

## AP English III/ Dual Credit Summer Reading 2018-19

Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Composition engages students in the study of rhetoric, “the use of language for persuasive purposes” (Corbett and Connors). Students become skilled readers, using a variety of deconstruction methods. The selections of the course are a combination of texts representative of the literary movements of American literature in addition to texts grouped by rhetorical form. The analysis of prose and, in turn, the student’s writing focuses on higher purpose, audience expectations, writer’s attitude, and conventions of writing and language as a means of effective communication. Students become mature readers and writers through interpretation, class discussions, inquiry, and written discourse of texts—all of which allow students to prepare for the AP Language and Composition exam as the ultimate culminating assessment for the course.

**Assignment:** Read and annotate **Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried***. This is a collection of semi-autobiographical stories. Pay close attention to how O’Brien’s voice (specifically with regard to diction, detail, imagery, syntax, and tone) changes according to the topic and purpose of each story.

Please buy your own copy of the book (a used copy is fine), and bring it with you starting on the first day of class, as the reading must be completed by the **first day of class**. Please get your book early; not being able to find the book in August does not excuse you from the assignment.

In addition to the reading assignment, you should also expect detailed tests, essays, class discussions, and assignments over *The Things They Carried* **within the first two weeks of school and throughout the first grading period.**

Also, you will need to choose and obtain a fiction book (see list on page 5 of this document) by **August 30<sup>th</sup>** for a fiction independent reading project you will start on that date in class.

\*\*\*Do not hesitate to email us if you have any questions regarding the assignment:

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We look forward to a year of challenges and successes!  
Dr. Dyer and Ms. Solomon

### **Annotating for Voice: Close Reading and Analysis**

Understanding voice gives readers a deeper appreciation of the richness of language and a deeper understanding of literature. Through voice, we come to know authors; by exploring voice, we learn to wield language. The aim of our studies is to better develop a personal voice. To do so, we must first learn to recognize voice and analyze its elements. The five elements of voice we will focus on to begin our studies are diction, detail, imagery, syntax, and tone.

**Diction**: the author's choice of words to express shades of meaning and tone. Effective writers avoid non-specific, weak words such as nice, thing, stupid, etc. Instead, a strong writer employs precise, descriptive words for a specific effect. Verbs are the strongest parts of speech, and strong verbs such as "thirsts" and "thuds" are powerful and descriptive.

Diction is dependent upon topic, purpose, and occasion. The topic often determines the specificity and sophistication of diction choices. A writer creating a scholarly article for a scientific journal would use specialized diction choices to convey meaning precisely and efficiently.

The writer's purpose—whether to convince, entertain, amuse, inform, or plead—partly determines diction choices. For example, if an author's purpose is to inform, the reader can expect straightforward diction. In contrast, if the purpose is to entertain, the reader will likely encounter ironic, playful, or unexpected diction choices.

A writer's diction choices also depend upon the occasion. Formal diction is largely reserved for scholarly writing, serious prose, or poetry. Informal diction is the norm in exposition, newspaper editorials, and works of fiction. Colloquial diction borrows from informal speech and is typically used to create a mood or capture a particular historic or regional dialect.

Be aware of both the denotation (dictionary definition) and connotation (emotional meaning) of diction choices. When a writer calls a character slender, this conveys a different feeling from calling the character gaunt.

Diction choices can impart freshness and originality to writing. Words used in surprising or unusual ways make us rethink what is known and re-examine meaning. For example, writer Annie Dillard describes the sea as "a monster with a lace hem." Good writers often opt for complexity rather than simplicity, for multiple layers of meaning rather than precision.

**Detail**: facts, observations, and incidents used to develop a subject and impart voice. Specific details bring life and color to description, focusing the reader's attention and bringing the reader into the scene. Detail makes an abstraction concrete, particular, and unmistakable. For example, when Orwell describes an elephant attack, the attack comes alive through his description of the elephant's specific violent actions. By directing readers' attention to particulars, detail connects abstraction to their lives and engages them.

Detail can also create understatement, through a lack of detail. The absence of specific details, for example, may be in sharp contrast to the intensity of a character's pain. The laconic cowboy who claims his gunshot wound is "only a scratch" is using understatement, which makes him appear brave. In this case, elaborate, descriptive detail could turn the pain into sentimentality. Good writers choose detail with care, selecting those details that add meaning and avoiding those that trivialize or detract from their expression.

**Imagery:** the verbal representation of sensory experience. In literature, all five senses may be represented: sight (visual imagery), sound (auditory imagery), touch (tactile imagery), taste (gustatory imagery), and smell (olfactory imagery). Visual imagery is the most common, but good writers experiment with a variety of imagery. Imagery depends on both diction and detail: an image's success in producing a sensory experience results from the specificity of the author's diction and choice of detail.

Imagery itself is not figurative but may be used to impart figurative or symbolic meaning. For example, the parched earth can be a metaphor for a character's despair or a bird's flight a metaphor for hope. Traditional imagery typically has a cultural history. For example, in western culture, immersion in water frequently signifies rebirth or baptism, and the image of flight frequently symbolizes freedom. However, sometimes a writer will play with this cultural expectation and subvert its meaning. For example, Toni Morrison incorporates flight imagery to convey the effects of running away from our responsibilities. An alert reader needs to recognize and analyze traditional meanings of images, departures from tradition, and the effect of both on the meaning of the text.

**Syntax:** the way that words are arranged within sentences. Although the basic order of the English sentence is prescribed (there must be a subject and verb; word order cannot be random), there is great latitude in its execution. How writers control and manipulate the sentence affects the voice we hear and imparts personality to the writing. Syntax encompasses word order, sentence length, sentence focus, and punctuation.

Most English sentences follow a standard pattern of subject-verb-object/complement. Deviating from this pattern can startle the reader and draw attention to the sentence or particular words in the sentence. There are many ways to change normal word order, such as—inverting subject and verb (Am I ever sorry!); placing a complement at the beginning of a sentence (Hungry, without a doubt, he is.); placing an object in front of a verb (Sara I like—not Susan).

Good writers shift between conformity and nonconformity, preventing reader complacency without overusing unusual sentence structure to the point of distraction. Linguistically, the point of most emphasis is on the last word in a sentence (a good reason to never end a sentence with a weak preposition).

Another aspect of syntax is sentence length. Writers vary sentence length to avoid monotony and control emphasis. A short sentence following a much longer sentence is emphasized by the juxtaposition. Many modern writers place key ideas in short sentences, but this has not always been the case throughout history. Now it is.

Writers also use syntactic tension—the withholding of syntactic closure-- to engage readers. Sentences that delay closure are called periodic sentences. Periodic sentences carry high tension and interest: the reader must wait until the end of the sentence to understand the meaning. Here's an example: As long as we ignore our children and refuse to dedicate the necessary time and money to their care, we will fail to solve the problem of school violence. By using the syntactic tension of a periodic sentence, this writer places the emphasis in this sentence on the problem. We can't understand this sentence until we read all the way to the end word.

In contrast, sentences that reach syntactical closure early (loose sentences) relieve tension and allow the reader to explore the rest of the sentence without urgency. Note the difference in tension when we change the sentence to a loose sentence: We will fail to solve the problem of school violence as long as we ignore our children and refuse to dedicate the necessary time and

money to their care. The emphasis here is on the cause of failure.

Repetition is another way writers achieve syntactical focus. Purposeful repetition of a word, phrase, or clause emphasizes the repeated structure and focuses the reader's attention on its meaning. Repeating parallel grammatical forms such as infinitives and prepositional phrases balance parallel ideas and give them equal weight.

Punctuation is another way writers can manipulate syntax to reinforce meaning, construct effect, and express their voice. Of particular interest in shaping voice are the semicolon, colon, and dash.

- The semicolon (;) gives equal weight to independent clauses in a sentence; the resulting syntactical balance reinforces parallel ideas and imparts equal weight to both clauses.
- The colon (:) directs the reader's attention to the words that follow. A colon sets the expectation that important, closely related information will follow, and words after the colon are emphasized.
- The dash (--) marks a sudden change in thought or tone, sets off a brief summary, or sets off a parenthetical part of the sentence. A dash often conveys a casual tone.

**Tone:** Expression of attitude. It is the writer's (or narrator's) implied attitude toward his subject and audience. Tone is created by word selection (diction) and arrangement of words (syntax) and by purposeful use of details and images. Tone sets the relationship between reader and writer. Tone is usually described with an adjective, such as one of the following: affectionate, angry, anxious, apprehensive, approving, ardent, bitter, calm, confident, confused, disrespectful, exhilarated, joyful, sympathetic, etc.

Understanding tone is requisite to understanding meaning. Identifying and analyzing tone requires careful reading, sensitivity to diction and syntax, and understanding of detail selection and imagery. This is where all your skills come into play. But, if we don't understand that a writer's tone is satirical, we might misinterpret his meaning and find ourselves offended or angry. That's one reason that email, which does not convey tone well because of its brevity, relies on emoticons to show tone. :)

Excerpted and Cited from--

Corbett, Edward P.J. and Robert J. Connors. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.

Dean, Nancy. *Voice Lessons—Classroom Activities to Teach Diction, Details, Imagery, Syntax, and Tone*. Gainesville, Florida: Maupin House, 2000. Print.

**Fiction Reading List—Possible Selections****\*\*\*You will begin reading one of these books on August 30<sup>th</sup> in class.**

*Bless Me, Ultima*, Rudolfo Anaya  
*Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury  
*My Antonia*, Willa Cather  
*The Last of the Menu Girls*, Denise Chavez  
*The Awakening*, Kate Chopin  
*The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne  
*A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, Michael Dorris  
*Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison  
*Absalom, Absalom*, William Faulkner  
*As I Lay Dying*, William Faulkner  
*The Sound and the Fury*, William Faulkner  
*Light in August*, William Faulkner  
*A Lesson before Dying*, Earnest J. Gaines  
*Catch-22*, Joseph Heller  
*On the Road*, Jack Kerouac  
*No Country for Old Men*, Cormac McCarthy  
*All the Pretty Horses*, Cormac McCarthy  
*Terms of Endearment*, Larry McMurtry  
*The Last Picture Show*, Larry McMurtry  
*Beloved*, Toni Morrison  
*The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison  
*The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath  
*Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger  
*Ceremony*, Leslie Silko  
*The Adventures of Huck Finn*, Mark Twain  
*Cat's Cradle*, Kurt Vonnegut  
*Slaughterhouse Five*, Kurt Vonnegut  
*The Color Purple*, Alice Walker