

Dear Parents and Students,

Thank you for attending the Valor AP Informational Meeting in order to learn more about the content and expectations of the AP Literature and Composition course. I have provided a class syllabus, the summer reading requirement, a sample excerpt from the 2004 AP Literature and Composition Exam and a set of sample AP Literature and Composition Open Ended essay prompts from recent exams. You are welcome to take these materials with you.

I am thankful to be a part of the Valor English Department and to have the privilege of teaching AP Literature and Composition. I assume you selected this course because of your interest, talents, and performance in previous English courses. I hope to help you further develop those interests and talents as readers, writers, thinkers, and speakers. Your success in the course will be in direct relation to how closely you look at and think about the ideas presented in the assigned readings and how well you convey what you think to the class in your writing and your speaking.

I would like to reiterate some thoughts from a long-time AP teacher, Kathleen May, on the value of English. Her thoughts mirror mine in many ways, so I feel comfortable sharing with you some of the following concepts: literature, for the most part, is not “practical.” It doesn’t tell us how to repair our computers, build a bookcase, or change a tire. What it does do, however, is more subtle and more powerful. It takes us out of ourselves, providing experiences that often leave us amazed. More importantly, perhaps, it also takes us *into* ourselves, helping us to process the events of our lives and to produce our own narratives. It provides case studies of successful lives and failures; of what to do and what not to do. Through literature, we live vicariously; we travel, both in time and place; we experience depression and elation, fear and courage, ignorance and wisdom. We grow and we know.

This course is built on the idea that literature is greater than the sum of its parts but that knowing *both* parts and the sum is *crucial*. Students of literature need to be conversant in the terms specific to its genres; they need to know something about the various approaches to literature, and they need to be familiar with the significant works of Western culture.

Finally, literature is grounded in morality. Each text has a moral agenda, whether explicit or implicit, tied to major themes such as Truth and Illusion, the Nature of Good and Evil, and Finding Purpose in Life. Literature challenges us to examine lives well-lived and lives squandered, to examine *our* lives in light of God’s truth.

This course will challenge you academically. You will read constantly, write frequently, and think relentlessly about who you are and how you are. The bottom line is that AP Literature and Composition promises to be an exciting course – if you make it so. We have, I think, some fascinating readings that bring to life questions about truth, honor, justice, courage, loyalty, accountability, love, faith and society. I will expect you to contribute ideas in class, but not dominate discussion, to challenge each other, but respectfully, to help all of us to hone our thinking about important issues and to seek the Lord’s discernment and wisdom as you contemplate and analyze western thought through the ages.

In His service,

*Mrs. Bunny Fisher*

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## AP Literature and Composition Summer Reading Requirement

Students enrolled in AP Literature and Composition are required to read **TWO** of the following texts during the summer.

### ***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley**

Enter a society where “soma” (Prozac?) is the drug of choice to navigate life, where mind- less activities entertain (video games and Internet surfing?), where babies are grown in laboratories (test-tubes?). This was Huxley’s prediction of society – only he wrote this novel in 1930. Compared by some to *The Matrix*, this novel is both science fiction and successful adventure. This is a classic which is eerily relevant today.

### ***For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway**

One of Hemingway’s best known works, this novel examines love, war, dying well and living well. Robert Jordan, the tragic hero, is about to blow up a bridge during the Spanish Civil War. His emotions and thoughts over the course of three days conclude that all mankind is related; that what happens to one happens to all. Analyzing war is now, and always has been, an occupation of the thoughtful, human mind.

### ***A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” is the famous opening line of this novel. In one of Dickens’ more tightly plotted and shorter novels, the French Revolution is depicted in all its bloody gore. Spies, mobs, and terrorism reveal the darker side of the Revolution. Filled with profound symbolism about sin, forgiveness and salvation, this may be Dickens’ most satisfying novel.

### ***A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry**

The question answered by the title of Hansberry’s play is, “What happens to a dream deferred?” Surprisingly fresh and current even though it was written in the 1950s, this play illuminates the dreams of various members of an African-American family. Mama’s dream is to own a house; Walter’s dream is to own a liquor store; Beneatha’s dream is to experience equality and freedom. The inability of each character to realize his/her dream provides the powerful drama, the frequent humor and the moving emotion of this play.

Students will respond to an essay prompt which will require them to incorporate ideas from *both* texts. Students will write the essay in class during the first week of class. Students also sign an Honor Code.

The essay prompt possibilities, assessment rubric and honor pledge are on the following pages.

# AP Literature and Composition

## Summer Reading Essay Prompts

Respond to the following prompt for **each** of the books you read. You will write **one** essay which must incorporate ideas from **both** of the texts you have read. You will write the essay in class during the first week of class.

Prompt: Listed below are seven characteristics of a **classic** work of literature. What makes the books you read classics? In your in-class essay, you will choose **one** of the characteristics of a classic and apply it to your books using *several specific examples* from the books to *support your argument*.

### What is a Classic?

1. The classics not only exhibit distinguished style, fine artistry, and keen intellect, but create whole universes of imagination and thought.
2. The classics portray life as complex and many-sided, depicting both negative and positive aspects of human character in the process of discovering and testing enduring virtues.
3. The classics have a transforming effect on the reader's self-understanding.
4. The classics adapt themselves to various times and places and provide a sense of the shared life of humanity.
5. The classics' appeal endures over wide reaches of time.

The characteristics above are taken from:

Cowan, Louis and Os Guinness, eds. *Invitation to the Classics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

**AP Literature and Composition**  
**Summer Reading Essay Response Assessment Rubric**  
**Mrs. Fisher**

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Titles:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authors** \_\_\_\_\_

**Scoring Guidelines**

1. Develops a clear point of view that *defends* the books as classics  
\_\_\_\_\_ (20 points)
  2. Uses *specific* examples from the books that demonstrate comprehension  
\_\_\_\_\_ (35 points)
  3. Uses *accurate* details from the books  
\_\_\_\_\_ (15 points)
  4. Presents ideas logically and clearly  
\_\_\_\_\_ (20 points)
  5. Uses language clearly and effectively according to the rules of standard written English  
\_\_\_\_\_ (10 points)
- Total: \_\_\_\_\_ (100 points)

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

# AP Literature and Composition

Summer Reading Honor Pledge – Complete an honor pledge for each book.

Title of book \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the entire book.  
(please PRINT)

If you have **not** read the entire book, please indicate the % of the book read. \_\_\_\_\_

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(Signature)

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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

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(Signature)

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