

Who Should Take AP Literature, and Why?

What makes so many students credit AP English Literature as the course that best prepares them for college?

Analytical skills

The AP English Literature and Composition course is intended to give you the experience of a typical introductory-level literary analysis course in college.

On a daily basis, it asks you to read critically, think clearly, and write concisely. By the end of the course, you will have cultivated a rich understanding of literary works and acquired a set of analytical skills they will use throughout their lives.

Deepen your understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers. In the course, you'll learn to consider a work's structure, style, and themes, as well as such smaller-scale elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone.

You will learn to read deliberately and thoroughly, taking time to understand a work's complexity, to absorb its richness of meaning, and to analyze how that meaning is embodied in literary form.

In addition to considering a work's literary artistry, you will also learn to consider the social and historical values it reflects and embodies. Careful attention to both textual detail and historical context provides a foundation for interpretation of the text.

Writing to evaluate a literary work involves making and explaining judgments about its artistry and exploring its underlying social and cultural values through analysis, interpretation, and argument.

Evaluation of the human condition

Writers have the full palette of human emotion and relationships at their fingertips. They challenge us to see what makes us tick and why we react to the world in particular ways. Our ability to make sense of the complexity and ambiguity in life is rooted in our understanding of ourselves and our place in our families, our communities, our world. As a window on who we are (and often why) AP Literature has no equal.

Builds empathy

Researchers at The New School in New York City have found evidence that literary fiction improves a reader's capacity to understand what others are thinking and feeling.

The results suggest that reading fiction is a valuable socializing influence. The study data could inform debates over how much fiction should be included in educational curricula and whether reading programs should be implemented in prisons, where reading literary fiction might improve inmates' social functioning and empathy.

Testimonials

- “It’s a real class. It’s active and engaging.”
- “Don’t worry about ‘not getting it.’ Of course you don’t, that’s what you take the class for.”
- “Expands your mind in a way only college courses can. I took it because I wanted a level higher than AP Lang, not a level lower.”
- “I like being in this class because when we have class discussions it feels like my brain is expanding.”
- “I enjoy the challenge and I know for a fact that colleges like seeing that challenge.”
- “It’s not as hard as everyone says.”
- “This class is something really special.”
- “I leave the class feeling smarter.”
- “This class makes you think differently. The in class discussions are always interesting.”
- It’s “discussion based which is good – you’re not lectured at.”
- “Colleges look to see if you took the hardest possible courses.”
- “This class is important to take because you get to think for yourself. The teacher guides you, yes, but you have the privilege of being a fully independent thinker.”
- “In this class, I have been introduced to pieces of literature that have expanded my knowledge and understanding of history, war, love, and loss. Analyzing works in class has given me confidence in my opinion and perspective of the world.”
- “AP Literature approaches books as pieces of art representative of and essential to the human condition.”
- “I took AP Lit because I wanted to keep my class rigor up for college applications. Colleges want to see that you are taking hard classes both junior and senior year so they can tell if you would do well at their school.”
- “AP Lit is amazing. [It’s] the only time you get to explore literature at a college level and in a sophisticated setting with brave people.”
- “This is the class that taught me how to read. It prepares you for college level reading.”