

Welcome to

Pre-AP English I

@ **Austin** High School



Janis Bellon, Instructor

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WELCOME TO HIGH SCHOOL.

“So, teacher...how is reading a book going to help me when I have a real job?”

I am so glad you asked. 😊

There are numerous skills that will be needed for you to navigate the real world successfully, and many of them are acquired during the high school years. One of those skills that may be most overlooked is the necessary ability to read and write with absolute clarity. It does not matter if you are an engineer, a lawyer, a writer, or a construction worker – The need to write, read, and interpret is omnipresent, and you have taken the first step to master those skills with more finesse and ease than your peers.

The freshman year is the best indicator of success in the high school years. Those students who leave 9th grade with As and Bs in their coursework tend to maintain that throughout their high school career (and often in college!). This packet is, simply, a way to help you get your high school experience started the right way.

And, yes...I know that summer work is not the *ideal* way to spend your summer, especially when you feel like you’re doing the work on your own. That’s why this packet is for you. I have included as many hints and helps to assist you with the assignment. The work does not have to be perfect; I am looking for your best effort. If you do that, it makes your first year in high school a bit more fun and a little less stressful.

I look forward to having you in my classroom. 😊 Have a fantastic summer vacation, in between reads. See you in August.

Until,

Janis Bellon

Teacher, Pre-AP English 1

Stephen F Austin High School, Fort Bend ISD

Pre-AP English 1: The Class Expectations

English 1 Pre-AP is not a normal English classroom. The major expectation in your first two years of high school English on an advanced level is to prepare yourself for college level coursework, beginning in your junior year of high school.

In order to accomplish this, we must cram a lot of reading and writing into two years. In high school Pre-AP classes, there is more reading and writing, period. There is no intent to scare anyone away from that, but it is necessary to understand that there is a necessary time commitment to reading, independent study, and writing. The good news is that the teachers give intensive practice so you can receive assistance and feedback.

Most reading will be completed outside of class, and homework will be given daily. Maintaining a schedule and completing your assignments on time will be necessary for passing the course. If you have difficulty completing an assignment, or if there is a concept that you don't understand, tutorials will be given on a regular basis to receive small group feedback from me. It is imperative that you ask questions when you fail to understand a concept or lesson – it is difficult for me to know how to help you, otherwise.

These assignments are here to help you prepare for the independent element of the course. While some hints and assistance will be posted to the Austin AP English website from time to time, a large part of the discovery is yours, through reading the stories assigned.

Don't be afraid of being wrong...in fact, think different! Think outside the box. The most insightful discussions come from one person who dares to think differently. Begin that, starting now.

Half-price book (get it?)

Your Reading Assignments

Mythology, by Edith Hamilton: A collection of Greek/Roman mythology. This book can be found at most bookstores, or ordered gently used and cheap from Amazon.com or Half Price Books. This book shows the constant references that are made to mythology throughout literature, something that will be useful every time you read a book.

The following short stories have been included in many anthologies, but can also be found online for free at <http://austinapenglish.weebly.com>

“The Tell-Tale Heart”, by Edgar Allan Poe: A horror tale with lots of interesting diction and syntax...and guilt.

“The Lottery”, by Shirley Jackson: The story seems simple enough...what happens when we dig further? Someone gets a stone...

“To Build A Fire”, by Jack London: What makes a story...a story? How do we pick it apart? Let’s find out when a man decides not to trust his instincts...

“Lamb to the Slaughter”, by Roald Dahl: Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, so let’s find out what the characteristics of such a woman look like!

Now, for the assignments!

Mythology – A Chart

The purpose of any mythology is for a reader to question, and then connect to, experience. As you read the book, select any eight (8) myths throughout the book that you found interesting. Think about the experiences the mythological characters go through. Next, write down what you believe the ancient Greeks were supposed to learn/understand from the myth. Then, make connections to actual events that have occurred in the news (use relatively recent events – birth to present).

Title of Myth	What do you think the Greeks were supposed to understand after reading/listening to the myth?	Connect this myth to an actual event. What events in the news seem like similar experiences?
1.		
2.		
3.		

4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

“To Build A Fire” With Annotation – How To Really Take Notes

Annotation has been taught to many a student as “pick up a highlighter and highlight something”, but it needs to be more purposeful. If annotation is done with commitment and purpose, it can help to unlock the meaning behind the reading, as well as the author’s purpose. In “To Build A Fire”, Jack London throws his protagonist into an incredibly harsh environment, and he has to make a choice which will decide his fate.

Let’s annotate to see which direction his fate will progress. Follow the steps below while reading “To Build A Fire”. After reading, choose a section of text that you will submit with the rest of your assignments (at least 5 paragraphs long). Don’t lose the highlighter...you’ll need it for the assignment.

1. As you read, circle any unfamiliar vocabulary (either vocabulary you have never read, or vocabulary that you cannot readily define). Look up the definition for each word you have located. In the margin, write a shortened definition to help you retain the meaning of the word.
2. When you find an important detail, highlight the detail (should be no more than two phrases/sentences at a time). Ask yourself this question: “Why could this detail be so important to the story?” Write the answer to this question in the margin. This is your annotation, so there is no wrong answer. Write away.
3. When you approach something that confuses you, or provokes a question, use your highlighter to bracket the text [like this]. Write your question in the margin. Attempt to answer it as you continue through the story.
4. Every 2-3 paragraphs, write a 1 sentence summary of the events in the story so far. This helps you keep track of where certain annotations are located for future reference.
5. If something surprises you as you read, write an exclamation mark (!) by the detail. Write why it surprises you.
6. Think about what you might do/say/react to in such situations as you read. Does the story remind you of anything? Make connections to the reading; write any connections you can think of as you read.

Highlighting is important, but should be kept to a minimum – your paper should not be covered in highlighter ink. Search for key elements that help to reveal the story from the inside out. What we want to see is *writing* – any question, summary point, confusing vocabulary or details...we want you to think with your pencil on the page. We are searching for lots of written commentary. The margins should be filled with annotations.

Some points you may wish to take notes on using “To Build A Fire”:

- Why did the protagonist go into the wilderness alone?
- What are the protagonist’s feelings for the dog?
- What would you do in extreme weather conditions?
- What is the perception from the dog’s point-of-view?
- Why is setting essential to the construction of this story?

3 Levels of Reading – Taking “The Tell-Tale Heart” to the Next Level

You’ve probably read “The Tell-Tale Heart” before...English teachers love this story around Halloween time. So, you ask, “Why am I reading this again?” First, it’s a story with wonderful, yet complicated word choice. In order to get how truly *creepy* the story is, understanding the diction is a part of “getting the whole story”. Second, there’s a bit more we could try to understand about humanity, and how we react when we’re guilty. Let’s explore.

On the next page is a concentric circle diagram, which you will turn into a ‘shovel’ to dig into “The Tell-Tale Heart”, all beginning with a single word.

First, you will read and annotate “The Tell-Tale Heart” using the same steps shown with “To Build A Fire.” Submit a passage from your annotations (around 5 paragraphs).

Step 1: Reading On The Lines – Choosing The Best Word

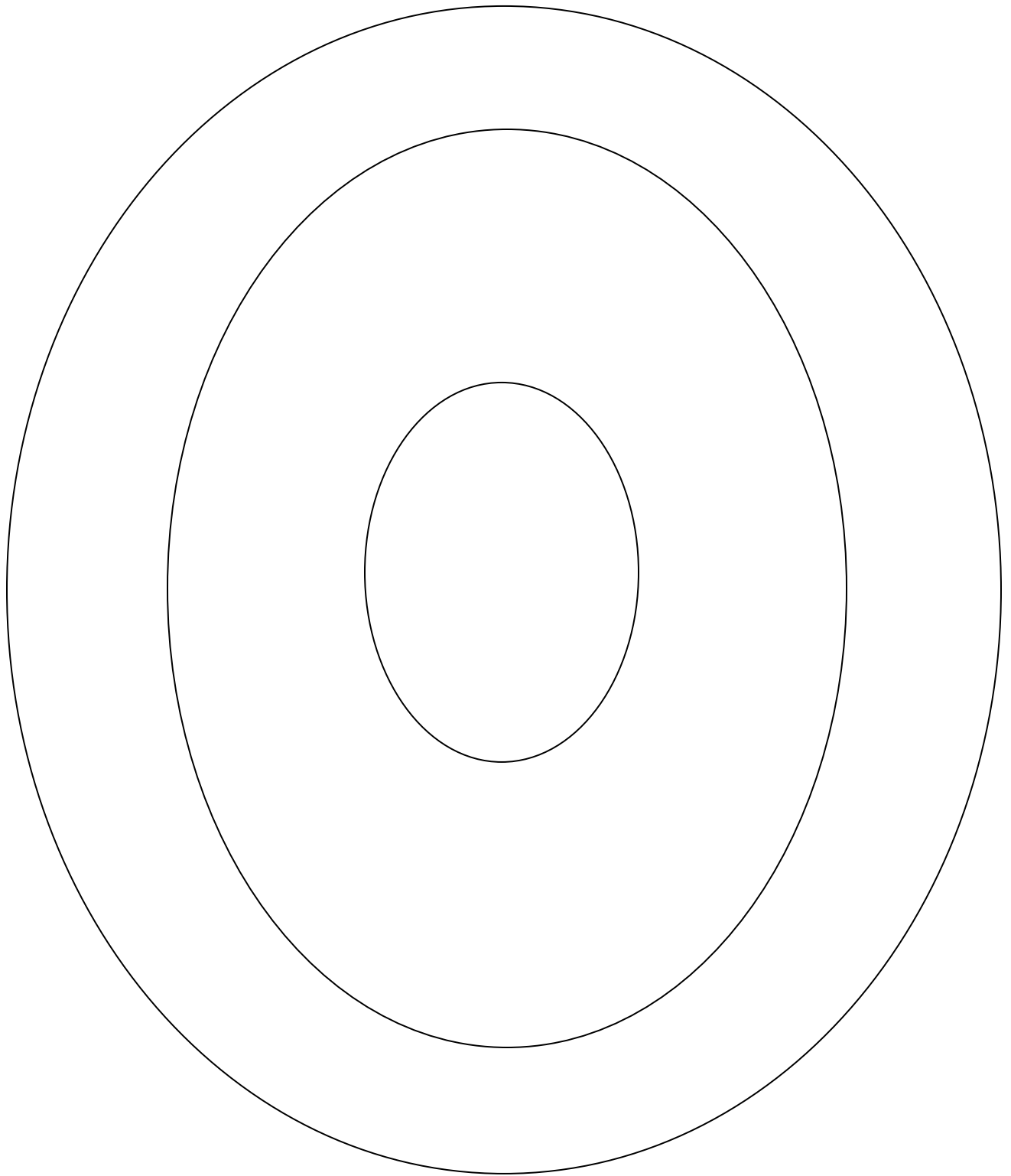
Choosing the most important word in a Poe story must be difficult... Now, you try. Select one word that you believe is *the* key word to understanding this story. Write your word in the smallest circle. Then, write the definition which connotation matches the connotation of the word in the story.

Step 2: Reading Between The Lines – Visualizing The Word in the Story

Now, you need to show the importance of the word, using your analysis skills. Draw 4 pictures in the second circle that somehow represent your chosen word. Then, write a statement that connects the word to the image, and demonstrates the importance of the word in the story.

Step 3: Reading Beyond The Lines – Creating Thematic Statements

You have created meaning for this word in the context of a story. Now, you must think about a *theme* statement using the word. Pretend your chosen word is an *idea*; what does the author want us to understand about this *idea*? In the outermost circle, write two possible theme statements that help us to understand what this story is truly about.



“The Lottery”: Elements of a Story and Plot

You will use the table below to help you analyze Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery”. The story itself is a classic, but unsettling in its casual morbid existence. Using “The Lottery”, you will pick out particular quotes and set them up in a dialectical journal, commenting on particular elements throughout the story. Pay attention to which element each part of the table requires.

First things first: you will annotate the story, following the steps set forth in “To Build A Fire.” Submit a sample of your annotations (about 5 paragraphs) along with your assignment.

Now, using your annotations, pick out short excerpts that match each of the following story elements. Answer the questions that the table provides, using the assigned story/plot element.

Story Element	Excerpt from the text which highlights the story element	Answer each question below...
<p>Setting: the location and time in which a story occurs. Mood can enhance setting as well.</p>	<p>Quote:</p>	<p>Describe the setting of the story. - How does the setting contribute to the overall mood of the story?</p>
<p>Conflict: the ultimate problem within a story. Some problems are more ‘important’ than others in a story; choose the problem that drives the story forward.</p>	<p>Quote:</p>	<p>What is the conflict in the story? How does the conflict move the story forward?</p>
<p>Climax: the pinnacle of excitement, and a turning point; at the climax, something has occurred that changes the story forever.</p>	<p>Quote:</p>	<p>What is the climax of the story? What has changed within the story, and cannot be reversed? Why?</p>

<p>Tone: the “feeling” of a passage/story. Enhanced by diction and sentence structure (syntax).</p>	<p>Quote:</p>	<p>What is the tone of the story? How does the author’s word choice and sentence structure contribute to tone?</p>
<p>Theme: the big idea in the story; an idea that the author wants us to understand. Theme is general; it can be applied to <i>any</i> story.</p>	<p>Quote:</p>	<p>In your opinion, what is the theme of the story? What ‘big idea’ does the author want us to understand after reading the story?</p>

Characterization in “Lamb to the Slaughter”

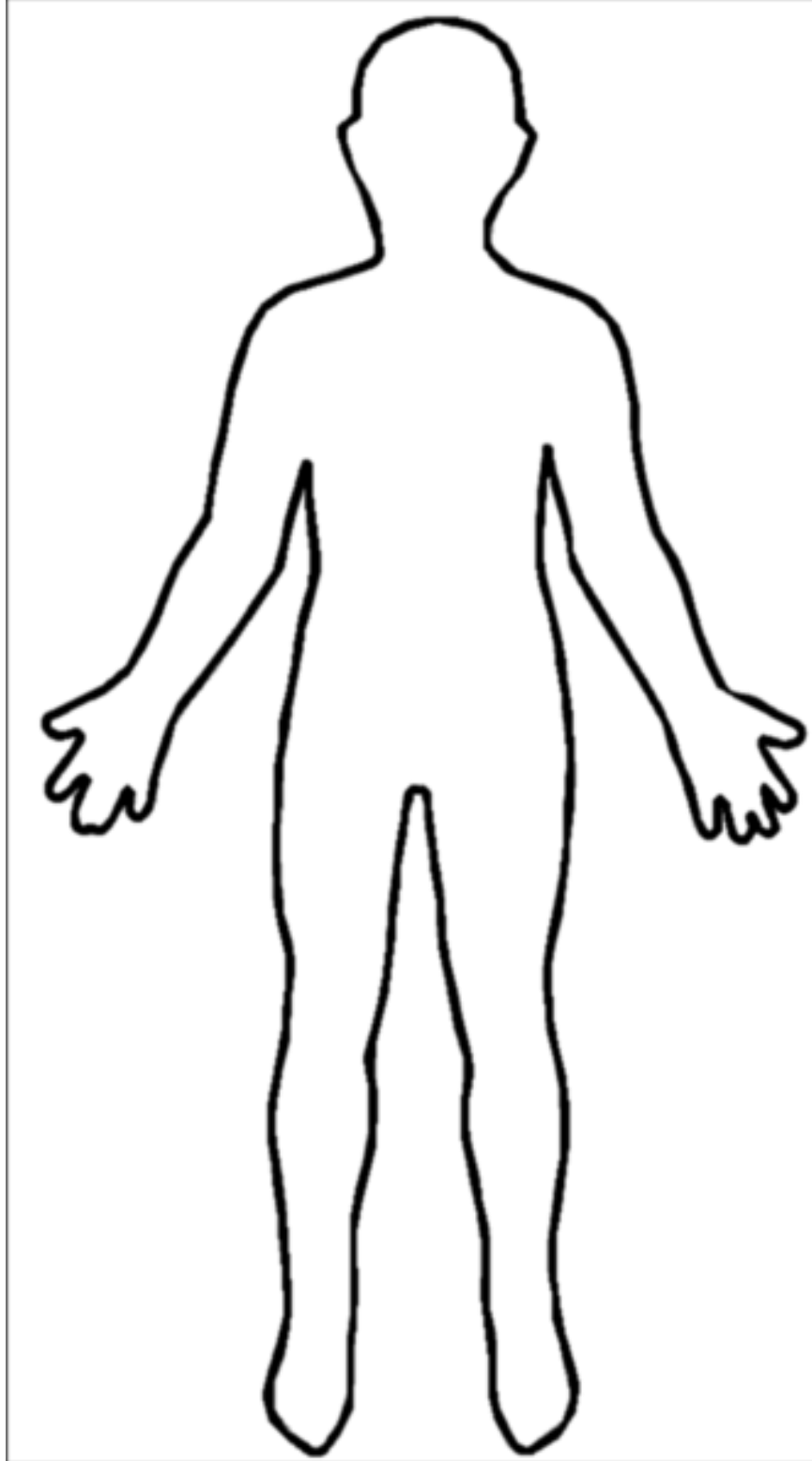
Our protagonist, Mary Maloney, can be interpreted as either the ‘good guy’ or the ‘bad guy’ in this tale of impassioned revenge. What many people immediately interpret about her is that she is a psychopath, but there might be more to her than we understand. You are going to “dissect” her character, pulling out details that help to build her personality throughout the story.

First things first: you will annotate the story, following the steps set forth in “To Build A Fire.” Submit a sample of your annotations (about 5 paragraphs) along with your assignment.

On the next page is a diagram of a body. Using the parts of this body diagram, you will fill in specific details about Mary Maloney in the empty space around the diagram.

The Body Parts- You must complete **ten of the following twelve** body parts for your character. This is where you will analyze your character using the following parameters. You may use post-it notes to complete this section, and then attach them to the body diagram sheet. Include text evidence to bolster your argument.

- **Head**-Intellectual side of the character-What are his or her dreams? What are his her thoughts about life? They may or may not share this information with other characters in the story.
- **Eyes**-Seeing through the character’s eyes-What memorable sights affect him or her? How and Why?
- **Ears**-Hearing through the character’s ears-What does he or she notice and remember others saying to him or her or about him or her? How is the character affected?
- **Nose**-Smelling through the character’s nose-What smells affect him or her? How? Why?
- **Mouth**-The character’s communication-What thoughts about life does the character share with others in the story?
- **Arms**-Working-What is the character’s relationship to work in general? Does your character have a specific job? How are they affected by their work? Why?
- **Hands**-The practical side of the character-What conflicts does your character deal with in the story? How is your character affected?
- **Heart**-The emotional side of the character-What or whom does your character love in the story? Why? How does it affect him or her?
- **Torso**-The instinctive side of the character-What doesn’t your character like about himself or herself? What does he or she hide from others? What brings your character pain? What does he or she fear? Do they have a dark side?
- **Legs**-Internal and external motivations-How is your character motivated internally? How is your character affected externally?
- **Feet**-Character’s mobility-Where has your character been (literally/figuratively)? How has your character been affected by the setting? What is the significance of the setting to the plot of the story or the individual character?
- **Wings**-The character’s future-What prediction can you make about where or what your character will be in the future?



The Essay – Analyzing A Theme Throughout A Story

Your final assignment is to take one of the short stories you have read and break them down to find a theme. All of the short stories share at least one motif: violence.

Using this motif, we must answer the question: “What does the author want us to understand about violence?” The creation of this statement must then be defended and discussed, using text evidence.

Your final summer reading assignment is to write a 4-5 paragraph essay discussing a theme centered around violence in the short story of your choice. Follow the steps below:

- Select a short story to write about.
- In your thesis statement, answer the following question: “What does the author want us to understand about violence and violent behavior?”
- In your body paragraphs, use selected text evidence to discuss how your theme is demonstrated throughout your story.
- Conclude your essay by reflecting on the theme and discussing violence in a way that does not merely restate the thesis, but makes a connection to the greater world outside of the story.

The essay should be typewritten, in 12 point font, using only Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman fonts. The essay should be double spaced, and in MLA format. The heading should look like this:

Your Name

Ms. Bellon

Pre-AP English I

Day Month Year

Please print your essay in black ink. Maintain 1 inch margins on all sides of the paper, and to place quotations around *any* text you borrow from another text.

When you arrive in August...

When you arrive at Austin in August, **your assignments in this packet (except the essay) will be due for collection on the fourth day of school, August 29th, 2012** – no exceptions, no excuses. Your Essay will be due on Tuesday September 3rd, 2012. My recommendation is for you to space out your work gradually. *Mythology* is broken up into several small chapters of reading, and the short stories are easy enough to annotate and complete in an hour. Take a little time every day to do the reading and work assigned to you.

On day one, you will receive your syllabus with course readings and assignments for the year. Again, this assignment is your “bridge” – it helps the entire class to hit the ground running so we can get to the meaty content that Pre-AP English 1 has to offer.

If you need assistance with your assignments, turn to the Austin AP English website: austinapenglish.weebly.com. The Freshmen blog has a place for you to add comments where I can communicate with you and give you feedback. My email address is also posted on the website. I will help as much as we can, and I will reply to every comment made on the blog – if there is any delay...remember – it is summer! It is worth repeating that if you find something difficult, it is more important for you to give your best effort rather than give up, because the attitude needed to be successful in Pre-AP coursework is one of perseverance and questioning...not just quitting when things become difficult.

Check the website from time to time. I will do my best to post hints and helps to get you through the summer reading. Happy reading, and enjoy your summer!

My best,
Ms. Bellon