

Analytical Reading and Writing

Period 5 (2:05-3:15) • 2024-2025
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“Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.”
—Ether 12:24

“So great is the bounty with which [Redeemed Man] has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation. All tales may come true; and yet, at the last, redeemed, they may be as like and as unlike the forms that we give them as Man, finally redeemed, will be like and unlike the fallen that we know.”
—J.R.R. Tolkien

Course Description

Analytical Reading and Writing is an elective course offered to 9th - 12th graders at American Heritage School - Salt Lake City. It is designed to set you on the path to becoming a truly great writer who is able to influence the world for good through powerful words. Becoming a great writer is an exhilarating and rigorous process that takes many, many years. The purpose of this class is to accelerate this process by empowering you to learn directly from the great writers of English literature. By reading, enjoying, and analyzing examples of great literature, you will discover the principles and philosophies the masters used, and you will then apply these principles in your own writing projects to communicate messages that are both important and deeply meaningful.

This course includes both an instructional component and a writing lab component. Classes held on Mondays and Wednesdays will be instruction days, on which we will read and analyze great literature, discuss principles of great writing, and generate writing ideas. Tuesdays and Thursdays will be writing lab days, on which you will work on your own writing projects, read your classmates' writing, and give and receive feedback. The writing lab has been added this year to give you more time for developing your writing in class.

Why did you choose to take this course? What are you most excited about? (This will help Mr. Holzer understand what you want to get out of this course.)

Do you have any worries or concerns? (Again, this will help Mr. Holzer.)

Course Policies

Respect for People — The highest standard of respect for others is expected in our class: for your classmates, for all faculty and staff, and for any volunteers who may assist us in any way. I promise to treat you with the same level of respect, for I view the opportunity to interact with you in class as a profound privilege.

Additionally, you will frequently have the opportunity to read and critique other students' writing, as well as receive feedback from other students on your own writing. Please be respectful, kind, and generous in your feedback, while also providing honest, clear, and helpful thoughts that could help your fellow students improve their writing. Please also be humble and willing to learn from your fellow students when they provide feedback to you. Giving and receiving feedback is one of the ways in which you can most quickly improve your writing, and I hope that you will learn to embrace this process with grace.

Technology Use

- Computers — All writing in this course will be done by hand; neither personal nor school computers will be used in class. For all writing assignments, first drafts must be written by hand and turned in; for my sake and yours, please use your best handwriting. Subsequent drafts may be typed and formatted using a computer, if you wish, but this will be done exclusively outside of class using your own personal or family computer.
- Phones — In accordance with the policies of American Heritage, phone use in class is not permitted.

Assignment Submissions and Due Dates — All work is due on the set due date. Late work will incur a 20% late penalty. Further, all assignments must be turned in on paper; electronic submissions will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Cleanliness — We all need to work together to keep our classroom clean. It is expected that everyone will help to clean up at the end of each class. Once you have finished cleaning up your own work area, please look for opportunities to help others clean up as well.

Writing Lab — Participation in the writing lab portion of this course is a privilege that has been graciously granted to you by the school's administration to give you more time for writing. You will be expected to view this time as a sacred stewardship and to use it to the best of your ability to improve upon the talents you have been given (see Matthew 25:14-30). Specific guidelines for the writing lab will be given to you before the first writing lab day. By taking this course, you agree to abide by these guidelines.

Artificial Intelligence Use — Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool and has many legitimate and powerful uses. However, because this course is focused on developing your own personal skills of reading, reasoning, and writing, you will not be allowed to use generative AI tools of any kind for any of the work done in this course. American Heritage aims to offer a unique style of education in which both the heart and mind are educated, and we believe that developing the time-honored skills of reading, reasoning, and writing are some of the best methods of achieving this kind of transformative learning. Education about how to use ChatGPT and other AI tools can be obtained in other classes (such as American Heritage's Computer Science Principles class for 9th graders), at other schools, or in other places. We ask for your trust as we insist that this policy be kept by all students in this course.

Artificial intelligence, though powerful, is earth-bound: it is doomed to end when this world ends. By contrast, your soul is eternal, and the mental and spiritual capacities you develop here on Earth will rise with you into the eternities. God does not need *artificial* intelligence: He has *real* intelligence — and it is, in every conceivable way, vastly superior to any artificial intelligence system that man has or ever will invent. If we are to become like God, it behoves us to exercise and enlarge our own intelligence rather than rely on fake, artificial intelligence.

If you have concerns about this policy, please talk with me; I will be happy to discuss this with anyone. If it is suspected that you have used an AI tool to do any of your thinking or your writing, we will have frank conversations that will likely result in you needing to redo your work. Repeated violations of this policy will be escalated to school administration.

Do you anticipate having any problems keeping these policies? Do you have any special circumstances or needs Mr. Holzer should be aware of?

I agree to abide by these policies. (Sign your name to signify your agreement.)

Assignments

I. Journaling

Due on the first writing lab of each month

Writing frequently is essential to improving your writing. To encourage you to develop a pattern of frequent writing, you will be required to keep a personal journal. This is not meant to be a great burden — you will only be required to write for 5 minutes each day, at least 5 times per week (of course, daily journaling is certainly encouraged, but not required).

Your journaling, like all other writing in this class, must be done by hand. A bound journal will be given to you on the first day of class, but you are free to use your own, if you prefer. On the first writing lab day of each month, you will bring your journal to class, along with a filled-in worksheet showing which days you made an entry in your journal in the previous month. Don't worry — I will not read your journal entries, but I will flip through the pages to get an idea of how much you are writing.

Hopefully daily journaling will become more than just an assignment, but will instead become a rewarding life pattern that you will choose to continue even after you have completed this course.

2. Unit Assignments and Projects

Due on the last day of each unit

This course is made up of 10 units. In each unit, you will read and annotate texts, complete discussion guides, participate in class discussions, and complete a writing project. All of this work — including your annotated texts — will be due in class on the last day of the unit.

Reading and Annotating

We will do lots of reading in this course. Assigned readings will be of two kinds: 1) short articles or works, which will inform class discussions on writing, and 2) works of great literature, which we will analyze in order to learn how master writers approached their craft. You will be expected to complete all of these readings and annotate the texts as you read. Your grade for reading will be based upon your annotations. You will turn in your text(s) at the end of the unit for grading.

Discussion Guides

To guide our learning and class discussions, you will receive discussion guides in class to fill out. These will mostly be completed in class, but you will occasionally be expected to complete something outside of class. You will regularly draw from these guides as we hold class discussions on various topics. If you take them seriously, they will become a valuable repository of notes that you can use throughout your writing career.

Writing Projects

We will do lots of writing in this course. Clear instructions will be given for each writing project, including due dates for each phase of the project. If you follow the instructions carefully and do your very best work, you will get a good grade. Remember, good writing is almost never produced in a single day, so it would be wise for you to begin each project quickly and give yourself plenty of time to revise and refine your writing.

3. Course Notebook

Due at the end of the term:

- Term 1: Wednesday, October 16, 2024
- Term 2: Thursday, December 19, 2024
- Term 3: Thursday, March 6, 2024 (before Experiential Learning, which is the last week of Term 3)
- Term 4: Friday, May 16, 2025 (one week before the end of Term 4)

Throughout the year, you will be expected to maintain a class notebook containing class assignments, copies of the various drafts of your writing projects, and reflections on what you are learning. Your best work is expected, including good handwriting and neat organization. Your notebooks will be inspected and graded at the end of each term.

Grading

Grades will be assigned according to the standard American Heritage breakdown, as follows:

A = 100-93%	A- = 92-90%	B+ = 89-87%
B = 86-84%	B- = 83-80%	C+ = 79-77%
C = 76-74%	C- = 73-70%	D+ = 69-67%
D = 66-64%	D- = 63-60%	
F = 59-0%		
IN = Incomplete		

Course Materials

Works of Literature — The following works of literature will be read, annotated, discussed, and analyzed, either in full or in part.

- “I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew” by Dr. Seuss
- “The Sneetches” by Dr. Seuss
- “You’re Only Old Once” by Dr. Seuss
- “The Lorax” by Dr. Seuss
- “Wanted—A Real Mother” by Margaret Eggleston
- “The Bank Errand Boy” by Margaret Eggleston
- “Personal Stories in Religious Education” by Margaret Eggleston (from the book *The Use of Story in Religious Education*)
- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” by Dr. Seuss
- “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry
- *The House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne
- “Leaf by Niggle” by J.R.R. Tolkien

Articles and Essays — The following articles and essays will be read and discussed in class, either in full or in part.

- “Language Acquisition” by Betty Birner (The Linguistic Society of America)
- “Do Children Soak Up Language Like Sponges?” by Lindsay Patterson (New York Times Online, 16 April 2020)
- “How Do Children Learn Language?” by Carol Bainbridge (Verywell Family, 24 October 2022)
- “Walking Straight into Circles” by Jan L. Souman, et al. (Current Biology, 29 September 2009)
- “Berkshire Hathaway star followed Warren Buffett’s advice: Read 500 pages a day” by Kathleen Elkins (CNBC, 27 March 2018)
- “On Fairy-Stories” by J.R.R. Tolkien

Talks – The following talks from leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be read and discussed in class, either in full or in part.

- “Celestial Training in a Telesial World” by Sheri Dew (BYU Women’s Conference, 5 May 2023)
- “The First Great Commandment” by Jeffrey R. Holland (General Conference, October 2012)
- “Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence” by Jeffrey R. Holland (BYU Devotional, 2 March 1999)
- “Fear Not to Do Good” by Henry B. Eyring (General Conference, October 2017)

Additionally, the Standard Works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be regularly used, both to give insights into our discussions and as examples of great writing.

Course Outline

Unit 0: Why Writing?

Discussion Topics

- The Power of Language and Words
- The Result of Powerful Writing
- Is Great Writing Possible for Me?

Reading

- “Language Acquisition” by Betty Birner (The Linguistic Society of America)
- “Do Children Soak Up Language Like Sponges?” by Lindsay Patterson (New York Times Online, 16 April 2020)
- “How Do Children Learn Language?” by Carol Bainbridge (Verywell Family, 24 October 2022)

Writing Project

- Write a story – any kind and any length. This project will serve as a baseline for your writing.

Unit 1: Dr. Seuss and the Elements of Story

Discussion Topics

- What makes a good story?
- How can I write memorably?

Reading

- “I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew” by Dr. Seuss
- “The Sneetches” by Dr. Seuss
- “You’re Only Old Once” by Dr. Seuss
- “The Lorax” by Dr. Seuss

Writing Project

- Write a simple story outline, then write the story using the principles learned from Dr. Seuss’s stories.

Unit 2: President Holland and the Use of Story in Speeches

Discussion Topics

- How can stories be used to teach a principle?
- What can speakers do to help their audience truly learn and feel?

Reading

- “The First Great Commandment” by Jeffrey R. Holland (General Conference, October 2012)
- “Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence” by Jeffrey R. Holland (BYU Devotional, 2 March 1999)

Writing Project

- Write a talk about a spiritual subject that is important to you, using a story to amplify your message (as President Holland does). Give your talk in front of the class.

Unit 3: Margaret Eggleston and Stories that Touch the Heart

Discussion Topics

- What is the purpose of telling stories?
- How do we craft stories that reach the heart?

Reading

- “Wanted—A Real Mother” by Margaret Eggleston
- “The Bank Errand Boy” by Margaret Eggleston
- “Personal Stories in Religious Education” by Margaret Eggleston (from the book *The Use of Story in Religious Education*)

Writing Project

- Write a personal or family story, using principles learned from Margaret Eggleston to help the story reach the heart.

Unit 4: The Five Grand Keys to Becoming a Great Writer

Discussion Topics

- Principles and patterns followed by nearly all great writers (affectionately called the “Five Grand Keys”)

Writing Project

- Go through the process of writing a story by applying all of the “Five Grand Keys”. Write an essay explaining how you applied the Keys in your story-writing process.

Unit 5: Charles Dickens and Christmas Stories with Meaning

Discussion Topics

- How do we select a message to bring forth in our writing?
- How do we craft stories to powerfully convey that message?

Reading

- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry
- “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” by Dr. Seuss

Writing Project

- Write a holiday story to convey a personally meaningful message, using principles learned from Charles Dickens, O. Henry, and Dr. Seuss.

Unit 6: J.R.R. Tolkien and the Christian Fairy-Story

Discussion Topics

- What is a fairy-story? What is its purpose? What is its value?
- What is the “eucatastrophe”? How can it be achieved in story?

Reading

- “On Fairy-Stories” by J.R.R. Tolkien
- “Leaf by Niggle” by J.R.R. Tolkien

Writing Project

- Write a fairy-story to convey a personally meaningful message, using principles from J.R.R. Tolkien.

Unit 7: Analyze Great Talks from a Church Leader

Discussion Topics

- What principles of great writing can be learned from the talks of Church leaders?

Reading

- Selected General Conference talks and other messages from a Church leader of your choice.

Writing Project

- Write a talk about a spiritual subject that is important to you, using principles learned from a Church leader of your choice.

Unit 8: The Parables of Jesus — The Master Teacher and Storyteller

Discussion Topics

- What makes Jesus' parables so timeless and so powerful?
- What can we learn from the Master Teacher about great writing — its purpose, its construction, and its delivery?

Reading

- Selected parables of Jesus from the King James Version of the Bible.

Writing Project

- Write a short parable, using principles learned from the Master.

Unit 9: Final Project

Writing Project

- Apply all the principles learned throughout the year to create a significant piece of writing as a final project.