

### **Course Description**

Advanced Placement (AP) English classes serve two purposes: (1) to prepare high school students for college level work, and (2) to allow students to receive college accreditation upon successful completion of the College Board Advanced Placement Exams in Language and Composition and/or Literature and Composition.

Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) English classes (typically grades 7 through 10) give students the opportunity to improve and practice (at the appropriate level) skills that will enable them to be successful in AP classes (grades 11 and 12). Pre-AP classes will expose students to the type of activities and expectations required by the AP program. Pre-AP classes lay the groundwork and foundation for success not only in later AP classes, but ultimately in college course work as well. They also foster organizational skills and study habits that provide excellent preparation for college.

Successful Pre-AP students are typically task-oriented, proficient readers who are able to set priorities with regard to time and responsibilities. Parental support also plays a key role in the success of these students.

### **Enrollment**

This class is open to all students. Any student willing to make the necessary sacrifices and commit to the time and work required to succeed is welcome to enroll. With parental consent, a student may request a schedule change to an on-level English class ***only at the end of the first six weeks*** of the fall semester.

### **Pre-AP Course Requirements for English I**

Reading comprehension is the best indicator of future success in education. The only way for that skill to develop is through consistent practice. A suggested goal at many high school campuses is that Pre-AP students should read twenty (20) works of literature per year. Of these twenty, six to eight will be assigned reading for in-depth, in-class analysis. Additional books may be suggested as related independent reading. The remaining books should be selected by the student based on individual ability, needs, and interest. We ask parents to encourage and help students to achieve this goal.

***Students are required to buy their own copies of the books for summer reading.*** The summer books will be the **only** books students are required to purchase. During the school year, students who are able to purchase their own copies will have a decided advantage in that they will be able to highlight, mark, and make notes in their copies. This is an invaluable tool in literary analysis. Students will be encouraged to buy their own copy during the year for this reason. Purchase of these books is completely optional during the school year. A school copy is available for every title during the school year. Only the summer titles must be purchased.

## **The Readings**

Students should have purchased and read the following as summer reading:

*The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck

*The Pearl*, by John Steinbeck

(These books may be purchased separately or in a new publication called *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck*. The book includes both the titles and several more, including *Of Mice and Men*, which will be read in class when you return to school in August.)

These titles, among others, may also be studied during the course of the year.

*Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck

*The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros

*To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee

*A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens

*Cry, The Beloved Country*, by Alan Paton

These works will also be read from school textbooks.

*The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare

*The Odyssey*, by Homer

These are a few of the other suggested works students may wish to read on their own, however this is by no means a complete list.

*Life As We Knew It*, by Susan Beth Pfeffer

*The Dead and the Gone*, by Susan Beth Pfeffer

*Bless Me, Ultima*, by Rudolfo Anaya

*Great Expectations*, by Charles Dickens

*Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley

*The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck

*The Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger

*Night*, by Elie Wiesel

Other authors and titles may be suggested throughout the year. We will also read several short stories, nonfiction selections, and a unit of poetry.

## **Writing Requirements**

Students are required to do many types of writing, including:

- persuasive argument (a TAKS requirement in 11<sup>th</sup> grade)
- journal writing (homework commentaries)
- reading responses and/or dialecticals
- literary analysis of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction

## **Expectations and Workload**

**Homework!** Students should plan on homework every day. This may include reading, journal entries, vocabulary assignments, take home exams, and more.

Prioritizing responsibilities is a major aspect of Pre-AP. Students will be held to strict deadlines for submitting and making up work. AP policy dictates that late daily work will not be accepted and late major assignments receive a 25% penalty per day.

**Grades** and the grading system will be outlined in detail by the course instructor.

**Material Needed:** One large 3-ring binder with pockets and dividers, loose leaf paper, Highlighters, index cards, and a dark blue or black pen.

English I – Pre-AP Preview  
Summer Reading

*The Red Pony* and *The Pearl*, by John Steinbeck

**Your Assignment:** *Always write in paragraphs.*

- 1 Annotate the book. Write in it ... a lot!

As you read, come up with a title for *every page* of the book. Record your title at the top of each page. This activity helps with several skills:

- It keeps you focused and helps to prevent the mind from wandering. How often have you finished a page of reading and cannot remember what happened on that page? By doing titles, you have a purpose for reading. Your title should be one that will help you remember what happened on that page. If needed, two titles may be appropriate.
- It encourages you to keep a main idea in mind as you read. Recording a main idea or the most important event at the top of each page keeps you *looking* for the main idea or most important event. That in itself will increase your reading comprehension.
- It produces a basic plot outline. When you have finished a chapter, flip back and review the titles at the top of each page. You will find that it is a very efficient way of keeping up with plot developments and quickly reviewing what you have read.

2. Circle the names of new characters and draw a box around any physical descriptions of the characters. Doing so makes it very easy to flip back and review a character's introduction when or if the character reappears in the book.
3. Highlight or underline any important, revealing, or particularly well-written passage.
4. Write in the margins. Record personal reactions, comments on meaningful passages, effective use of rhetorical strategies, *or anything else that appeals to you.*
5. Finally, write four 200-word responses (two per book) **in multiple paragraphs** reacting to your summer reading. Responses are exactly that – your *response*, your *reaction*, to the text. **Do not simply summarize** what happens, but talk about *what you think* of what happens.

Your first topic is about the main character, the boy in *The Red Pony*. Discuss his strengths and weaknesses. What does he do well? What mistakes does he make? What motivates his actions? What should he have done that he did not do? How does he change and what does he learn from his experience in the novel?

Topic two is about *The Pearl*. Discuss the changes in the life of the main character. How does his life change after he finds The Pearl? Discuss his behavior and attitude the actions and attitudes of those around him. What, if anything, should he have done differently and why?

The second response for each book may be about any aspect of each novel you choose. We have provided a handout attached which will give you some of the most common ideas for writing responses. You may choose from anything on the page, or you may come up with something completely original.

**Again, write in multiple paragraphs and avoid summary.**

**Your responses and the books will be collected as grades when we come back in August. There will also be a test on the novels. Come back to school ready for that test.**

Have a good summer. I look forward to seeing you in August. It's going to be a good year.

Jeff Spencer  
Jason Roth  
Dobie English Department

## Response Ideas

**First, find a good book. Second, write with your own attitude. Say what you like. Indulge yourself. Have fun.**

**Finally, practice your writing skills.**

### Some General Ideas to start with

<u>Explain why you chose the book</u>	<u>Explain what you expect from the book</u>		
<u>Speculate (ask 'what if')</u>	<u>Ask Why</u>	<u>Pass Judgment</u>	<u>Predict</u>
<u>Be a critic</u>	<u>Praise and criticize</u>	<u>Relate it to your experience</u>	

### Responding to Characters

1. Discuss whether a character is a protagonist (good guy) or an antagonist (bad guy) and why you think so. Predict what will happen to a character.
2. Discuss the character traits of the people in the book. What are their best points and their worst points? What about them do you admire? What about them do you dislike?
3. If you knew the character in real life, would you like him or her? Why or why not?
4. What would you do if you were in the character's situation?
5. Discuss how the characters feel about each other. Do they get along? Do you understand why or why not?
6. If you know people like the characters in the book, discuss ways that they are alike or different.
7. Discuss the motivations of the characters. Why do they do what they do?

### Plot

8. Talk about "the hook." In most novels, the author begins the story in a way that makes the reader want to read more. Does the author do so effectively in your book? How so or why not? (Be specific.)
9. Predict what you suspect will happen next. What clues make you think so?
10. Discuss the pace of the novel. Do things happen quickly? Is there action and adventure? Is there more dialogue than description?
11. Discuss things that happen in the book that also happen in your experience. Compare your experience to the book's experience.
12. Is the book easy to understand or is it confusing? In some books, especially mysteries, the author wants the reader to wonder what is going on. Does the author intend you to be confused?
13. Is the book predictable? Were there clues that helped you to guess what would happen? Were there things that happened earlier in the book that make more sense now that you know what has happened?
14. Discuss the main conflict or conflicts in the story. Perhaps it is pure action, or maybe it is tension between characters. Is the type of conflict person versus person, person versus nature, or person versus self, or maybe even all of them?
15. Comment on the situations and ideas in the book. Are they believable? Are they fantasy? For example, if you are reading a book with ghosts, discuss the possibility of the real existence of ghosts. If you are reading about a famous person, comment on the unusual pressures a public figure might face? If it is a love story or a story of hatred, are the reasons believable?
16. Present possible solutions to the problems in the book.

17. If you have completed a book, discuss how you would have ended the book if you were the author. If you were going to write a sequel (that is, a part two), how would you do it?
18. Common complaints are that a book is “just stupid” or “boring.” What is stupid? How could you make it less boring?
19. What in the book surprises you? What makes you wonder?

### **Setting**

20. Discuss the time and place of the story. Would you want to be there? Live there? Is the setting appropriate for the action and events of the story?
21. Does the time and place add or detract from the novel?
22. Discuss the importance of the setting. For example, science fiction often takes place in space or in other worlds. Horror stories are often placed in dark, scary places. Love stories often take place in romantic settings. Does the setting of your book make a significant contribution to the story?
23. If you were the author, would you change the setting? Where and when? Why?

### **Theme**

24. What is the author trying to teach the reader about life? Do you agree or disagree with the author’s ideas?
25. Fill in the blank with one word and explain why you chose that word. “This book is about \_\_\_\_\_.” Are there several words that may fit?
26. What have you learned from the book? For example, someone reading *Jurassic Park* might learn a great deal about dinosaurs, the history of extinction, and theories about cloning and animal behavior. Someone reading a murder mystery may learn about detective techniques, courtroom scenes, or human motivation.
27. What have you learned about yourself as a result of reading the book?
28. How does the book make you feel? Why?

### **Writing and Writers**

29. If you have read more than one book by the same author, compare and contrast the two books.
30. Compare and contrast two different writers.
31. Discuss a quote, a particularly vivid image, or an idea. Explain why the quote, image, or idea caught your attention. Explain the author’s meaning in your own words.
32. Discuss the dialogue in the book. Is it realistic? Do some characters talk differently than others? Is there dialect or accents in the book? Explain their effects. Do they make the book more or less enjoyable?
33. If the author was available, what would you ask him or her? What would you expect the answers to be?

### **Point of View**

34. Who is the storyteller? The author? A character? How does this affect the story?
35. What would another reader of a different sex think if they read the same book? What would your parents think? A teacher? Anyone else?
36. Apply other reading, movies, or television shows to your reading. Are there many stories about the same as your book? Is there a movie of your book? A TV show? Compare the two. Which was better? Which was more enjoyable? Which one did you understand better? Why?