

# Advanced Placement Literature and Composition

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## DESCRIPTION

An AP course in Literature and Composition focuses on close reading of literary content. You will be challenged to comprehend and interpret the form and substance of poems and prose passages. You will learn to write clear, concise, and persuasive interpretive essays in which you demonstrate your understanding of the broad implications of particular works of literature.

Our purpose is to: (1) empower students to contextualize and dimensionalize their reading of texts, (2) understand a range of complex literature, and (3) be able to write sophisticated prose in order to communicate effectively with mature readers.

## SUMMER READING

Toward the goals of the course, AP Literature and Composition students are required to read one novel over the summer: *Peace Like A River* by Leif Enger. You are not required to purchase the text; however, the purchase of it allows you to annotate and use it as reference in class discussion.

## CLASS PREP

Write (or type) thoughtful, reflective, and critical notes for each question 1-6 below. If you are repeating the same events and ideas in each question, then you are not *thinking* (and writing) *critically* enough, or your reading was too surface-level. Your goal is to interact with the novel, synthesize ideas, and explicate YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDINGS of the novel. Have these notes prepared for the first day of class. We will formalize your work at a later time.

1. **TITLE:** You can be sure the title is somehow significant; the author has chosen and phrased it purposefully. Is it literal or figurative, appropriate or ironic? If its significance is not apparent, try to understand it as you reread the work, then write about each of the following: What is the significance of the title? To what crucial incidents does it direct your attention? What key characters does it focus on or evaluate? What themes embodied in the work does it imply or directly state? What are the multiple connotative and denotative levels of the title? Support your explications with textual evidence.
2. **FIRST AND LAST LINES:** What does the author accomplish in these pages of the text? Their contents are inevitably significant as a function of their position – opening and closing the novel. Write about each of the following: Do the opening and closing lines/paragraphs/pages unify the work? Do they emphasize an idea? Why does the work begin at this point and end at that point? What has

- changed between the beginning and ending of the novel? Support your explanations with textual evidence.
3. **NAMES:** Are names of characters, settings, or objects chosen appropriately, ironically, or accidentally? Names can be helpful clues to an author's attitude toward his material. Write about each of the aforementioned. Support your explanations with textual evidence.
  4. **REPETITION:** Repetition is a guarantee of significance. What instances of repetition can be detected? Why are particular incidents, images, or ideas repeated? Why are particular phrases repeated? What is the author trying to emphasize in each case? Discuss three significant themes developed through repetition. Include a variety of textual support for each one.
  5. **CONFLICT:** What is the nature of the conflict(s) and what is its (their) resolution? (Resolution of conflict frequently emphasizes a theme.) Examine this question by responding to each of the following: How would you describe the main conflict? The sub conflict? How are they each/all resolved? How does the author want the reader to react to that resolution? How does the reader know what reaction is desired? If the conflict is unresolved, why has the author purposefully left it so?
  6. **FORESHADOWING:** In a well constructed work, every incident, every character, every detail has a function. How has the author foreshadowed the work's conclusion? Form a response to this question by examining **what previously *seemingly insignificant* details can now *be seen as significant instances of foreshadowing***? What patterns (juxtapositions, parallels, intersections, paradoxes, etc) of character and incident are established to lead inevitably to a particular resolution? Discuss two significant examples of foreshadowing.