

AP Language and Composition

Course Overview

AP Language and Composition satisfies the third in a series of four required English courses. The purpose of this course is to sharpen students' writing, language, and rhetorical skills. Objectives for the course are taken from the *AP English Course Description* published by the College Board. The literature studied in this course is primarily non-fiction. Because the state course of study requires that 11th graders study American literature from 1900 to present, pieces chosen for study will be primarily by American authors, and emphasis is placed on major themes posed by works of literature from respective time periods. Students will also study SAT vocabulary, and grammar is taught prescriptively, focusing on students' weaknesses and on improving writing skills.

Through the course of the class, students will participate in critical reading, analytical thinking, and clear communication. They will learn to synthesize rhetorical skills in order to put together essays, speeches, and researched arguments. These skills will also be utilized in numerous class discussions. Students will write for diverse audiences using numerous modes of development. Students will also read varied texts in order to analyze them and to develop and support arguments. Students will also study how rhetoric is used in non-print sources, such as photographs and political cartoons, charts, and graphs, and film. As stated in the course description, this class will teach "students to read primary and secondary sources carefully, to synthesize material from these texts in their own compositions, and to cite sources using conventions recommended by professional organizations such as the Modern Language Association (MLA)."

The course is designed to work sequentially through essential skills students need in order to achieve collegiate-level rhetorical analysis and argument skills. Students will have numerous opportunities to hone their skills in timed writing situations along with projects that include multi-draft writing, research, and speaking. Homework is consistent and complementary to in-class work and projects.

Materials Needed

Students will be provided with the texts *Everyday Use* and *One Hundred Great Essays* (see bibliography). In addition to these texts, students will purchase their own copies of outside reading materials along with a copy of *Cliff's AP* (see bibliography). Along with these materials, the following class supplies are required:

- One 2" three-ring binder
- Dividers for the binder (journal, vocabulary, rhetoric, composition, and test-prep divisions)
- Loose-leaf paper
- Pencils and black or blue ink pens
- Index cards
- Post-it notes
- Highlighters

Notebook Divisions

Students must maintain an organized binder for the course. The binder must include the following sections:

1. **Journal**—Daily, students will receive a prompt to which they must respond. Many of these prompts will come from *The Week* (see bibliography). Prompts coming from this source are meant to give students practice at choosing a side and articulating an argument, analyzing rhetorical strategies used in non-print media such as political cartoons, pictures, and charts. These prompts also help build students' "cultural memory," which David Jolliffe, author of *Everyday Use*, considers of paramount importance in performing well on the AP exam. Students will also be given prompts requiring them to craft defend, challenge, qualify thesis statements and responses.
2. **Vocabulary**—Initially, vocabulary study will include mastery of rhetorical devices. Students will keep lists of definitions and examples of each device. Wherever possible, vocabulary will come from the works being studied in class. Otherwise, lists will be pulled from *Word Smart* by the Princeton Review (see bibliography).
3. **Rhetoric**—This section will contain notes and course work relating to rhetoric, such as the defining characteristics and the five canons.
4. **Composition**—This section will contain coursework relating to composition; most specifically, composition employing the seven modes of development. Student multi-draft papers will also be works in progress in this section.
5. **AP Test Prep**—This section will focus on multiple-choice test taking strategies and practice work. Along with the multiple choice practice, this section will also contain tips and notes for the three essay questions. Students will keep records in this section of their performance on all practice testing so that they can see trends in their test taking and writing skills.

Grading

55%	writing (including practice timed-writes and multi-draft writing)
30%	tests and projects
15%	class work, homework, minor quizzes, multiple-choice practice

Course Planner

The onset of the course is designed to be a "primer" on rhetoric. Once students have become familiar with rhetoric, then students engage in a series of projects that expand their analysis of rhetoric and build their experience in exercising rhetoric. Woven into the study and application of rhetoric are numerous practice AP timed-write sessions, along with multiple-choice practice. Students will have at least two practice sessions on each type of essay question. For one question, students will be provided a sample packet of model essays demonstrating each level of writing, one through nine. Some class time will be devoted to analyzing these model essays so that students are more familiar with expectations for the AP exam.

Besides timed writing experiences, students will also apply rhetorical skills in multi-draft assignments. Students' researched arguments will be in the form of persuasive speeches, and the culminating project has students write multi-draft essays

utilizing each of the seven modes of development. (This project is adapted from Valerie Stephenson, Patrick Henry High School, San Francisco, CA.) These major writing and speaking assignments will proceed through prewriting, research (where warranted), drafting, peer and teacher reviews, revision, editing, and final drafts.

Summer Review

- Students are assigned two summer readings, *The Great Gatsby* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. For *The Great Gatsby*, students create a “soundtrack” for the novel, choosing one song that fits each chapter and one song that embodies the entire book. Students must defend their song choices by giving specific connections between each song and characters, conflicts, or plot events in the book. For *A Raisin in the Sun*, students must write an essay responding to the following prompt: Mama’s plant, although mentioned little in the play, is a central symbol in it. Explain what Mama’s plant symbolizes and how that symbolism works to better the audience’s understanding of Mama and Ruth. Then, choose another character and think of an object that symbolizes that character. Explain the symbolism and how the symbolism can help the reader better understand the character.
- Assignments are due the first day of school, and for the first few days, students will use these fictional texts to begin viewing things rhetorically. Using student-led open discussions, students will look at textual connections (text to itself, text to self, text to text, text to world). Discussions will focus on textual analysis, leading to the class’s first practice timed-write, using a past prose analysis question relating to *The Great Gatsby*.

Unit One

- This unit primarily explores how language is used to appeal to audiences in order to influence the audience’s thoughts, actions, and attitudes. Students will read and discuss chapters one through three of *Everyday Use*, along with using three anchor pieces for analysis of rhetorical concepts studied in the chapters—“On the Duty of Civil Disobedience,” by Henry David Thoreau; “It’s a Woman’s World,” by Eavan Boland; and “Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker. Students will put into practice the concepts covered in those chapters through several projects and writing assignments. Journals focus on building students’ rhetorical analysis skills and on building their “cultural memory.”
- The first project is an individual project in which students choose a columnist and “follow” that columnist. Students must research and provide biographical information on the columnist. Students choose at least five articles to read and analyze. These responses are kept in a journal format. Additionally, students choose one article to pair with two other treatments of the same issue from other sources and analyze the similarities and differences among the pieces, explaining which piece they feel is most effective rhetorically and why. (This project originally came from Valerie Stephenson, Patrick Henry High School, San Francisco, CA.)

- The second project is interspersed throughout the term. Students will complete three non-fiction book reports (adapted from V. Stephenson, Patrick Henry High School, San Francisco, CA). The purpose of this project is to expose students to more non-fiction reading and analysis throughout the term. Students are provided a book list from which to choose; however, they may choose a book not on the list with my approval. Students read and summarize these books as well as provide a thorough rhetorical analysis of the book. This analysis includes audience, purpose, logos, pathos, ethos, tone, and delivery. Students are also required to give their personal response to the book at the end of the report. Throughout the term, we discuss the books being read and share ideas that arise out of them.
- Students will also work with multiple-choice question stems pulled from past AP multiple-choice exams to hone their prose analysis and multiple-choice question skills. Additionally, students will take a second timed-write from a past prose analysis question. Afterward, students will look at model essays (provided by College Board) from that same prompt in order to gain clarity on scoring and to see what strong (and weak) analysis looks like.

Unit Two

- This unit begins with students reading and discussing chapters four and five of *Everyday Use*, focusing on rhetoric and writing along with rhetoric and reading. This point in our study of rhetoric also complements our work in composition, as we spend time on diction and syntax, working on the word and sentence level in order to tighten writing and to speak with a more sophisticated and mature voice. Students use their own writing on which to practice, and we study our anchor pieces (mentioned in Unit One) along with numerous other pieces by authors such as Susan Sontag, Martin Luther King, Jr., Joan Didion, Ellen Goodman, Barbara Holland, Dave Barry, and others.
- Prose analysis work continues with specific lessons in taking apart the prose analysis questions to ensure that students address the prompt and attempt to move away from primarily formulaic writing to more organic organization. The third practice prose analysis timed-write is given at this time.
- The main project for this unit is another memory builder and a test of rhetorical analysis. For this project student pairs analyze a current “hot-button” issue. They read and analyze “pro” and “con” articles on an issue of their choice (and my approval). Each student in the pair individually writes an analysis of the articles he or she has found. Together, the students compose a presentation that thoroughly outlines the issue and articulates both sides of the issue. This presentation must use technology. Suggestions of technology use include power point presentations, videos, podcasts, etc. Class discussion arises out of the presentations in which students explore the validity of arguments presented. (This project is adapted from one by Valerie Stephenson, Patrick Henry High School, San Francisco, CA.)

Unit Three

- This unit covers the rhetorical elements of argument and persuasion. At this point, I have been using journals to acclimate students to answering defend, challenge, qualify statements. We look at the elements of argument including the categories, purposes, and appeals. We also look for logical fallacies and study how they diminish an argument. Using resources on current events, such as *The Week*, we look at arguments for or against current issues and spot the fallacies and the strengths present in the arguments.
- We begin work on practicing with the free-response question on the AP exam. Again, as with prose analysis, we look at taking the prompt apart in order to understand the issue to be addressed, and we work on ways to address the issue by providing quality evidence. During this unit, students will complete three practice free-response timed-writes. Again, with the second one, students analyze model essays that demonstrate strengths and weaknesses of responses to this prompt.
- The project for this unit involves much of the analysis and practice in argument. Using 10 speech examples from the “100 Greatest Speeches of the 20th Century” section of the AmericanRhetoric.com website (see bibliography), the class will read and listen to the speeches, keeping a response journal for each speech. In each journal entry, students will comment on elements of argument such as appeals, purposes, audience, concession, etc. Students will also respond personally to the speeches and comment on any strategies the speaker used that they may want to incorporate into speeches of their own. Students research an issue and develop an argument concerning that issue and write a speech. This speech goes through the steps of the writing process, and is submitted in written form to the teacher as the student presents it to class. The written speech must cite sources using MLA guidelines, and it must be annotated according to guidelines concerning rhetorical elements, diction, and syntax. The hard copy of the speech must have a cover sheet that also requires students to provide more information on rhetorical elements present in their speeches.

Unit Four

- This unit mainly revolves around composition. The center of this unit is a “modes” writing project (adapted from one by Valerie Stephenson, Patrick Henry High School, San Francisco, CA) in which students read and compose essays under the umbrella of one theme and that fit the seven modes of development, narrative/descriptive, process analysis, cause-effect, definition, compare/contrast, and argument/persuasion. Essays come from various sources, including our text, as well as *The Riverside Reader* (see bibliography). We read and discuss the essays in class, focusing on aspects of the essays that make them good examples of a particular mode. Students write a rhetorical précis for each essay we read. Then, students choose a theme of their own and write original essays from each mode addressing that theme. These essays are true pieces of multi-draft writing. Students pre-write and draft then have peer revision/editing conferences along

with conferences with the teacher. Then, students revise, edit and publish their work. “Expert” groups are formed for each mode, and the groups assess students’ essays based on a detailed rubric. Then, the teacher uses the assessments and reads final essays in order to assign the summative grade.

- Concurrently with the modes project, the class works with the synthesis question from the AP exam. The focus is on analyzing the prompts so that students understand the task appointed them on this question. We work on defending arguments using sources and documenting those sources correctly. Students participate in three practice timed-writes of the synthesis question, with the second question being one on which students discuss sample essays in order to see strengths and weaknesses in responses to this question type. As students have already completed a researched argument in their speeches and have researched for several other projects, the synthesis work we do is mainly practice for students in choosing quality evidence to support their arguments and articulating those arguments in timed situations.

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