**AP Language and Composition**

**Vocabulary List**

**Week of 10/21-10/25**

**Sentence Type: Balanced Sentence**

**sarcasm –** From the Greek meaning “to tear flesh,” sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule

someone or something. It may use irony as a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic (that is, intended to

ridicule). When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when poorly done, it is simply cruel.

**satire –** A work that targets human vices and follies or social institutions and conventions for reform or ridicule. Regardless of

whether or not the work aims to reform human behavior, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for

writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively by the satirist: irony, wit, parody, caricature,

hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer’s goal, but good satire,

often humorous, is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition. Some modern satirists include Joseph

Heller (*Catch 22*) and Kurt Vonnegut (*Cat’s Cradle, Player Piano*).

**semantics –** The branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words, their historical and psychological development, their

connotations, and their relation to one another.

**style –** The consideration of style has two purposes:

(1) An evaluation of the sum of the choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other

literary devices. Some authors’ styles are so idiosyncratic that we can quickly recognize works by the same author.

We can analyze and describe an author’s personal style and make judgments on how appropriate it is to the author’s

purpose. Styles can be called flowery, explicit, succinct, rambling, bombastic, commonplace, incisive, laconic, etc.

(2) Classification of authors to a group and comparison of an author to similar authors. By means of such classification

and comparison, we can see how an author’s style reflects and helps to define a historical period, such as the

Renaissance or the Victorian period, or a literary movement, such as the romantic, transcendental, or realist

movement.

**subject complement –** The word (with any accompanying phrases) or clause that follows a linking verb and complements, or

completes, the subject of the sentence by either (1) renaming it (the *predicate nominative*) or (2) describing it (the

*predicate adjective*). These are defined below:

(1) the *predicate nominative* – a noun, group of nouns, or noun clause that renames the subject. It, like the

predicate adjective, follows a linking verb and is located in the predicate of the sentence.

Example: Julia Roberts is a movie star.

*movie star =* predicate nominative, as it renames the subject, Julia Roberts

(2) the *predicate adjective --* an adjective, a group of adjectives, or adjective clause that follows a linking verb.

It is in the predicate of the sentence, and modifies, or describes, the subject.

Example: Warren remained optimistic.

*optimistic* = predicate adjective, as it modifies the subject, Warren

**subordinate clause –** Like all clauses, this word group contains both a subject and a verb (plus any accompanying phrases or

modifiers), but unlike the independent clause, the subordinate clause cannot stand alone; it does not express a complete

thought. Also called a *dependent* clause, the subordinate clause depends on a main clause (or *independent* clause) to

complete its meaning. Easily recognized key words and phrases usually begin these clauses. For example: *although,*

*because, unless, if, even though, since, as soon as, while, who, when, where, how* and *that*.

Example: Yellowstone is a national park in the West that is known for its geysers.

underlined phrase = subordinate clause

**syllogism –** From the Greek for “reckoning together,” a syllogism (or syllogistic reasoning or syllogistic logic) is a deductive

system of formal logic that presents two premises (the first one called “major” and the second called “minor”) that

inevitably lead to a sound conclusion. A frequently cited example proceeds as follows:

*major premise*: All men are mortal.

*minor premise*: Socrates is a man.

*conclusion*: Therefore, Socrates is a mortal.

A syllogism’s conclusion is valid only if each of the two premises is valid. Syllogisms may also present the specific idea first (“Socrates”) and the general second (“all men”).

Adapted from V. Stevenson, Patrick Henry High School, and Abrams’ *Glossary of Literary Terms*

**symbol/symbolism –** Generally, anything that represents itself and stands for something else. Usually a symbol is something

concrete -- such as an object, action, character, or scene – that represents something more abstract. However, symbols

and symbolism can be much more complex. One system classifies symbols into three categories:

(1) *natural symbols* are objects and occurrences from nature to symbolize ideas commonly associated with them (dawn

symbolizing hope or a new beginning, a rose symbolizing love, a tree symbolizing knowledge).

(2) *conventional symbols* are those that have been invested with meaning by a group (religious symbols such as a cross

or Star of David; national symbols, such as a flag or an eagle; or group symbols, such as a skull and crossbones for

pirates or the scale of justice for lawyers).

(3) *literary symbols* are sometimes also conventional in the sense that they are found in a variety of works and are more

generally recognized. However, a work’s symbols may be more complicated, as is the jungle in *Heart of Darkness*.

On the AP exam, try to determine what abstraction an object is a symbol for and to what extent it is successful in

representing that abstraction.

**synecdoche –** a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole or, occasionally, the whole is used to

represent a part. Examples: To refer to a boat as a “sail”; to refer to a car as “wheels”; to refer to the violins, violas, etc.

in an orchestra as “the strings.”

**synesthesia –** when one kind of sensory stimulus evokes the subjective experience of another. Ex: The sight of red ants makes

you itchy. In literature, *synesthesia* refers to the practice of associating two or more different senses in the same image.

Red Hot Chili Peppers’ song title,“Taste the Pain,” is an example.