



[AP English Language and Composition]

Course Description: This writing-intensive course prepares students for college-level writing and introduces American literature. Students will write for various audiences and purposes and will read both fiction and nonfiction, analyzing writers' rhetorical styles. The course is recommended for students planning to enroll in AP Literature their senior year, and passing the AP exam earns a writing credit that most colleges require for all students.

Attendance: Students are required to be in school every day. Students are responsible for communicating with their teachers to make up missed learning.

Essential Skills: Below are the four essential standards for English 11. All standards for grades 11-12 can be found at <https://doe.sd.gov/>

RL.1/RI.1: Cite evidence and inferences from the text.

W.4: Produce coherent writing with development, organization, and style appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

SL.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric identifying any false, exaggerated or distorted evidence.

L.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Course Expectations: Although not everything is graded, everything is important. In order to demonstrate growth and learning, students will need to:

1. Participate in class activities (take notes, work in a group, complete in class tasks, ask questions) without distractions (cell phones, games, etc.)
2. Use morning time and teacher to seek help outside of class when needed.
3. Complete all assessments within teacher timelines.

Grading

Skyward Assessment (Grades) may include quizzes, labs, learning checks, tests, speeches, performances, projects, and various kinds of writing activities.

Calculations:

Final Grade Calculation	
Semester Grade	95%
Semester Exam	5%

Final Grade	
A	100% - 90%
B	80% - 89%
C	70% - 79%
D	60% - 69%
F	40% - 59%

Note: For AP English language, "40% is the new 0%," meaning that missing or incomplete work will be assigned 40%. Students should recognize that they are not being awarded 40% for missing work but that the scale has been tightened to make the numbers better represent the evidence of students' learning.

Instructional Resources:

- *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy
 - *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* by Frederick Douglass
 - *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
 - *Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Patillo Beals
 - *Coming of Age in Mississippi* by Anne Moody
 - *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
 - *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
 - *They Say, I Say* (Graff/Birkinstein)
 - *On Writing Well* (Zinsser)
 - *Elements of Style* (Strunk/White)
 - Essays and contemporary shorter works as assigned (see below for a sample list of required and optional reading—reading beyond this list will be used)
 - Short stories as assigned (Sample list below, though material is not restricted by it)
 - Poetry—one poem a day (too many to list)
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- **Essay anthology table of contents:** Death of a Pig (White); Why I Write (Didion); Toy Children (Daum); Don't Eat Before Reading This (Bourdain); Me Talk Pretty One Day (Sedaris); The Ballad of Luther and Johnny (Vowell); Bad Taste, and on Such a Large Scale (Schmich); America's Bad Jeans (Will); Curvy or No, Barbie Is Still a Mean Girl (Daum); All Can Be Lost (Carr); A Yellow Card (Phillips); For \$1 per Big Mac (Kingsbury); What is to be done about schooling? (Belz); A Wounded Boy's Silence (Noonan); Us and Them (Sedaris); Walking While Black (Cadagon); Letter from a Birmingham Jail (King); The Boy Who Got Stuck in a Tree (Key); A Sudden Illness (Hillenbrand); Junk Food Heaven (Bryson); The Nature of the Fun (Wallace); This is Water (Wallace); Megaphone Man (Saunders)

Essay anthology drawer:

- Alexander, Caroline – Epic of Survival: Shackleton; Alexie, Sherman – What Sacagawea Means to Me; Berry, Wendell – The Pleasures of Eating; Bourdain, Anthony – Don't Eat Before Reading This; Boyle, Rebecca – Light Pollution Is Destroying the Environment; Bryson, Bill – The Toilet, the Stairs, and the Lawn; Cassidy, Cody – How to Outrun a Dinosaur; Catron, Mandy Len – To Fall in Love with Anyone, Do This; Christman, Phil – How to be Married; Cofer, Judith Ortiz – The Myth of the Latin Woman; Collins, Paul - 22,000 Seedlings; Crosley, Sloane – 35.09, the Exact Age at Which Beauty Begins to Fade; Daum, Meghan – My Misspent Youth; de Botton, Alain – Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person; Didion, Joan – Goodbye to All That; Dillard, Annie – Total Eclipse; Doyle, Brian – selections from *Hoop*; Sheehy, Geoffrey – School Districts that Take Up Teachers' Valuable Time by Requiring Them to Make Lists of Everything Because Who Knows Why Really?; Ehrenreich, Barbara – Serving in Florida; Epstein, David – Roger vs. Tiger; Faust, Drew Gilpin – Gen Z Never Learned to Read Cursive; Frazier, Ian – Coyote v. ACME; Gioia, Ted – Is Old Music Killing New Music?; Gioia, Theodore (Ted) – Bach at the Burger King; Gladwell, Malcom - The Sports Taboo; Golding, William – Thinking as a Hobby; Gourevitch, Philip - After the Genocide; Halberstam, David – Jordan's Moment; Hartnick, Christopher – Medicine Face to Face; Heti, Sheila – On the Importance of Finding Trusted Readers; Holley, Claire – The Wisdom of Goodnight Moon; Hugo, Richard – Writing Off the Subject; Jamison, Leslie – In the Shadow of a Fairy Tale; Key, Harrison Scott – The

Wishbone; Kidder, Tracy – Facts and the Nonfiction Writer; King, Stephen – Reading to Write; Lebovitz, David – My Paris Kitchen (Introduction); Lim, Lousia – The People’s Republic of Amnesia (introduction); Mairs, Nancy – On Being a Cripple; Marshall, Colin – You Must Change Your Writing Style; Mauldin, Laura – Care Tactics; McClay, B.D. – It’s Very Unlikely Anyone Will Read This in 200 Years; McPhee, John – The Search for Marvin Gardens; Mooney, Michael J. – The Most Amazing Bowling Story Ever; Onion, The – Amicus Brief for the case of Novak v. City of Parma, Ohio; Orwell, George – Shooting an Elephant; Phillips, Brian – A Fighter Abroad; Phillips, Brian – The Man-eaters; Rakoff, David – The Invisible Made Visible; Rennicke, Jeff – Trapped! The Mike Turner Story; Robinson, Marilynne – When I Was a Child; Strebeigh, Fred – The Wheels of Freedom, Bicycles in China; Touré – Forty Million Ways to Be Black; Vowell, Sarah – The Ballad of Luther and Johnny; Wallace, David Foster – How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart; Whitehead, Colson – The Loser Edit; Wilson, N.D. – Why I Write Scary Stories for Children; Zinsser, William - College Pressures

Short story possibilities

- Hop Frog (Poe); The Devil and Tom Walker (Irving); Minister’s Black Veil (Hawthorne); Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge (Bierce); Devil’s Dictionary (Bierce); Outcasts of Poker Flat (Hart); To Build a Fire (London); Hills Like White Elephants (Hemingway); Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber (Hemingway); The Life You Save May Be Your Own (O’Connor); A Good Man Is Hard to Find (O’Connor); A Rose for Emily (Faulker); Health of the Sick (Cortazar); Clean Well Lighted Place (Hemingway); Tenth of December (Saunders);

Course Calendar/Pacing:

This calendar is subject to change as the teacher tweaks and improves the course.

A vision for the course

While one obvious goal of this course is to prepare students for AP English Language exam and college courses, the ultimate goal is to advance them towards lives of quality and purpose. Intellectually, a life of quality involves being reasonable, adept, and thoughtful, and enables students to be vigilant citizens of their community.

Skills that will prepare students to live such a life include the ability to reason carefully (part of what I mean here is often referred to as critical thinking), to think agilely (within this is the idea of problem solving), and to reflect deeply. These skills and the knowledge base needed to sustain them are best attained through an interdisciplinary, liberal arts study, but to advance them via our course, students will evaluate how others express their thinking and precisely what thinking is expressed. In concert with that evaluation, they will attempt to express substantive ideas in clear and convincing ways. Said another way, students will examine to what extent others have expressed beautifully that which is true, and attempt themselves to express truth beautifully.

Big Ideas

The AP English Language and Composition course was revised in the summer of 2019 to include four big ideas and enduring understandings that spiral throughout the course. Each enduring understanding encompasses the skills and knowledge that students must acquire to succeed in the class.

- **Rhetorical Situation** - Enduring Understanding: Individuals write within a particular situation and make strategic writing choices based on that situation.
- **Claims and Evidence** - Enduring Understanding: Writers make claims about subjects, rely on evidence that supports the reasoning that justifies the claim, and often acknowledge or respond to other, possibly opposing, arguments.
- **Reasoning and Organization** - Enduring Understanding: Writers guide understanding of a text's lines of reasoning and claims through that text's organization and integration of evidence.
- **Style** - Enduring Understanding: The rhetorical situation informs the strategic stylistic choices that writers make.

Long Term Projects and Daily Rhythms

Poem of the day: Students will read a poem at the beginning of each class and discuss it briefly together, with the aim to enjoy language and words that were crafted with precision. Where applicable, images will be used to connect with poetic themes (e.g. Bruegel's "Fall of Icarus" to accompany William Carlos Williams's and W.H. Auden's poems about it).

Rhetoric Terms: Students receive a packet with 67 terms describing common rhetorical moves writers make. Students take a series of quizzes over the course of the year testing their recall of the terms. As the year progresses, we will use the terms in increasing measure, particularly pulling from them during our "Reading as writers" unit, but until students are familiar with their definitions, mastery and use of the moves would be limited.

Grammar and usage: Students will study usage and grammar in small doses throughout the year. For example, students work through a chapter on commas from an old *Warriner's English Grammar and Composition* textbook, completing one exercise a day until we have worked through all 10 exercises. Additional mini-lessons include semi-colons, colons, dashes, and the first rules of style and usage from Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. (8.C.)

Unit 1: What makes good writing?

Section 1: Good writing is clear in voice and style.

Instructional focus: In this section students are introduced to the idea of 'clutter' and simplicity of style. Students will be introduced to the concepts through discussions about Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" and Jonathan

Rogers’s essay “Be More Brilliant.” To build on the concepts Orwell and Rogers affirm, they will study the foundational chapters from William Zinsser’s *On Writing Well* (7.C). Exercises in removing clutter will complement the material they’ve read (8.C).

Big Ideas: Style, Rhetorical situation

Core Skill

- 7.C – Explain how grammar and mechanics contribute to the clarity and effectiveness of an argument
- 8.C – Use established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate effectively.

Readings

- Chapters from *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser
 - “The Transaction,” “Simplicity,” “Clutter,” “Style”
- “Politics and the English Language” by George Orwell
- “Be More Brilliant” by Jonathan Rogers
- “Draft No. 4” by John McPhee

Writing assignment for unit 1, section 1

- [Essay of Introduction](#) - Students write for a summer assignment a personal essay responding to one of the Common App college application questions.

Section 2: Good writing is driven by a question or tension.

Instructional Focus: Students begin this section by asking the question, what makes writing interesting? They’ll explore how published writing is driven by some kind of question or tension. Students are introduced to the concept through a guest-speaker (recorded as a classroom podcast) and Joan Didion’s “Why I Write,” in addition to examples from writers who have organized their work around the principle (e.g., E.B. White’s “Death of a Pig,” Megan Daum’s “Toy Children”). For Didion, White, and Daum’s essays, students explore the text through class discussion, with half the discussion devoted to an open conversation about what works in the piece and the other half of the discussion more carefully directed by the teacher toward the elements of questions and tension driving the essay. Students also read additional pieces that exemplify how tension drives content, but they will spend a little less time in discussion with those pieces, instead exploring them through small groups. (1A; 3B; 5.B,C)

Big Ideas: Rhetorical situation, Reasoning and organization

Core Skill

- 5.C – Recognize and explain the use of methods of development to accomplish a purpose.
- 3.B - Identify and describe the overarching thesis of an argument, and any indication it provides of the argument’s structure.
- 1.A – Identify and describe components of the rhetorical situation: the exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message.

Readings

- “Why I Write” by Joan Didion
- “Death of a Pig” by E.B. White
- “Toy Children” by Megan Daum
- “Me Talk Pretty One Day” by David Sedaris
- “On Dumpster Diving” by Lars Eighner
- “Nature of the Fun” by David Foster Wallace

Section 3: Good writing is organized around ideas and fits its occasion.

Instructional Focus: Students in this section reconsider the way an essay is arranged. We formally lay the five-paragraph essay into a grave, even sharing eulogies to note its passing. From there, we look to a few chapters from William Zinsser’s *On Writing Well* to suggest how a lead and an ending and the unity of a piece might be approached differently than we knew (5.A,B). To reveal that Zinsser has no corner on the truth, students will read selections from Verlyn Klinkenborg’s *Several Short Sentences About Writing* to counter some of Zinsser’s ideas about beginning. They will analyze leads and endings of essays they’ve read this year to see how well these essays utilize Zinsser and Klinkenborg’s principles. Students will discuss—in small groups and as a whole class—a number of contemporary essays to examine how these writers have arranged their work according to the needs of the ideas and the rhetorical situations before them. (1.A; 5.B,C)

Students capitalize on what they have learned in this unit with a formal essay called “Driven by a Question.”

Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation, Reasoning and Organization

Core ideas/skills

- 2.A – Write introductions and conclusions appropriate to the purpose and context of the rhetorical situation.
 - 1.A Identify and describe components of the rhetorical situation: the exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message.
- 6.A – Develop a line of reasoning and commentary that explains it throughout an argument.
- 6.C – Use appropriate methods of development to advance an argument.

Readings

- “Words” and “Unity” by William Zinsser (from *On Writing Well*)
- “Leads and Endings” by William Zinsser (from *On Writing Well*)
- Selections from *Several Short Sentences About Writing* by Verlyn Klinkenborg
- “One Small Step” by Brian Philips
- “Curvy or No, Barbie is Still a Mean Girl” by Meghan Daum
- “Us and Them” by David Sedaris
- “Junk-Food Heaven” by Bill Bryson

Writing assignments for unit 1, Section 3

- [Driven by a Question](#) – This essay involves two drafts. After the first draft students receive detailed feedback from the teacher; the second draft must incorporate and engage with the feedback offered. The second draft is then graded. (2.A; 6,A,C)
- [“Essays and Ideas”](#) – one submission (2.A,B)
 - This is a recurring assignment for students where they choose an essay of note from our ‘anthology drawer,’ read it carefully, and then write a response to something the essay puts forward, exploring a claim the writer makes and the evidence supporting it (3.A).
 - Students’ essays are then shared with the class: students each must read four classmates’ essays each time we submit them. This audience creates a need for writers to be particularly clear in how they discuss the text they’re critiquing, as their readers will not have read it (2.B).
 - This first submission serves mostly as a kind of pre-test before students begin unit 2, but it also gives them opportunity to write according to principles they’ve studied in unit 1.

Unit 2: Writing as Conversation

Instructional Focus: In this unit students are helped to move beyond the formula of the five-paragraph essay with a more flexible and scalable strategy, which is presented in Graff and Birkenstein’s *They Say, I Say*. This book helps students see how rhetorical situations give rise to texts, since texts we write emerge from existing conversations and exchanges (2.A) (e.g., the introduction on entering the conversation and chpt. 1 on starting with what others are saying). The templates and rhetorical moves introduced in this text are especially helpful in guiding students to write more commentary about evidence they have presented in essays (6.A) (e.g., chpt. 3 on quoting and chpt. 7 on saying why it matters), transitioning a reader clearly through an argument (6.B) (e.g., chpt. 8 on connecting the parts), and including opposing voices and ideas into an argumentative essay (3.C; 4.C) (e.g., chpt. 6 on planting a naysayer in your text).

Students will read the text and take notes on it, which the teacher will augment with lectured examples and explanations. Students will then practice the skills from the text in a series of in-class exercises and responses—writing ‘they say, I say’ style responses to class readings, videos, or ideas the teacher has presented (see examples of exercises below) and in some cases completing the exercises presented in the *They Say, I Say* text.

Key Text: *They Say, I Say*

Big Ideas: Reasoning and Organization, Claims and evidence, Rhetorical situation

Core Skills:

- 2.A – Write introductions and conclusions appropriate to the purpose and context of the rhetorical situation.
 - 1.A Identify and describe components of the rhetorical situation: the exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message.
- 4.C – Qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives.
- 6.A – Develop a line of reasoning and commentary that explains it throughout an argument.
- 6.B – Use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning of an argument.

- 6.C – Use appropriate methods of development to advance an argument.

A sample of exercises

- Students read an excerpt from Malcolm X’s autobiography, “Learning to Read,” and are presented with a thesis they might write (“The best education doesn't involve a teacher.”). They then construct a ‘they say’ style introduction to this essay that leads to that thesis statement. (2.A)
- Students choose something from the book they’re reading and summarize and respond to one idea from it.

Readings

- *They Say, I Say* – chapters 1-10
- “Learning to Read” by Malcolm X

Writing assignments for unit 2

In the essays for this unit, students are explicitly required to use the transition cues (6.B), commentary on quotations (6.A), a clear thesis (4.B), naysayer templates (4.C), and conversation-establishing situations (2.A) introduced in the text.

- “Essays and Ideas” – two submissions
 - This is a recurring assignment for students where they choose an essay of note from our ‘anthology drawer,’ read it carefully, and then write a response to something the essay puts forward.
 - Students’ essays are then shared with the class: students each must read four classmates’ essays each time we submit them.
- Argumentative essay in the “they say, I say” style – For this essay, students respond to a retired argumentative free-response prompt from the AP exam, but they are required to use the style and templates we’ve studied in *They Say, I Say*.

Unit 3: Writing more without adding clutter

Instructional Focus: In this unit students will approach supporting their claims with appropriate and sufficient evidence by focusing on a common problem they recognize: they need to write more in their papers, but what they need to write cannot be clutter and filler. Students will examine three tried-and-true techniques for adding evidence without adding filler—using scenes, addressing naysayers, and pulling in outside information. For each element, students will learn the technique, read essays that employ the technique well, discuss how that writer improves the essay with the technique (3.A,B,C), and then practice the technique themselves in a short piece of writing (4.A,C).

Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence

Core skills:

- 3.A/4.A – Identify and explain claims and evidence within an argument / Develop a paragraph that includes a claim and evidence supporting the claim.
- 3.B – Identify and describe the overarching thesis of an argument, and any indication it provides of the argument’s structure.
- 3.C/4.C—Explain ways claims are qualified & Qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives.

Readings:

- “At a Shelter after Katrina” by John Jeremiah Sullivan (scenes)
- “Against the Grain” by Marina Keegan (scenes)
- “A Wounded Boy’s Silence” by Peggy Noonan (scenes)
- “What Is to be Done About Schooling?” by Aaron Belz (naysayers)
- “Bad Taste and on Such a Large Scale” by Mary Schmich (naysayers)
- “Braindead Megaphone” by George Saunders (scenes)
- “All Can Be Lost” by Nicholas Carr (outside information)
- “A Yellow Card” by Brian Philips (outside information)
- “For \$1 Per Big Mac” by Kathleen Kingsbury (outside information)

Writing Assignments for Unit 3

- Practicing for a Eulogy – Students will evoke someone close to them using scenes. (4.A; 8.A)
- Best/Worst, a naysayer argument – Students will argue for a position but build their case almost entirely by responding to naysayers. (4.C)
- Saying Something About our School – Students will support a brief argument about our school by pulling data from the state’s school report cards (their outside information). (4.B, 4.A)
- [“Essays and Ideas”](#) – one submission
- [The Repair Project](#) – This essay requires students to write an extended argument in favor of an idea that would help repair a broken part of the world. To be convincing, students will need to draw upon the skills they’ve learned to fill a paper with ideas without adding clutter—particularly presenting evidence and using counterarguments or alternative perspectives. This essay will be submitted twice, the second time taking into account the teacher’s feedback on the first submission. (8.A, 4.A,B,C)

Unit 4: American Literary History

Students study the three major periods in American literary history: romanticism, realism, and modernism. Students will learn the traits of the three periods and the historical contexts that gave rise to them, discovering how these philosophies of art are expressed in painting as well as literary texts. They will read short stories from each period and articulate what traits make a story’s period of origin clear.

Short stories typically read:

- “The Devil and Tom Walker” by Washington Irving
- “Hop Frog” by Edgar Allan Poe
- “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce

- “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin
- “Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway
- “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” by Ernest Hemingway
- “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner
- “To Build a Fire” by Jack London
- “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor
- “Adventure of the Mason” by Washington Irving
- “The Gorgon’s Head” by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Key American Novel

In addition to short stories, students will read a key American novel, either Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*. Their study of the novel will include close examination of the author’s subtext and ultimate meaning—how is this text not simply a story about a man and a boy wandering around? Students will engage with criticism of the text, determining another reader’s core claim (3.A,B) and whether they agree with it. Much of the unit will be conducted through students’ discussion.

Criticism read (Which articles are used depends on which novel is read)

- “The End of the World as She Knows It” by Sloane Crosley
- “Left Behind” by William Kennedy
- “Thoughts on The Road” by Jacob Knutson (a podcast interview)
- “The United States of Huck” by George Saunders
- “How to Tell a Story” by Mark Twain
- “The Code of Honor” by Claudia Durst Johnson
- “Huck Finn” by Lionel Trilling
- “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses” by Mark Twain

Unit 5: Using and incorporating others’ ideas

Instructional focus: This unit is centered around a research project where students make a claim involving an idea that is of interest to them and that requires significant research to prove (4.B). They will pick a topic, possibly one connected to the independent reading book they read in the previous month, and then find at least five outside sources—one of them a visual table, figure, or image—to prove it in a 5-7 page paper. Instruction during the unit focuses on teaching students each step of the process from research to note-taking to organizing an argument to citing sources—the teacher shows how, then students do it. Students’ papers will utilize the range of traits studied up to this point (2.A; 4.A,B,C; 6.A,B,C; 8.A,B,C). To confirm the skills they acquire, students will cap the unit by practicing with retired synthesis prompts from the AP exam.

In their preparation for writing this research paper, students will read a number of research-based essays to show them how to develop an extended argument as well as document and cite sources (5.B). They will also read a book of

their choice leading into the unit, with the hopes that the book will serve as a source for their research paper. After reading that book, students will explain how it develops one or two core ideas and supports its claims (5.A,C).

Big Ideas: Claims and evidence, Reasoning and Evidence

Emphasized core ideas/skills:

- 3.A/4.A – Identify and explain claims and evidence within an argument / Develop a paragraph that includes a claim and evidence supporting the claim.
- 3.C/4.C—Explain ways claims are qualified & qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives.

Readings for unit 5

- excerpt from David McCullough’s *The Greater Journey*
- “Man v. Rat: Could the long war soon be over?” by Jordan Kisner
- Former students’ research papers
- “Jordan’s Moment” by David Halberstam
- A book of their choice

Writing assignments for unit 5

- [Research paper.](#)
 - This is a multi-week project where students will choose a topic and research it in depth.
 - Students are encouraged in January to read a book that could springboard them into the research project. If it works out, that book can become an important source for their research project.
- Depending on time and students’ success, students will write one or two smaller essays attempting to pull together various sources’ information to create a coherent thesis and paper. These timed essays will utilize previous synthesis free response questions from the AP English Language and Composition exam.

Unit 6: Reading Like a Writer

Instructional Focus: The “Reading Like a Writer” unit corresponds with the skills demonstrated on the rhetorical analysis question of the free-response section of the AP exam. In this unit students are pushed to look more closely at pieces of text and wrestle with writers’ particular choices.

Skills and strategies include showing students to ask “five whys” of a writer, digging past surface level observations into the more particular goals a writer might have with any rhetorical choice (1.A,B; 7.A,B,C). The skill is demonstrated by applying it to paintings like George Seurat’s *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, Grant Wood’s *American Gothic*, and Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*. Writing assignments in this unit focus on relaying students’ analysis of texts—the instructional emphasis falls on students’ ideas, evidence, and commentary (6.A). To that end, lessons and

assignments in this unit likely include close-readings of a speech from Winston Churchill, an excerpt from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, and a poem of their choice from Billy Collins. The capstone reading will be *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, with special focus on Douglass's purpose and style (5.A,C; 7.A,B,C). Students will finish the unit by analyzing passages used for old AP exams (1.A,B; 3.A,B,C) and writing their own piece of cultural criticism.

Big Ideas: Style, Rhetorical Situation, Reasoning and Organization

Core ideas/skills:

- 5.C: Recognize and explain the use of methods of development to accomplish a purpose.
- 7.A: Explain how word choice, comparisons, and syntax contribute to the specific tone or style of a text.

Reading Thoreau

- Students read and analyze excerpts from *Walden*. Students are introduced to Thoreau's context and priorities so as to identify his rhetorical situation and sense of purpose (1.A,B). Students will choose a paragraph from *Walden* to analyze in particular focus, seeing how Thoreau's purposes are achieved at the level of the sentence. Groups of students will create posters sharing what stylistic moves they've discovered Thoreau making (7.A,B,C).

Reading Churchill

- Students will read Winston Churchill's "Give Us the Tools" and write two paragraphs of analysis. One will consider the rhetorical situation facing Churchill in February 1941 (1.A,B). The other will consider the effect Churchill's rhetoric had on the British people and what Churchill does rhetorically to bring about such responses (7.A).

Analyzing a poem

- Each day for the year we begin with a poem of the day. For this unit, we read a large swath of Billy Collins's work, getting a sense of his style and humor. Then we read a review poet Aaron Belz wrote of Collins's work ("A Regiment of Aimless Strolling"), analyzing Collins's style and approach. Using Belz as a model and a guide into Collins's poetry, students choose one of the poems we read in class and write their own analysis of the poem. The analysis must wrestle with particular lines and phrases in the poem and must be at least two pages long. Students work on this assignment with a partner, as a partner helps each student push more deeply in their analysis. [See instructions below](#). (7.A)

Frederick Douglass

- Students will read Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. Instructional focus centers on Douglass's purpose in writing his autobiography and how he accomplishes that purpose by invention and style.
- Douglass's Syntax: Students examine Douglass's syntax by rearranging it, setting it up as if it were a poem or a bullet-pointed list. To grasp the exercise students read [two passages from Verlyn Klinkenborg](#) advising writers to rearrange prose sentences as separate paragraphs and read it aloud to get to know it better. Students then choose an orally rich passage from what we have read to that point and rearrange it, emphasizing the sound of the lines and guiding a reader how to read Douglass's work aloud. (7.A,B,C)

- [Examining Douglass closely](#): Students examine Douglass’s syntax again but also examine his choice of details and use of rhetorical devices like imagery, scenes, and exposition. Students choose a chapter to examine, then zoom in to a paragraph in that chapter, then to a sentence in that paragraph. At each level students consider the rhetorical choices Douglass makes, using questions given by the teacher to guide responses and following an example from a chapter students won’t be allowed to use. (7.A,B,C)
- Comparing slave narratives: Helping students recognize the way a purpose changes the character of a text, students read slave narratives archived at the Smithsonian, recorded as the Civil War generation died away. Students will compare and contrast these former slaves’ narratives with Douglass’s, helping them see the way Douglass’s rhetorical purpose colored his presentation. (1.A,B)
- Achieving his purpose: Students read a public letter Douglass wrote to his former master explaining his intentions to use him “as a weapon with which to assail the system of slavery.” Given that purpose, students will then work in a group to examine how Douglass achieves this purpose with his *Narrative*. They’ll find and write about six examples from the text that show Douglass developing and achieving his purpose. (1.A,B; 5.A,C)

Writing Assignments for Reading Like a Writer

- [Cobbler Review](#) – For this assignment students will become a critic and ‘review’ a cultural item. It is a capstone to the analysis unit, allowing them to apply their thorough analysis skills to a cultural artifact of their own choosing. They will hand in two drafts, the second draft taking into account the teacher’s feedback. Their own writing will need to emphasize claims, evidence, and commentary (2.A,B; 4.A; 6.A,B,C).
- **Rhetorical Analysis** – Students will complete one or two retired rhetorical analysis prompts from former AP English language exams.

Unit 7: Have a Style

This focus of this unit is helping students with tangled questions about voice and style. Success in gaining these elements as a writer would help a student earn the sophistication points on the AP exam. Students will be presented with the guiding questions, What is voice? And What are we talking about when we discuss a writer’s style? Students will wrestle with specific elements like sentences’ lengths, figurative language, and choice of content, recognizing that any element of language contributes to what we call voice.

Big Ideas: Style

Core Skills:

- 7.A – Explain how word choice, comparisons, and syntax contribute to the specific tone or style of a text.
- 8.A – Strategically use words, comparisons, and syntax to convey a specific tone or style in an argument.

Instruction and lessons

- To help them explore the questions of voice and style, students will read (and listen) to an address from George Saunders on a writer’s personality influencing their work (“Writing like yourself”) as well as William

Zinsser’s chapters “The Sound of your Voice” and “Style” and Kurt Vonnegut’s “How to Write with Style.” Students will discuss the concepts presented in these essays and share what elements are most convincing and which are most important to consider when developing or analyzing style and voice. The teacher will suggest ways voice is created by choice of content as well as manners of sentence construction. (7.A)

- Figurative language and style: Students will be presented with Brooks Landon’s idea that a writer’s style is greatly expressed through choices of figurative language. They will pull out an essay read previously in class and find an example of figurative language and connect that example with the writer’s style. Students will also practice including their own, turning to a piece of writing they have created this year and revising a sentence or paragraph by inserting some kind of figurative language. (7.A)
- Students will read “The Lengths of Sentences,” a chapter from Ward Farnsworth’s *Farnsworth’s Classical English Style* and attempt to revise a paragraph they have written this year, varying their sentences’ lengths in ways that mirror one strategy Farnsworth shares (7.C; 8A).
- Students will explore essays they have read this year that they particularly liked—especially for their style (Who are the writers we’ve read that make you want to write?)—analyzing the effect of the writers’ voices, styles, and tones. (7.A)
- Students will also attempt to write a parody, capturing the voice, tone, and style of another piece of writing (e.g., the King James Bible, a newspaper article, a lawyer’s brief, a Kanye or Taylor Swift song, etc.). Students will read models by Ian Frazier or *The Onion* to propel them into their own. (8.A)

Readings:

- “How to Write with Style” by Kurt Vonnegut
- “Coyote v. ACME” by Ian Frazier
- “The Amicus Brief for Novak v. Parma” by The Onion
- “Style” and “The Sound of Your Voice” by William Zinsser
- “Writing Like Yourself” by George Saunders
- “The Lengths of Sentences,” from Ward Farnsworth’s *Farnsworth’s Classical English Style*

Writing assignments for unit 6

- Write a parody, capturing the tone, voice, and style of another artist or writer but with a lighter subject matter. Students will hand in their new parody with an example text of the original voice. (8.A)
- Revise your summer essay: Students’ summer essay required them to answer one of the Common App’s college admittance prompts, and at this point in the year students will return to their essay and revise it, taking into account all they’ve learned in class this year. Students will need to analyze the quality of that summer essay, honestly reckoning with its strengths and weaknesses, and then they will revise it accordingly. (8.A,B,C)
- [What is your philosophy?](#) Students examine their own approach to one aspect of their lives and explain what motivates them to do it the way they do. This essay will emphasize style while serving as a capstone for the entire course (4.B; 8.A,B,C)