

BOOK LIST

AP[®] English Literature & Composition

Fall 2024 / Spring 2025

Title	Edition	Author/Editor	ISBN	Available on the Academy's Bookstore?
The Elements of Style	*	Strunk, William & White, E.B.	978-0205309023	Yes—find it here.
Barron's AP English Literature and Composition 2024	2023**	Ehrenhaft, George	978-1506287713	Yes – Find it here.
Crime and Punishment	1958	Dostoevsky, Fyodor	978-0553211757	Yes – Find it here.
The Death of Ivan Ilyich	*	Tolstoy, Leo	978-0553210354	Yes – Find it here.
Divine Comedy, Vol. 1: Inferno	2005	Alighieri, Dante / Esolen, Anthony (trans)	978-0345483577	Yes – Find it here.
Frankenstein	*	Shelley, Mary	978-0199537167	Yes – Find it here.
The Glass Menagerie	*	Williams, Tennessee	978-0811214049	Yes – Find it here.
Gulliver's Travels	*	Swift, Jonathan	978-0486292731	Yes – Find it here.
Hamlet	*	Shakespeare, William	978-1451669411	Yes – Find it here.
Heart of Darkness	*	Conrad, Joseph	978-0460874779	Yes – Find it here.
Merchant of Venice	*	Shakespeare, William	978-0743477567	Yes – Find it here.
The Metamorphosis and Other Stories	*	Kafka, Franz	978-0486290300	No

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Title	Edition	Author/Editor	ISBN	Available on the Academy's Bookstore?
Odyssey	*	Homer / Fitzgerald, Robert (trans)	978-0374525743	Yes – Find it here.
Oedipus Rex	*	Sophocles	978-1420953466	Yes – Find it here.
Paradise Lost	*	Milton, John	978-1420953305	Yes – Find it here.
Top 500 Poems	1992	Harmon, William	978-0231080286	Yes – Find it here.
Waiting for Godot	*	Beckett, Samuel	978-0802144423	Yes – Find it here.

Please note:

- > ** The 2024 edition was published July 2023. It is also referred to as the “Premium” edition.
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Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky

SYNOPSIS: In *Crime and Punishment*, Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky describes the character of Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, a man who thinks he is above common morality. Dostoevsky

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follows Raskolnikov as his guilt for committing murder tears his soul apart, proving the biblical truth that no man can escape God’s moral law.

→ **REASONS FOR TEACHING:** *Crime and Punishment* is gripping, insightful, and widely acclaimed as one of the greatest novels of all time. Despite its dark themes, it tells a powerful story of redemption. A psychological thriller, it fuses two classic genres: the classical tragedy and the Christian resurrection story.

DISCLAIMER: This novel contains description of a murder, minimal language, and cruelty to animals. Key characters include a prostitute and a sexual predator, but there are no graphic accounts of their activities. Dostoevsky dives deep into the depraved human heart but never loses sight of God’s grace.

The Death of Ivan Ilyich by Leo Tolstoy

SYNOPSIS: This Russian novella, written shortly after Tolstoy’s conversion to Christianity, examines the life of Ivan Ilyich, a Russian judge. Ivan has spent his life seeking social status and financial achievement. As he nears the end of his life due to a freak accident, he finds that what he has been striving after has not been fulfilling; his life needs something more.

→ **REASONS FOR TEACHING:** This book is a psychological masterpiece by Tolstoy, one of the most significant authors of the 19th century. The story deals with the nature of the lawful vs. the virtuous life and the process of redemption.

Divine Comedy, Vol 1: Inferno by Dante

SYNOPSIS: The first part of Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, this epic poem portrays a fictionalized autobiographical journey through Hell with the Roman poet Virgil as the poet’s guide. Dante provides a taxonomy of sin, making it appear hideous, repulsive, and “exceeding sinful.”

REASONS FOR TEACHING: We read Dante because his language is beautiful, his insights are stunning, and his piety (and poetics) are profound. The Inferno is an excellent showcase of the medieval mindset.

DISCLAIMER: This work describes various sins and their graphic punishments, and some translations contain brief instances of strong language apropos to the story’s setting in Hell. The reader sees the serious consequences of sin and of rejecting God.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

SYNOPSIS: In this classic work of the Romantic era, Mary Shelley tells the tale of a misguided doctor and his experiment gone awry. In attempting to thwart death and create life, Dr. Victor Frankenstein creates a monster. Hideous and rejected, the monster seeks revenge against its maker.

→ **REASONS FOR TEACHING:** This book is a classic representation of gothic literature and is arguably the first science fiction novel. It raises thought-provoking questions about the value of human life and the boundaries of scientific inquiry.

DISCLAIMER: This novel includes some violent content.

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams

SYNOPSIS: In this “memory play,” the narrator tells the story of his home life, his mother, and his handicapped sister who finds comfort in her collection of glass figurines.

→ **REASONS FOR TEACHING:** This play vividly illustrates the dangers of living vicariously through others, dodging responsibility, and seeking unhealthy escapes from reality. It also shows the loss of functionality and intimacy as society rejects healthy family models.

DISCLAIMER: This play contains some language and themes of abandonment.

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Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift

SYNOPSIS: This fictional travelogue follows the exploits of Lemuel Gulliver as he journeys to various exotic lands. The Reverend Jonathan Swift used these fictional societies to critique his own contemporary culture, politics, and (especially) religion in this biting, witty satire.

→ **REASONS FOR TEACHING:** *Gulliver's Travels* is one of the best satires ever written. Swift's devastating exposé of vice and folly is as fresh today as it was in the 18th century. It is also an exciting adventure story that makes an excellent introduction to Neoclassical literature.

DISCLAIMER: As part of his satirical critique of the Enlightenment movement, Swift includes some crude content.

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

SYNOPSIS: The tragedy of Hamlet follows the Prince of Denmark on a quest to avenge the murder of his father. In the style of Greek tragedy, Hamlet's choices bring about further death and destruction.

→ **REASONS FOR TEACHING:** This play contains many memorable lines, its story introduces many thought-provoking themes, and it has received universal acclaim as one of Shakespeare's greatest plays.

DISCLAIMER: This play deals with mature themes in a non-graphic way, including references to suicide, murder, betrayal, insanity, and marital infidelity. It explores concepts of mercy vs. revenge and guilt vs. forgiveness.

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad

SYNOPSIS: In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad follows colonists in the Belgian Congo, journeying up the Congo River with the help of native Africans. The story exposes the cruel nature of man, and effectively contrasts the supposedly civilized Europeans with the uncivilized natives. Using this contrast, Conrad shows that darkness is not unique to the heart of Africa, but rather is found in the heart of man.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This short novel makes beautiful and brilliant use of the English language in its writing style and symbolism. It simultaneously documents and questions the colonization project pursued by the nations of Western Europe. Ultimately, it stands as an effective introduction to the dark turn taken by literature and the other fine arts at the beginning of the 20th century, while signaling the deeper message that, apart from God, the “light of the civilization” is a fantasy at best.

DISCLAIMER: This novel showcases colonial oppression, racism, and the cruelty of the slave trade as conducted by Africans and Europeans.

Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

SYNOPSIS: Though technically one of Shakespeare’s comedies, *The Merchant of Venice* is the story of the intense struggle between a Venetian merchant and a Jewish moneylender over an unpaid debt. It includes all the drama, humor, and romance you can expect from a Shakespeare play.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This play serves as an excellent representation of the (real) genre of comedy and offers keen insight into the complexities of interactions between different races and religions.

DISCLAIMER: This play includes anti-Semitic themes, Shakespearian innuendo, and early forms of racist language.

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka

SYNOPSIS: *The Metamorphosis* follows the strange tale of Gregor Samsa, a travelling salesman who wakes one day to find that he has turned into a giant bug. Franz Kafka, an Austrian Jewish author, uses Gregor’s “condition” and the subsequent reaction of his family to comment on the absurdity of human existence in a Godless universe.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This book effectively documents 20th-century alienation from God, self, and the world. Kafka uses his profound literary skills to raise the question of whether human love is economically motivated. Once Gregor cannot provide for his parents anymore, their love is exhausted and Gregor is abandoned. The story wrestles with who bears responsibility for humanity's alienation from each other and from God

DISCLAIMER: This novella contains weighty themes of isolation, abandonment, and rejection by loved ones.

Odyssey by Homer

SYNOPSIS: This sequel to Homer’s *Iliad* follows the wanderings and adventures of Odysseus as he journeys home from the Trojan War to reclaim his family and estate from the clutches of presumptuous fortune hunters.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This epic poem is one of the oldest, best-known cornerstones of Western literature and culture. Much more than a thrilling adventure story, the *Odyssey* provides an insightful study in character through Odysseus’s courage, cunning, and perseverance, Penelope’s legendary loyalty, and Telemachus’s longing for manhood. While Christians would not endorse or emulate all actions or choices of these characters, there is much we can learn from them.

DISCLAIMER: This work contains some violent battle scenes and (non-graphic) instances of marital infidelity.

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles

SYNOPSIS: This second play in Sophocles’ Oedipus Cycle, this iconic Greek tragedy examines classical conceptions of fatalism as Oedipus attempts to run from a prophecy. In classic tragic form, Oedipus’ choices end up orchestrating his own downfall.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This play provides a window into the ancient Greek mindset, is of very high literary quality, and serves as an introduction to the historically important genre of tragedy. It is also essential for understanding specific references in today’s culture. Students will appreciate the Christian faith more deeply as they contrast it with Greek fatalism.

DISCLAIMER: This play deals with mature themes in a tactful, non-graphic way, including the consequences of suicide and unintentional incest. It portrays evil as evil, but leaves open the question of whether human beings are mere pawns of fate.

Paradise Lost by John Milton

SYNOPSIS: *Paradise Lost* is John Milton’s epic poetic retelling of the fall of man. The story follows Satan’s rebellion, the ensuing war in heaven, and the temptation of Adam and Eve in beautiful English verse.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This poem is one of the few representations of an epic written in modern English. It is also a keystone of English literature and a landmark work of the Renaissance era

DISCLAIMER: This epic poem includes sexual allusions in the context of marriage.

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett

SYNOPSIS: A play in which nothing happens – twice! Samuel Beckett’s classic, postmodern play examines the habits of two vagrants waiting for a companion who never arrives. The absurdity of

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the play leaves room for broad interpretation and speculation, primarily surrounding the identity and nature of the elusive Godot.

REASONS FOR TEACHING: This play is a powerful representation of what happens when hope and reality are replaced by a deliberately chosen alienation and meaninglessness. Similar themes are prominent throughout 20th century literature. We expose students to these ideas so they will understand both the progression of modern literature and what happens when society rejects God's presence in the world.

DISCLAIMER: This play contains dark images, a strong focus on despair and pointlessness, and references to suicide.