Based on curricular requirements found in the most recent *AP English Course Description*, AP English Language and Composition encourages students to enter into conversations with texts, to become active readers, and, through active reading, to become more accomplished writers. The course includes intensive study and discussion of the ways writers use language to provide richness and complexity of meaning and the ways they present this meaning through the work’s purpose, structure, tone, style, and use of rhetorical modes, strategies, and devices. Students close read and analyze a variety of works, mostly nonfiction, from various periods and disciplines, making careful observations of the textual details, historical context, and social and cultural value. Students use their observations to write analytically about the works they have studied. In addition, a wide variety of writing assignments allows students to develop their own writing skills with an eye not only to their subjects, but also to their purposes, the needs of their audiences, and the uses of language and rhetoric.

**Course Organization**
The course is organized by theme. Each unit requires students to acquire and use rich vocabulary, to use standard English grammar, and to understand the importance of diction and syntax in an author’s style. Therefore, students are expected to develop the following through reading, discussion, and writing assignments:

- a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively;
- a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination;
- logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis;
- a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail; and
- an effective use of rhetoric including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

For each reading assignment students will identify the following:

- Thesis or Claim
- Tone or Attitude
- Purpose
- Audience and Occasion
- Evidence or Data
- Appeals: Logos, Ethos, Pathos
- Assumptions or Warrants
- Style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax)
- Organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast
- Cause/effect, extended definition, problem/solution, etc.
- Use of detail to develop a general idea

**Grading:**
Students will assessed on the following:

**Essays:** Many essays are first written as in-class essays and graded as rough drafts. Rough drafts are self-edited and/or peer-edited before students type the final copies. All formal/processed essays must use MLA citations.

**Tests:** Most tests consist of multiple-choice questions based on rhetorical devices and their function in given passages. Some passages are from texts read and studied, but some passages are from new material that students analyze for the first time.
Quizzes: Quizzes are used primarily to check for reading and basic understanding of a text. Quizzes are also used to assess understanding of grammar skills and vocabulary from each unit.

Daily: Daily assignments consist of a variety of tasks. Some of these tasks involve individual steps leading to a larger product, such as plans, research, drafts, and edits for an essay. Most lessons begin with a warm-up or anticipatory task. These could be focused on grammar, vocabulary or a writing concept that connects to the day’s reading assignment. (Items for these mini-lessons are from Nancy Dean’s Voice Lessons, 10 Real SATs and other sources.) Students do these exercises during the first five minutes of the class period. Other daily tasks consist of grammar reviews, vocabulary exercises, annotation of texts, fluency writing, and participation in Socratic discussions.

**Introduction to Rhetoric, Close Reading, and Synthesis**

Using Chapters 1, 2, and 3 in the class text, *The Language of Composition*, students review elements of rhetoric, practice close reading, and learn to synthesize sources. Topics covered include the Aristotelian triangle; types of appeals; patterns of development; rhetorical modes; analyzing style; talking with texts through annotation, dialectical journals, and graphic organizers; analyzing visual texts; formulating positions; and incorporating sources effectively.

Students will apply their knowledge of rhetoric and newly acquired vocabulary to a discussion of their summer reading and reading selections about work. Students will consider how work shapes or influences people’s lives. Students will also make connections to current events and explore editorial and opinion pieces in a variety of newspapers.

**Authors and works may include:**
Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America* (Summer Reading)
Claudia O’Keefe’s *The Traveling Bra Salesman’s Lesson*
Selection from Annie Dillard’s *The Writing Life*
J. Howard Miller’s *We Can Do It!* (poster)
Marilyn Gardner’s *More Working Parents Play “Beat the Clock”*
Amelia Warren Tyagi’s *Why Women Have to Work*
Claudia Wallis’s *The Case for Staying Home*
Christopher Mele’s *Sick Parents Go to Work, Stay Home When Kids Are Ill*
Kimberly Palmer’s *My Mother, Myself, Her Career, My Questions*
Buzz McClain’s *Don’t Call Me Mr. Mom*

**Sample Assignments:**
Keep a dialectical journal and/or annotate the readings, paying attention to author’s thesis or claim, tone or attitude, purpose, audience and occasion, evidence or data, appeals: logos, ethos, pathos, assumptions or warrants, style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax), organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast etc. and use of detail to develop a general idea.

Informal writing assignment: Respond to quotations about work. Explain why your selection best represents your attitude toward work. (Chapter 5, *The Language of Composition*)

Informal writing assignment: What is the difference between a job and a career? Write an essay explaining the difference, using sources from this unit. (Chapter 5, *The Language of Composition*)
Formal writing assignment: Using at least three sources from this unit’s readings, write an essay identifying the major issues facing working parents. Do not include your opinion; just synthesize the information in the readings. (Chapter 5, *The Language of Composition*)

Formal writing assignment: *Nickel and Dimed* takes place from 1998 to 2000. Write an essay explaining whether the author’s experiences would be the same or different in today’s economy. Use a variety of sources from this unit; essay will use MLA citations. (Chapter 5, *The Language of Composition*)

**Semester 1: Individual’s Place in the Community**

Students will explore the use of language expressing a writer’s views on his or her place within a larger community and explore the conflicts which arise when one’s beliefs, economic standing, personality, race, language, or gender do not conform to community ideals. Through analysis of primarily nonfiction writings, students will analyze the impact of the class, gender, and racial roles that society creates and enforces and the role of language in both revealing who we are to others and separating us from others.

**Unit 1: Gender**

**Overview:**
This unit will explore the concept of gender, stereotypes surrounding both genders and how these ideas have evolved (or not) over time. Through analysis of primarily nonfiction writings, students will analyze gender roles and how language reveals these roles. Students will also analyze a fictional work, *The Scarlet Letter*, and analyze how Hawthorne portrays Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth and how their gender affects their experiences within the novel.

**Authors and works may include:**
Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*
Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (film study)
Virginia Woolf’s “Professions for Women”
Paul Theroux’s “Being a Man”
Gretel Ehrlich’s *About Men*
Judith Ortiz Cofer’s “The Myth of the Latin Woman”
Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat”
Marge Piercy’s “Barbie Doll”
Cathy Guisewite’s *Cathy* (cartoon)
Mark Bauerlein and Sandra Stotsky’s *Why Johnny Won’t Read*
David Brooks’s *Mind over Muscle*
Rebecca Walker’s *Putting Down the Gun*
Ann Hulbert’s *Boy Problems*

**Sample Assignments:**

Keep a dialectical journal and/or annotate the readings, paying attention to author’s thesis or claim, tone or attitude, purpose, audience and occasion, evidence or data, appeals: logos, ethos, pathos, assumptions or warrants, style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax), organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast etc. and use of detail to develop a general idea.

Informal Writing Assignment: What does it mean to be a woman? What are the stereotypes of women? Use your reading and your experiences to respond to these questions.

Informal Writing Assignment: Using the readings from this section, write an argument defining what you see at the central issue facing boys and young men in our society. (Chapter 7, *The Language of Composition*)
Informal Writing Assignment: Write an essay in which you discuss the rhetorical strategies Zora Neale Hurston uses to convey her attitude toward prejudice. Pay particular attention to her use of counterarguments and her tone. Who is her audience? Compare/contrast her attitude with that of another writer. How is the point of view different?

Informal Writing Assignment: Read the following passage (paragraph 3, “I might be, … martyrdom.”) from The Scarlet Letter, Chapter 5, “Hester At Her Needle.” Then write a short essay showing how Hawthorne depicts Hester’s inner turmoil. Consider such rhetorical devices as diction, figurative language, syntax, irony, and tone.

Informal Writing Assignment: Read the following passage (paragraph 7, “Hester sought not, … wrong, beneath.”) from The Scarlet Letter, Chapter 5, “Hester at Her Needle.” Then write a short essay analyzing the author’s use of clothing to reveal Hester’s self-perception, the attitude of Hester’s neighbors, and the nature of her daughter’s conception. Consider such rhetorical devices as diction, imagery, syntax, irony, and tone.

Informal Writing Assignment: Read the following passages from The Scarlet Letter. Passage 1 is from Chapter 2, “The Market-Place” (paragraph 11, “The young woman … by herself”). Passage 2 is from Chapter 3, “The Recognition” (paragraphs 1 and 2, “From this intense… his lips”). Then write a carefully reasoned and fully elaborated analysis of Hawthorne’s attitude toward these two characters. Consider allusion, irony, imagery, syntax, organization of details, and other rhetorical devices.

Informal Writing Assignment: Read Chapter 9, “The Leech,” from The Scarlet Letter. Then write an essay analyzing how Hawthorne uses setting, allusion, metaphor, irony, diction, and tone to reveal character.

Informal Writing Assignment: Read Chapter 22, “The Procession,” from The Scarlet Letter. Then write an essay analyzing how Hawthorne uses rhetorical devices, including irony and extended metaphor, to reveal the conclusion.

Informal Writing Assignment: What does guilt imply about free will and choice? If we had no free will and choice, how would guilt likely affect us?

Students will revise at least one of their informal writing assignments from this unit after receiving teacher feedback and will be graded using the AP rubric.

Related AP Practice:
1981 (Question 3) Struggle for definition
2001 (Question 2) George Eliot to women on development of a writer

Unit 2: Race and Class
Overview:
This unit will explore the use of language expressing a writer’s views on his or her place within a larger community and explore the conflicts surrounding race and class. Through analysis of primarily nonfiction writings, students will analyze the impact of the class and racial roles that society creates and enforces and the role of language in both revealing who we are to others and separating us from others.

Mark Twain’s Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
Henry David Thoreau’s Where I Lived and What I Lived for
Amitai Etzioni’s “The New Community”
Anna Quindlen’s Commencement Speech at Mount Holyoke College
Lori Arviso Alvord’s “Walking the Path Between Worlds”
Emily Dickinson’s “The Soul Selects Her Own Society” and “Much Madness is Divinest Sense”
Sample Assignments:
Keep a dialectical journal and/or annotate the readings, paying attention to author’s thesis or claim, tone or attitude, purpose, audience and occasion, evidence or data, appeals: logos, ethos, pathos, assumptions or warrants, style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax), organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast etc. and use of detail to develop a general idea.

Informal Writing Assignment: Write an essay tracing and analyzing the way King balances the twin appeals to religion and patriotism throughout “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Does he ultimately emphasize one over the other? If so, why do you think he made that choice? In addition, examine and analyze the appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos.

Informal Writing Assignment: How do we learn right from wrong? Who helps to shape a person’s conscience?

Formal Writing Assignment: Write an essay analyzing how Twain reveals the ills of society through Huck’s travels and adventures. In addition, examine and analyze the appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos.

Related AP Practice:
2005B (Question 1) Hardships of labor on African-Americans
1997 (Question 2) Fredrick Douglass autobiographical passage
1984 (Question 2) Compare/contrast two definitions of freedom
2004 (Question 3) Unspoken rules and belonging
2003B (Question 2) Relationship between the individual and society

Unit 3: Nature
Overview:
This unit will explore the use of language expressing a writer’s views on his or her relationship with nature and explore what man can learn from nature as well as the dilemma which arises when technological progress and the preservation of nature conflict. Through analysis of primarily nonfiction writings, students will analyze the impact of nature on man, man on nature, and explore man’s responsibility to nature.

Authors and works may include:
Jon Krakauer’s Into the Wild
Selections from Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring
Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Nature”
Ralph Waldo Emerson’s from Self-Reliance
Selections from Henry David Thoreau’s Walden
Chief Seattle’s “Message to President Franklin Pierce”
Wendell Berry’s “An Entrance to the Wood”
Wagari Muta Maathai’s 2004 Nobel Prize Speech
Joyce Carol Oates’ “Against Nature”
Bill McKibben’s It’s Easy Being Green
Selections from Richard Conniff’s Counting Carbons
Selections from E.O. Wilson’s The Future of Life
Selections from Al Gore’s An Inconvenient Truth
Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s “Flower in the Crannied Wall”
Walt Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”
Robert Frost’s “Nothing Gold Can Stay”
Emily Dickinson’s “Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church”
Sample Assignments:
Keep a dialectical journal and/or annotate the readings, paying attention to author’s thesis or claim, tone or attitude, purpose, audience and occasion, evidence or data, appeals: logos, ethos, pathos, assumptions or warrants, style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax), organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast etc. and use of detail to develop a general idea.

Informal Writing Assignment: Write a descriptive essay describing a place in nature you have experienced. Include vivid imagery that appeals to at least four senses in your description, and carefully select adjectives to convey the beauty of the natural environment. Peers will provide oral feedback on the effectiveness of the imagery and adjectives used for description, and students will revise accordingly.

Informal Writing Assignment: Write a narrative essay where you recreate a nature experience for your readers and convey your attitude (admiration, awe, fear, etc) towards the experience as well as create a mood (peaceful, gloomy, etc.) for the reader through the narration. Choose words with powerful connotations to create the mood and narrate the experience. The teacher will provide specific written feedback on the student’s diction, highlighting words with powerful connotations and suggesting improvements where needed. Students revise and resubmit.

Informal Writing Assignment: In the selection from Silent Spring, students will analyze through verbal and written response the following questions: why doesn’t Carson mention her “contention” until she is nearly finished with the piece? Is her argument inductive or deductive? How do you know? Also, why does she tell the reader what her “contentions” aren’t before stating what they are? What response from her readers might she anticipate at this point in their reading?

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading and discussing the first two chapters of Silent Spring, consider Carson’s statement: “If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem.” Write an essay explaining how the framers of the Constitution might protect the environment if they were writing the Constitution today.

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading, annotating, and discussing the first three chapters of Emerson’s “Nature,” reread paragraphs one and two. In an essay consider how Emerson uses comparisons and distinctions to characterize nature and how the characterization helps him achieve his purpose.

Students will revise at least one of their informal writing assignments from this unit after receiving teacher feedback and will be graded using the AP rubric.

Related AP Practice:
2001 (Question 2) Mary Oliver’s response to nature
1998 (Question 1) Lamb to Wordsworth¬city over nature
2003(Question 3) Compare/contrast two descriptions of birds/nature
2004B (Question 1) From Silent Spring¬ethics of poisoning pests
2005B (Question 2) Description of Mississippi River
1999(Question 1) Compare descriptive passages of Okefenokee swamp
1994 (Question 3) Narration/description on Santa Ana winds by Joan Didion
1993 (Question 3) Forester’s “My Wood” from autobiography
1986 (Question 1) Compare/contrast passages on western landscapes
**Semester 1 Assessment:**
Formal Writing Assignment: Who are considered outsiders in our society? Why are they in this position? How does society treat them? Should society be more tolerant of them? Using at least five sources from this unit, including *The Scarlet Letter*, write an essay that discusses the position of the outsider in society. Properly cite your sources using MLA citations. Avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Peers evaluate essays for organization and style and provide both written and oral feedback. Essays are graded according to AP rubric.

**Semester 2: The American Dream and American Society**
It is the promise that drew and still draws millions to our shores the American Dream. But what is it: financial success, happiness, freedom, opportunity? Lionel Trilling stated that America is the “only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one.” Poet Archibald MacLeish said, “There are those, I know, who will reply that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind, is nothing but a dream. They are right, it is. It is the American dream.” Noble words, but what is the American Dream and what, if anything, does it mean today? Is the promise empty? What happens to a country’s people when they can no longer count on the dream?

**Research Paper: The Documented Essay**
During the course of the second semester, students will choose a topic of interest to research.

Task and Prompt:
- Choose a current event that reflects one of the themes that we studied this semester.
- Research the topic through different types of sources (newspapers, magazines, news stories, interviews, online sources, radio broadcasts, visuals, etc.).
- Take careful notes, making sure that you cite your sources accurately using MLA format.
- Develop an argument about this topic.
- Establish a claim.
- Then integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay.
- Use the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary.
- Your argument should be central.
- Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations, using MLA format.
- Create a Works Cited page using MLA format.
- Plagiarism will result in a zero.

**Unit 1: Education**
**Overview**
Students have spent more than a decade trying to attain it, but can they define what constitutes a true education? Is education a particular body of knowledge or is it more? Who decides what comprises public education in America? Is public education preparing American students to take their places in a never-changing, global society? This unit stimulates students’ thinking about the value of their educations by exploring the question “To what extent do our schools serve the goals of a true education?”

**Authors and works may include:**
Francine Prose’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read”
Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Education”
Sherman Alexie’s “Superman and Me” and “Indian Education”
Walt Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”
Benjamin Franklin, from *The Autobiography*
Frederick Douglass, from *My Bondage and My Freedom*
Emily Dickinson’s “The Brain Is Wider Than the Sky”
Louise Gluck’s “The School Children”
Sample Assignments

Keep an “issues” journal on independent readings in education. Document each article using correct MLA works cited form. Summarize each article and integrate at least two quotes using correct MLA parenthetical references and signal phrases. Analyze structure, language, and rhetorical devices. Personally react to the article.

Informal Writing Assignment: Defend, challenge, or qualify the following statement by Francine Prose: Traditionally, the love of reading has been born and nurtured in high school English class.” (from The Language of Composition, Chapter 4)

Informal Writing Assignment: Write an essay identifying and explaining Emerson’s use of rhetorical strategies and techniques in the essay “Education.” Revise after feedback on organization, support of ideas, and effective use of rhetoric through peer editing and individual conference with teacher.

Informal Writing Assignment: Compare and contrast Sherman Alexie’s essay “Superman and Me” and his poem “Indian Education” both concerning the education of Native Americans. Discuss the choices Alexie makes to achieve his purpose.

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading Margaret Talbot’s views on valedictorians in “Best in Class,” write an essay proposing an alternate approach or approaches to the traditional grading system. Interview teachers, parents, and students for their ideas and include their comments. Discuss the pro’s and con’s of your alternatives as compared to the traditional system.

Informal Writing Assignment: In your reader response journal, analyze Baldwin’s use of pronouns in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the essay “A Talk to Teachers.” What is his purpose in alternating between first, second, and third person? (from Chapter 4 of The Language of Composition)

Informal Writing Assignment: Write a letter to the principal arguing for the addition of a new course (be creative here) to the curriculum. Use all three of the appeals in your letter, and provide ample support for your argument.

Formal Writing Assignment: Synthesize education sources in Chapter 4 of The Language of Composition to defend, challenge, or qualify Leon Botstein’s statement that “The American high school is obsolete.” Use correct MLA documentation. Revise according to peer and teacher comments.

Related AP Practice:
2004B (Question 2) 1901 essay on the censoring of books and art
2000 (Question 1) Eudora Welty on reading
1996 (Question 1) Lady Mary Wortley Montague on the education of her granddaughter
2006B (Question 1) On the thinker vs. the reader/intellectual
2005B (Question 3) Thomas on the value of mistakes
2003B (Question 3) Take a position on cheating
Unit 2: The Dream
Overview
This unit will explore the various meanings of the phrase “American Dream” and how that dream or the failure of it has shaped and influenced our lives. Through analysis of both nonfiction and fiction writings, students will analyze the conception of the American dream, (wo)man’s pursuit of the dream, and the reality of the dream.

Authors and works may include:
F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*
Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*
Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*
Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing”
Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer*
Carl Sandburg’s “The People, Yes” and “Chicago”
W.H. Auden’s “The Unknown Citizen”
Langston Hughes’ “Dream Deferred,” “I, Too,” “Mother to Son,” “Let America Be America Again”
Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream”
Eric Liu’s “A Chinaman’s Chance: Reflections on the American Dream”
Jeff Parker’s “The Great GAPsby Society” (cartoon)
Charles Murray’s “The Coming White Underclass”
Thomas Jefferson’s *The Declaration of Independence*

Sample Assignments
Keep a dialectical journal and/or annotate the readings, paying attention to author’s thesis or claim, tone or attitude, purpose, audience and occasion, evidence or data, appeals: logos, ethos, pathos, assumptions or warrants, style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax), organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast etc. and use of detail to develop a general idea.

Informal Writing Assignment: Write an extended definition essay on the phrase “the American Dream.” Use at least three of the strategies for defining which were reviewed in class (giving examples, analyzing qualities, attributing characteristics, defining negatively, using analogies, and giving functions). Peer edit in small groups before submitting to teacher.

Informal Writing Assignment: After instruction on the history of the American Dream and using ideas generated in the definition essays, students discuss the concept of the American Dream. At the end of the discussion, students write a journal entry explaining their own American Dream and how they plan to achieve it.

Informal Writing Assignment: Thomas Wolfe wrote “I believe that we are lost here in America, . . . I think that the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land is yet to come.” React to this quote in your reading journal.

Informal Writing Assignment: Focusing carefully on rhetorical purposes and techniques, analyze the similarities and differences in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” and Eric Liu’s “A Chinaman’s Chance: Reflections on the American Dream.” Explain how each writer achieves his purpose. Before you begin, complete a says/does analysis for each work.

Informal Writing Assignment: Modeling the passage from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech where he uses repetition and parallel structure to describe his dream, write your own version, paying close attention to syntax. Add visuals and music and present your creation to the class.
Informal Writing Assignment: After reading Death of a Salesman, write an essay in which you examine the cause(s) of Willy Loman’s tragic downfall. Consider such things as flaws with the American Dream, flaws with Willy’s perception of the American Dream, and flaws in Willy’s own character. Support your views with ample evidence from the text.

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading The Great Gatsby, write an essay in which you examine the cause(s) of Jay Gatsby’s tragic downfall. Consider such things as flaws with the American Dream, flaws with Willy’s perception of the American Dream, and flaws in Willy’s own character. Support your views with ample evidence from the text.

Formal Writing Assignment: After receiving teacher feedback on informal essays for both Death of a Salesman and The Great Gatsby, write an essay comparing/contrasting Willy Loman and Jay Gatsby’s conception of the American Dream. Support your views with ample evidence from the text. After receiving peer feedback, revise your essay.

Related AP Practice:
2006 (Question 2) Hazlitt “On the Want of Money”
2005 (Question 3) The Singer Solution to World Poverty
2000 (Question 3) from King Lear-quote on relation between wealth and justice
1996 (Question 3) Lapham on the American faith in money
1995 (Question 2) Goodman “The Company Man”
1993 (Question 3) Forster “My Wood” on possessions
1983 (Question 2) Carlyle arguing on the nobility of work
1982 (Question 1) What constitutes happiness

Unit 3: Popular Culture
Overview:
This unit will explore the following question: To what extent does pop culture reflect our society’s values? Through reading, discussing, and writing, students will explore the relationship between our culture and our values, focusing on certain issues and/or items such as television and technology.

Authors and works may include:
David Denby’s “High School Confidential: Notes on Teen Movies”
Mark Twain’s “Corn-pone Opinions”
Brent Staples’ “Godzilla vs. the Giant Scissors: Cutting the Antiwar Heart Out of a Classic”
Vine Deloria, Jr.’s “We Talk, You Listen”
Danyel Smith’s “Dreaming America”
Scott McCloud’s “Show and Tell”
Teresa Wiltz’s “Popular Culture in the Aftermath of September 11 Is a Chorus without a Hook, a Movie without an Ending”
Hans Ostrom’s “Emily Dickinson and Elvis Presley in Heaven”
Nikki Giovanni’s “Sanctuary: For Harry Potter the Movie”
Steven Johnson’s “Watching TV Makes You Smarter”
Corbett Trubey’s “The Argument against TV”
Julia Scott’s “He Doesn’t Like to Watch”
George Gerbner and Todd Gitlin’s “Is Media Violence Free Speech?”
Marie Winn’s “Television: The Plug-In Drug”
Pete Hamill’s “Crack and the Box”

Sample Assignments:
Keep a dialectical journal and/or annotate the readings, paying attention to author’s thesis or claim, tone or attitude, purpose, audience and occasion, evidence or data, appeals: logos, ethos, pathos, assumptions or
warrants, style (how the author communicates his/her message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices, which always include diction and syntax), organizational patterns found in the text, i.e., main idea detail, comparison/contrast etc. and use of detail to develop a general idea.

Identify the SOAPS (subject, occasion, audience, purpose, and speaker) for any one of these works. What inferences can you make about the writer(s)?

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading and discussing David Denby’s “High-School Confidential: Notes on Teen Movies,” write an essay answering Denby’s rhetorical questions: “Do genre films reflect reality? Or are they merely a set of conventions that refer to other films?” Use your own experience and teen movies you have seen as evidence.

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading and discussing Brent Staples op-ed piece, “Godzilla vs. the Giant Scissors: Cutting the Antiwar Heart Out of a Classic,” write an essay in which you discuss Staples’ assumption that popular culture can communicate an important message.

Informal Writing Assignment: After reading the selection from the graphic essay “Show and Tell” by Scott McCloud, note that he begins with a series of panels about a boy demonstrating how his toy robot turns into an airplane. Though six of the panels have no words, the vignette appeals to both pathos and ethos. Discuss how McCloud accomplishes this; consider the words and drawing separately first, and then together.

Informal Writing Assignment: In “You Talk, We Listen,” Vine Deloria, Jr. introduces his subject by reviewing the stereotyping of minorities in the films of the 1940s and 1950s. How does this lay the groundwork for his argument? Why is this rhetorical strategy effective?

Informal Writing Assignment: Read Teresa Wiltz’s “Popular Culture in the Aftermath of September 11 Is a Chorus without a Hook, a Movie without an Ending.” The tone of the essay shifts several times. Find the transition points, and consider why Wiltz might have shifted the tone at each spot.

Informal Writing Assignment: In “Television: The Plug-In Drug,” Winn writes: Surely it stands to reason that the television experience is instrumental in preventing viewers from recognizing its dulling effects, much as a mind-altering drug might do.” Pete Hamill writes in his essay, “Crack and the Box”, “In short, television works on the same imaginative and intellectual level as psychoactive drugs. . . . For the junkie, the world is reduced to him and the needle, pipe, or vial; the self is absolutely isolated, with no desire for choice. The television addict lives the same way.” Read the two essays and consider the arguments that they present. Referring to both Hamill and Winn, write an essay in which you support or challenge their positions. Teacher will provide specific feedback on content and writing style of students’ essays through written comments and individual student-teacher conferences, then students will revise after reviewing sentence length, sentence structure, parallel constructions, active verb choice, punctuation, and appropriateness of diction.

Formal Writing Assignment: Read, study, and synthesize the five texts in Conversation: Focus on Television. Use at least three of those sources in addition to your own observations and experiences to write an essay explaining whether you view television as beneficial or detrimental to society.

Formal Writing Assignment: After reading several of the selections, write an essay about the influence of technology on contemporary life, culture, and/or education, using evidence from the pieces you use as well as from your observation and experience. Essays will be rated on the AP rubric.

Related AP Practice:
2006 (Question 1)—The plastic pink flamingo as a reflection of American Culture
1998 (Question 3)—Humorous letters between Coke and Grove Press
2006 (Question 3)—On the value of public opinions
2003 (Question 1)—“Entertainment has the capacity to ruin society.”
1985 (Question 3)—About the state of television in America

**Course Texts:**

Hawthorne, Nathaniel *The Scarlet Letter*

Fitzgerald, F. Scott *The Great Gatsby*

Krakauer, Jon *Into the Wild*

Miller, Arthur *The Crucible*

Miller, Arthur *Death of a Salesman*


Twain, Mark *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

**Instructor Resources:**

