

Alexandra Fletcher  
www.ms Fletcher.org  
Course Syllabus • AP Language & Composition  
Welcome to the Class of 2015

“The hardest battle is to be nobody but yourself in a world that is doing its best, night and day, to make you like everybody else.”

e.e. Cummings

**About me:** Telephone: 562/925-9981 extension 2508  
Conference period: 6th period  
☆Best way to reach me: email ⇨ afletcher@busd.k12.ca.us  
Our Blog: apbloggers13-14.blogspot.com  
Want to receive reminder messages via text?  
Text the code **@apeng11** to **971-264-2776** to subscribe.  
Parents and students are both welcome to participate.

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**Purpose:** English Language and Composition is intended to parallel a college composition course and is organized around the principles of writing. Besides coming to know our own writing process through exploration of the writer’s craft, we write in a variety of genres, for varying purposes and audiences, while exploring a lively array of topics. Our educational objectives are:

- ❖ to prepare for the rigors of college writing;
- ❖ to write confidently and effectively in any writing situation, both personal and professional;
- ❖ to read actively and critically from a wide range of time periods, genres and contexts

To that end, the expository, analytical and argumentative forms are emphasized as the basis of most academic and professional writing, while the personal and reflective forms — the foundation of all good writing — are also regularly practiced.

Because this is a college class offered for college credit, the expectation is that students will read and produce prose that is rich and complex enough for mature readers.

### **The Texts**

Elbow, Peter. Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Longknife Ph.D., Ann, and K.D. Sullivan. The Art of Styling Sentences, Fourth Edition. Happaage, New York: Barron’s, 2002.

Roskelly, Hephzibah, and David A. Jolliffe. Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005.

Shea, Renée H., Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Aufses. The Language of Composition: Reading, Writing, Rhetoric, 2nd Ed. Boston-New York: Bedford St. Martin, 2013.

Write Source: A Book for Writing, Thinking and Learning. Wilmington, MA: Great Source Education Group, 2007.

Zinnser, William. On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction, Sixth Edition. New York: HarperCollins, 1998.

*Other resources we use include a variety of essays, articles and editorials collected from online sources, college readers, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, other national newspapers who publish online, and magazines, both print and electronic. I am constantly fiddling around with new material.*

*If anyone wants to give you a gift (birthday, holiday, you get your wisdom teeth pulled out), or if you have a couple extra bucks that you want to invest in yourself, every scholar needs the following texts in their library:*

High quality, print dictionaries give word origins and usages that are not offered in the commonly accessed electronic dictionaries. The heft and seriousness of a good dictionary inspires the proper attitude toward language. Get yourself a real dictionary that you can feel proud of. I love my Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, and my mother's well-thumbed dictionary (she was a crossword puzzle aficionado) is one thing that I would grab in a fire.

Fish, Stanley. *How to Write a Sentence (and How to Read One)*. Harpers, 2011. Love this book! Unbelievably readable, helpful and entertaining.

Hacker, Diane. *Rules for Writers*, Sixth Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2010. A fantastic resource.

Lunsford, Andrea A. *Easy Writer*, Third Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2006. Hacker and Lunsford are both really great, so whichever one you like best.

Strunk & White, *Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. New York: Longman, 2000. Beautiful old school text; classic, yet timely and relevant.

## **The Units**

### **Summer Homework**

Like most AP programs across the United States, our course of study begins in the summer. AP Language juniors will read the following four texts:

- Amusing Ourselves to Death, Neil Postman
- Brave New World, Aldous Huxley
- Alone Together: Why We Expect More of Technology and Less of Each Other, Sherry Turkle, OR
- Who Owns the Future, Jaron Lanier
- "Is Google Making Us Stupid?", Nicholas Carr
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Details of the assignment can be found at [www.msletcher.org](http://www.msletcher.org) or on the class blog, [apbloggers13-14.blogspot.com](http://apbloggers13-14.blogspot.com)

### **Fall Writing Assessment**

"Shooting an Elephant," by George Orwell

- *Using Orwell's essay as a model, write a narrative recalling a time you acted against your better judgment; consider what the results were, what you might have done differently, and what you gained from the experience.*

## **The AP Moves: Close Reading, Rhetorical Analysis, Argument, and Synthesis**

Students will acquire the skills of rhetorical analysis (ie., SOAPSTONE, rhetorical appeals, etc.), argument and synthesis, and practice applying these skills on short fiction/nonfiction pieces from a wide range of classic and contemporary writers. One goal of this strand is to expand student awareness of the depth and quality of literary nonfiction texts.

This ongoing work include close reading exercises, AP style multiple choice questions, vocabulary development, rhetorical analysis, rhetorical précis, informal reflective writing, timed writes, and multi-draft process essays.

Weeks 1-5: Technology → Major Paper: Synthesis Weeks 6-10: Education → Major Paper: MVA
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Weeks 11-15: Community/Environment → Major Paper: Book Review Weeks 16-20: Economics/Politics → Major Paper: Track-a-Columnist
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Weeks 21-25: Race/Gender/Language – Major Paper: MVA Weeks 26-30: Pop Culture/Sports → Major Paper: Book Review
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Weeks 31-35: AP Test Preparation → Major Paper: Two R/A Re-writes Weeks 36-40: Review/Reflect/Evaluate → Major Paper: Two Personal Statements
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### **Major Paper#1: Synthesis Essay**

Combining new readings with readings from the summer reading, students write a synthesis essay responding to Mark Bauerlein’s argument from “The Dumbest Generation.”

### **Major Paper#2, and Major Paper #5: Multivoice Researched Argument**

Students identify the key issues surrounding their chosen topic and conduct research online and at the library. Research and citation skills are explicitly taught.

Students produce a multivoiced argument (MVA) paper of between 2500-3500 words that, instead of building a “winning position” attempts to confront what is at stake and why. Relying on the pedagogical model presented by Cheryl L. Johnson and Jayne Moneysmith their book, Multiple Genres, Multiple Voices: Teaching Argument in Composition and Literature, this paper resists the traditional model of argument where the goal is to “[find] holes in the ‘opposition’s’ argument”. Rather than attempting to produce a document that presents “the last word” on a particular topic, students are empowered to give voice to various positions and perspectives in their writing pieces.

### **Book Club: Quarters 1 and 3**

Book Club is a reading/speaking/listening unit, where students read one of four books recommended by Fletcher, and meet in groups to discuss the book at regular intervals during the quarter. The culminating assessment is a class presentation, to be completely student designed.

The four books for first quarter are:

- The Happiness Advantage, Shaun Achor
- Mind Set: The New Psychology of Success, Carol Dweck
- The Genius in All of Us: New Insights Into Genius, Talent and IQ, David Shenk
- Outliers: the Story of Success, Malcolm Gladwell

The four books for third quarter are TBA.

### **Book Review, Major Paper #3 and #6: Quarters 2 and 4**

Book Review is a reading/writing unit, where students select a nonfiction title of literary merit from a list to read independently during quarters 2 and 4. We will read book reviews from the Sunday editions of the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and discuss the elements of the book review, which is essentially an argument: the reviewer takes a position on authorial purpose, and discusses how successfully the author achieved that purpose. Some academic summary is included when writing a book review, and the practice of writing concise summary is practiced. Students will produce a 1000-word book review each time, using details from the text to support a position; the paper goes through a multi-draft process in a mini, abbreviated writer's workshop, with most of the writing occurring outside of the classroom.

### **Major Paper #4: "Track a Columnist"**

Students apply their knowledge of rhetorical analysis, argument and persuasion, and style analysis, by tracking a newspaper or magazine columnist (self-selected from a list) for a period of six weeks. Students will present annotated articles along with a major paper, an analysis of the rhetorical strategies used by the columnist, and an overview of topics covered, positions taken, and overall impression of the columnist. Further, students focus on one column of their choice and discuss, in detail, how the author's rhetorical moves convey the writer's position in the chosen column.

### **Major Paper #5.5: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**

In addition to reading Twain's novel, students learn about the controversy that has surrounded Huck Finn since its publication in 1884. Students watch the PBS video, "Born to Trouble," and review the history of the novel's censorship. Students read critical essays by TS Eliot, Jane Smiley, Toni Morrison and Lionel Trilling, excerpted positions on both side of the divide from Satire or Evasion: Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn, along with excerpts from African American scholar Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua's book, The Jim Dilemma: Reading Race in Huckleberry Finn. Students consider the place of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in the American literary canon, and make their case for or against the book, using at least four sources to support their position. Writer's workshop groups gather to assist one another through the early drafts of this paper; in-text citation, embedding quotations and indirect citation is reviewed

<b>More Writing</b>
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### **Weekend Essays**

#### **Major Papers #7 & 8: Rewrite two rhetorical analyses**

Beginning around Week Six, students are assigned AP prompts every Friday (with breaks sprinkled when we have other major paper deadlines to contend with. Twice a month, we will devote an entire Friday, reading and scoring essays, using the 9-point AP rubric. Our goal is twofold; first, to improve, we must practice writing difficult and complex prompts regularly. By the time May rolls around, students who have put in effort will find themselves at a completely different level as a writer. Secondly, students will internalize the requirements of the rubric, enabling them to see strengths and weaknesses in their essays more readily.

### **The AP Notebook**

Students create the AP Notebook in the summer preceding class. The notebook is collected in late August and evaluated throughout first quarter. Notebook work is integrated into the daily routine, with pages dedicated to vocabulary development, lecture notes, in-class responses to texts as outlined elsewhere in the syllabus, sentence building, style imitation exercises, minilessons on grammar and other writing concerns, free-writing, and homework

assignments. The notebook is an integral part of a conversation with regard to participation; I reserve the right to collect and read notebooks at anytime during the year together.

### **Writers' Workshop**

Students will work in a structured Writers' Workshop environment, applying metacognitive thinking to their own writing processes, learning and "test-driving" various strategies for invention and revision, and discovering how to evaluate and respond to one another's writing in helpful and supportive ways. Students must learn how to apply a sharp and critical eye to their own writing product, and wean themselves from over-dependence on "teacher evaluation."

### **Informal writing: Blogging @ [apbloggers13-14.blogspot.com](http://apbloggers13-14.blogspot.com)**

Our blog is now back in session and you will be asked to post to the blog in response to our class work, to news and media events, and to extend classroom discussions. I will continue to post links on the blog for you to access and respond to.

<b>Reading</b>
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### **A Quick Glance at Four Giants in American Literature**

Readings are done outside of class; students will read, analyze and discuss the following works of literary merit in the context of a theme, such as sin and morality, censorship, the changing role of women, labor, etc.

- ❖ The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne (~November/December)
  - Skill: formulating a thesis statement, supporting with text
  - Skill: close reading and multiple choice practice
- ❖ The Awakening, by Kate Chopin (~December/January)
  - Skill: close reading and multiple choice practice
  - Skill: reciprocal teaching
- ❖ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (~January/February)
  - Skill: the synthesis essay
- ❖ The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck (~March/April)
  - Skill: speaking and listening: literature circles
  - Skill: close reading and making cross-curricular connections

### **Independent Reading**

California State Standards specify that juniors and seniors should read 2-million words annually outside of the classroom; this translates to 200 minutes per week for the average reader, or 40 minutes a day/five days a week. Students who read widely — textbooks, newspapers, extended essays and arguments in high quality magazines (*Wired*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers*, etc.), and literary fiction – are much better prepared to construct arguments and to write well reasoned essays than students who don't read beyond Facebook posts, gossip and style magazines, and the sports page. Read the news; read editorial pages. Stretch yourself; read outside of your comfort zone. Get stronger.

### **After the Exam – Life and learning does not stop in mid-May**

We may goof around a little bit, but the weeks after the exam gives us time to finish up whatever is left undone (usually *The Grapes of Wrath*), and for writing first drafts of the Personal Statement for college applications in the fall of 2014.

## The Five Classroom Rules:

1. Don't irk your English teacher.
2. Be prepared.
3. Be polite.
4. Be punctual.
5. Follow all school rules.

Let's talk about these rules in some detail.

**FIRST RULE – Please do not irk your English teacher.** (TIP: If you follow Rules Two, Three, Four and Five, you shouldn't run afoul of Rule One.)

### **FIRST RULE:**



**PLEASE DO NOT** annoy, nag, torment, pester, plague, bug, molest, upset, worry, rankle, vex, fret, bullyrag, pique, beleaguer, harass, taunt, exasperate, agitate, gnaw, trouble, heckle, diddle with, persecute, torture, madden, hassle, badger, bother, goad, tease, nettle, ruffle, perturb, disturb, provoke, irritate, chafe, trouble, harry, gall, disquiet, oppress, grieve, fluster, aggravate, beset, grate, mistreat, abuse, tantalize, rag, rattle, frustrate, bedevil, rile, peeve, or **IRK YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER.**

**RULE TWO: Be Prepared.** This means have your materials ready, your work done, your book open to the right page...be alert and take care of business.

**RULE THREE: Be Polite.** Learn to speak inside the classroom utilizing academic register; treat me and treat one another with compassion and respect; in whole class discussions where I am acting as a facilitator, please raise your hand to speak; please avoid interrupting me when I am teaching. Side conversations must be kept to a minimum. We are a collaborative classroom; please stay on topic. Respond immediately when I call for attention. Use the bathroom pass privilege responsibly. Please keep the classroom clean; return what you borrow; apologize if you hurt someone; keep the peace. Help me to create an atmosphere that is positive and productive.

**RULE FOUR: Be Punctual.** Be in class and ready to go when the bell rings. Turn your work in on time. Honor established deadlines.

**RULE FIVE: Follow all school rules.** Be familiar with the Mayfair Discipline Matrix. Perhaps we should read it closely and critique it. I enforce dress code and tardy sweep; I confiscate cell phones and MP3 players and turn them into the high school office.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please initial this line: There is **Zero Tolerance** for cheating in an AP class. If I suspect you have cheated, I will convene a meeting with you, your parent(s), and an administrator, and I will make a case for your dismissal from the class and a failing grade.

The law is a living document, open to interpretation by judges. I am the judge in my classroom, and I am free to interpret my rules as I see fit.

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Just a Few Don'ts (My Pet Peeves):

- Don't pack up and stand by the door before the bell rings.
- Don't break the food and drink rules.
- If it's late, it's late: don't make excuses. Take responsibility for yourself and your work.
- Don't do your other teachers' homework during my class.
- Don't slump or put your head down in class: I will either call your parents or send you to the nurse.

Consequences for Infractions: After a couple of warnings, I call your folks. I reserve the right, during any active conflict, to take assertive action and remove you from class.

**3P Grading and Assessment**

Responsibility for grades and assessments are shared between the student and the teacher; details are forthcoming in a detailed handout, a Powerpoint presentation, and ongoing classroom discussion. We are following 3P Grading, a collaborative system that requires students to take responsibility for learning outcomes through daily work habits, quarterly goal setting, frequent student-teacher conferences, and regular whole class communication about expectations and outcomes.

The basic outline for **3P Grading** is as follows:

- 50% **Participation** (classroom behavior, academic habits of mind, collaboration, work ethic)
- 30% **Progress** (your movement over time toward specific, established goals)
- 20% **Performance** (tests, timed writes, multiple choice practices, and other announced summative assessments)

Please see "Appendix A" for further explanation; I will post the appendix with links on [www.msffletcher.org](http://www.msffletcher.org)

**PRINT OUT THIS PAGE, SIGN AND RETURN BY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2013  
(Having this in on time is part of your participation grade.)**

*I have reviewed the syllabus for Fletcher's AP Language and Composition Class with my son or daughter; we have discussed it, and we both understand it and agree to comply with its requirements.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

☆YES! I would like to receive the same reminder text messages that you send my child, and will send a text to **971-264-2776** with the message **@apeng11**.

☆YES! You may contact me to discuss my son or daughter using email. My email address:

*Parents and Students! Please read and initial the following statements:*

\_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_      We have read and understand that *200-Minutes of Independent Reading per Week* is a bonafide homework assignment, but one that is 100% on the honor system.

\_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_      I understand that the 3P Grading System means that I will not be able to monitor my grade day-by-day; evaluating this kind of text-heavy work takes time and a holistic approach.

\_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_      We believe that the classroom rules are reasonable and that we will be able to uphold them, and understand the consequences for breaking these rules, especially with regard to cheating.

**Fletcher's Wish for Every Student:** a working computer, printer and internet connection; a place to work that is removed from the hectic activity of daily life, with a table, and a good light; a real dictionary; less screen time, more family face time; less gaming, more sleep; less drama, more peace; less stress, more exercise; less iPod, more cloud-busting and reflection...plus a comfortable chair, good lighting, and a book that rocks the world.

I wish to extend an open invitation to every parent to contact me any time; you are welcome to visit and to even volunteer in our classroom; I always have filing to do, and sometimes even stapling! During writer's workshop, students need readers to offer comments and feedback. I acknowledge that our relationship is a partnership, and I may need to look to you for guidance and insight when working with your child.

If you can't volunteer time but would like to contribute by donating material goods, we always need the following: black pens, red pens, printer paper, yellow highlighters, facial tissue, paper towels, anti-bacterial hand gel, anti-bacterial wipes for surfaces, black/blue fat dry-erase markers, paper towels, and college-ruled lined writing paper. Of course, none of this is necessary! We simply appreciate you, and thank you for reading this long syllabus.