

May 28, 2013

AP Literature and Composition students

Regarding Summer Reading

Welcome to AP Literature and Composition/ DMACC Introduction to Literature and Composition. Be prepared to complete the work of a college level class. Background knowledge is essential to understand, write about, and discuss literature at the highest level.

This summer we will be using a nonfiction text, a play, and a novel frequently cited on the AP exam. You will be handed a packet titled "College English: Advanced Placement Test Essay Topics." In this packet there are three essay questions for each SET from A through I. For each set, you will write one essay. Follow the directions exactly as written on the first page. The pieces you must read in order to write these essays are: Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl; A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams; and Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston. In addition to writing these essays, we will have brief discussion and quizzes over the selections when you return. Your typed essay answers will be collected the first day of the fall semester. If you have questions, please email me at janet.malmberg@dmschools.org.

Texts for the fall and spring semester include but are not limited to:

The Iliad (excerpts)

Literature: an Introduction to Reading and Writing

The Odyssey (excerpts)

Heart of Darkness

Beowulf

The Awakening

Grendel

Bless Me, Ultima

Oedipus Rex

Antigone

Hamlet

Five academic essays per semester are required. Grammar and/or AP practice tests will be given each Wednesday throughout the year. If you are looking to slide through your senior year, this is not the course to take.

V

COLLEGE ENGLISH
ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST ESSAY TOPICS

2007-2008

ALL ESSAYS:

- should be 750 - 1000 words excluding quoted text
- should be elaborated using ample support from the text, including direct quotes as well as specific references
- should include judicious and cogent use of at least 3 literary or figurative terms as an integral part of elaboration
- should be typed with a heading and title, and in the upper right-hand corner, the topic # and list of terms included should be indicated. Also write the question in small print at the top of the paper.
- must, after you have reviewed the graded essay, be kept in your writing portfolio for future reference and assignments

TOPICS:**SET A**

1. Often a work of superior literature addresses the question, "What a piece of work is man?" Write an essay explaining how this author uses characters' thoughts and actions to create a view of the human condition and explain why you either accept or reject this view.
2. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Explain how this work confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. Then in a well-organized essay explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work.
3. In some novels and plays certain parallel or recurring events prove to be significant. In an essay, describe the major similarities and differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in this work and discuss the significance of such events.

SET B

4. In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), protagonist Edna Pontellier is said to possess "that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions." In a novel or play that you have studied, identify a character who conforms outwardly while questioning inwardly. Then write an essay in which you analyze how this tension between outward conformity and inward questioning contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid mere plot summary.
5. Show how the work depicts a conflict between a parent (or parental figure) and a son or daughter. Write an essay in which you analyze the sources of the conflict and explain how the conflict contributes to the meaning of the work.

6. A recurring theme in literature is “the classic war between a 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. Explain how a character in this work confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibility. In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effect upon the character, and its significance to the work.

SET C

7. In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Show how such a character functions in this work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters.

8. The significance of a title such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is easy to discover. However, in other works, the full significance of the title becomes apparent to the reader only gradually. Show how the significance of the title of this work is developed through the author’s use of various literary devices such as contrast, repetition, allusion, and point of view.

9. According to critic Northrop Frye, “Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning.” Discuss a tragic figure that functions as an instrument of the suffering of others. Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.

SET D

10. Many plays and novels use contrasting places (for example, two countries, two cities or towns, two houses, or the land and the sea) to represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the work. How are two such places contrasted in this work? Write an essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.

11. Some works of literature use the element of time in a distinct way. The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be suspended or accelerated. Show how the author’s manipulation of time contributes to the effectiveness of this work as a whole.

12. An individual’s struggle toward understanding and awareness is a traditional subject of fiction. Trace this struggle towards a final awareness for a character from this work. How do the struggle and its resolution contribute to the meaning of the work?

SET E

13. From this work select an important character who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character's villainy and show how it is central to or enhances meaning in the work.

14. In many works of fiction a character has a misconception of himself or his world. Destroying or perpetuating this illusion contributes to a central theme of the work. Explain how such a character is found in this work. Explain what the character's illusion is and how it differs from reality; then explain how the destruction or perpetuation of the illusion contributes to the meaning of the work.

15. Critic Roland Barthes has said, "Literature is the question minus the answer." Considering Barthes' observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers any answers. Explain how the author's treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole.

SET F

16. Some of the most significant events in literature are often mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. Explain how these sorts of events are the pivotal and vital ones for characters in this work.

17. In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present actions, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

18. Some leading characters conform to the pattern of life expected of them; others rebel against this pattern. Select a character from this work and demonstrate the nature of the character's conformity or rebellion and explain how it is important to the theme or some other important aspect of the work as a whole.

SET G

19. 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. Explain how in this work such a character plays a significant role and show how that character's alienation reveals the surrounding society's assumptions and moral values.

20. "The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter." (George Meredith) Tell how you would interpret Meredith's idea and explain how a scene or character in this work awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader. Write an essay in which you show why this laughter is "thoughtful" and how it contributes to the meaning of the work.

21. Morally ambiguous characters- whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good- are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole.

SET H

22. The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time." From this work choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.

23. The struggle to achieve dominance over others frequently appears in fiction. Trace this struggle in this work. Explain for what purposes the author uses the struggle.

24. Although literary critics have tended to praise the unique in literary characterization, many authors have employed the stereotyped character successfully. Show how the convention or stereotyped character or characters in this work function to achieve the author's purpose.

SET I

25. Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole.

26. In many works of literature, a physical journey—the literal movement from one place to another—play a central role. Discuss how the journey adds to the meaning of the work as a whole.

27. One of the strongest human drives seems to be the desire for power. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in this work struggles to free herself or himself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.