exams: the country setting, the wedding or funeral, the character who isn't there, the betrayal, the symbol, the scene with the dead animal, the unexpected guest, the wrong color lipstick...(I made up the last three.)

To simplify your task? You can take a "beginning, middle, and end" approach to character development. You can move your characters into opposing camps and explore the outcome of the conflict that way. You can analyze the story element in the prompt and explain how it reveals aspects of the conflict, and go from there. You can include stylistic elements of the work, if they merit attention.

(See Below)

AP LITERARY ESSAY ANALYSIS: What to include in your essay

The point of literary analysis is to show how the art of literature helps shape the purpose or theme of the work. In your essays you should discuss how the author uses literary devices to effectively convey idea, purpose, human nature, message, viewpoint ... otherwise known as "theme".

FOR POETRY:

(See *Poetry Terms and Definitions* at www.absasso.com)

You should analyze poetic tools and connect them to the overall purpose of a poem

In narrative poems you might also consider narrative tools (see prose and fiction below)

Poetry also often involves characters, as well

Look, also for the development of argument (form)

FOR PROSE:

Look for poetic tools

Look for characterization tools

Look for narrative tools

Look for stylistic tools including syntax, tone, and grammar

Look for the development of argument

FOR LONGER WORKS OF FICTION:

Character

Conflict

Setting

Resolution / Theme

Plot elements

Symbolic motifs

Narrative Voice

And also, Poetic and other Stylistic Tools

Rubric for AP Literature and Composition Essays

	9-8 (A+ to A-)	7-6 (B+ to B-)	5 (C+ to C)	4-3 (C- to D-)	2-1 (60% to 50%)
I) Insight	These essays reflect an understanding of the work that is deeper than the work itself, perceptive to larger themes. They exhibit a profound understanding of precise elements in the work that function as the author's vehicle towards his goal.	These essays reflect an excellent understanding of the thematic elements of the specific work, but fail to express sensitivity to deeper interpretations of human psychology. They make perfunctory connections between the author's style, and the meaning of the work as a whole.	These essays are on target, but simple. They respond to the assigned task yet say little more than what might be very easily grasped observations.	These essays lack an understanding of the work, and perhaps express a misreading or misinterpretation of the work as a whole. They could rely on plot summary or paraphrase, rather than analysis.	These essays compound the problems of the essays in the 4-3 range. These are essays that express a serious misinterpretation of the work, or overall lack of understanding.
T) Strong Thesis	Flawlessly and precisely states the essayist's premise about the work, spotlessly answers the essay question, and clearly articulates a peerless understanding of thematic elements in the work. The introduction then proceeds to outline the main topic points of the essay writer's argument.	These good essays also include a strong thesis statement, that perhaps is not as clearly expressed, nor does it quite as flawlessly address the question prompt. The introduction paragraph will also outline the main topic points of the essay writer's argument, although perhaps not completely or smoothly.	A thesis statement exists, and it somewhat addresses the prompt. The essay's format might also be very bluntly stated in the introduction paragraph.	The thesis statement in these essays tends to be weak, and doesn't express argument or an analysis as much as it expresses and observation. There may be no organization outlined in the introduction, or it might simply be a list.	There might simply be plot summary rather than any type of thesis.
E) Evidence	These essays use excellent examples from the text that logically and fully support the writer's thesis statement. These examples are quotes or paraphrases, examples of actions or events, and point to specific places in the narrative to cite use of symbolism, mood or other broad literary tools.	The examples in these essays, while plentiful, perhaps are not the strongest in proving the writer's thesis.	The essay contains examples, but they fail to completely support the essay writer's thesis. Often, there aren't enough examples, or examples that don't really logically work to support the premise of the paragraph.	The evidence in these essays might consist of long paraphrases without revealing much connection to the thesis. There may be very meager or misconstrued examples as well.	Large blocks of quotes or paraphrases will fill space instead of evidence.

Rubric for AP Literature and Composition Essays (Continued)

	9-8 (A+ to A-)	7-6 (B+ to B-)	5 (C+ to C)	4-3 (C- to D-)	2-1 (60% to 50%)
A) Analysis	These essays take time to interpret and analyze the supporting examples to connect them to the writer’s thesis statement, making it clear as to WHY this evidence is strong, logical, and convincing.	The writers of these good essays will make a solid analysis of the evidence, although they might not connect in a convincing way to the essay’s thesis, and may not be as effective in convincing the reader of the validity of the argument.	Often, the essays have superficial analyses, or lack convincing connection to the thesis statement.	Without a strong thesis, there is no strong depth of analysis of the evidence.	Again, without a strong thesis, there is no strong depth of analysis of the evidence. In these essays, there is little or no analysis.
O) Organization	The argument of these essays is clear and unfolds and progresses flawlessly, becoming stronger as the essay progresses. The introduction is well-articulated, and the topics are clearly set out. The individual paragraphs each have a precise topic to tackle, and smoothly transition to the next argument. The essay ends with an excellent and moving conclusion, which reinforces the argument and caps it without dispute.	The argument in these essays is clearly organized, although perhaps not beautifully arrayed in a way that drives the argument to a convincing conclusion. They have well-constructed paragraphs and transitions and a nicely done, enlightened conclusion.	These essays are pretty formulaic in their structure, or lack a driving structure that would help a reader to progress through the writer’s thesis. They might lack a clear conclusion statement, or lack one that is enlightened.	If there is organization, it is very perfunctory. Generally, these essays lack a “plan” of argument, and may not contain clear paragraphs or organization that would assist to develop the thesis.	Generally, these essays are unacceptably brief, and don’t follow through on a premise or argument.
F) Fluency	These essays are flawlessly articulated and have an excellent command of vocabulary, grammar, syntax and rhetorical style. (Spelling, too!)	These well-written essays are perhaps not quite as smooth as the extraordinary essays, but neither are there glaring flaws in syntax, grammar, rhetorical style—or spelling.	These essays might have no egregious errors, but are not exceedingly thoughtful. They contain simple sentences and simple ideas.	Often these essays exhibit serious flaws in rhetorical style, grammar, syntax and spelling and fail to express the writer’s thoughts.	Often, these essays also contain very serious and distracting mechanical errors that significantly interfere with the reader’s ability to understand the writer’s intent.

Components of a Successful Essay: Insight. Fluency. Evidence.

1. **Thesis:** This is an essay's main proposition. A thesis should not be confused with a topic, which represents only the subject area of an essay. A good thesis must be arguable; there must be intelligent ways to disagree with it. This is what distinguishes a good thesis from a fact. Although writers often wish to delay announcement of the thesis, good academic writing generally states the thesis explicitly on the first page, then returns to a more detailed and complex form of it later in the text.
2. **Problem or Question:** This is the context in which your thesis matters. In academic essays, the problem usually arises from a current misunderstanding of an important issue, or a new observation of an important text. (On AP Lit. exam, author's style and use of literary tools are the key to analysis.) Essays promise to clarify something that would otherwise remain unseen or mistaken. Establishing the problem or question is the primary role of an essay's first paragraphs. If it doesn't promise to illuminate, deepen, or solve a problem, an essay risks irrelevance.
3. **Evidence:** This is the material a writer works with to shed light on a thesis. Evidence that has been overlooked or previously undiscovered may serve to prove a thesis. Frequently, however, academic writers re-examine evidence that others have looked at before, in which case, the evidence is more likely to suggest or persuade readers that the writers' approach is a fruitful one. Since a good thesis must be arguable, academic writers are especially obligated to consider counter-evidence, to grapple directly with facts, patterns, or passages that resist or complicate the essay's main argument. Writers must orient readers to the source of the evidence, which must be cited (textual support).
4. **Analysis & Reflection:** This is the work a writer does to turn evidence into argument, to show the reader how the evidence supports, develops, or extends the essay's thesis. Since a thesis must be arguable, no evidence in a good academic argument can speak for itself—all of it must be processed by the writer. Typical moves of analysis are to highlight significant details for the evidence and to name patterns that might otherwise be undetected. There should always be more analysis than evidence in a paper. The number of direct quotations, in particular, should be kept to a minimum. Analysis generally refers directly to the evidence: "Describing his actions with such words as 'growled' and 'stalked' suggests an underlying animal savagery." Reflection, however, builds upon analysis to support larger claims: "This imagery seems to contradict the narrator's stated assessment that Paul is a 'gentle soul.'" Other moves that indicate reflection are consideration of a counter-argument, definitions or refinements of terms and assumptions, and qualifications of previous claims. Reflection is important throughout the essay, but should be especially rich and full between sections of the argument and in the essay's conclusion.
5. **Structure:** This is how the sections of an essay are organized and stitched together. Sections of a good argument proceed in a logical way, but also develop the implications of a thesis more deeply as the essay progresses. The reader should understand how each new section extends the argument that's come before and prepares for the argument that's still to come. Reflective sentences at moments of transition often guide this review/preview, and complex essays frequently include sentences of this type.