

Frequently-Asked Questions

English 4 Synthesis Paper & Oral Exam

Joel Barlow High School PTSA, Jan. 12, 2012

WHO?

All students in English 4 (for January). AP English students complete spring semester.

WHAT?

- (1) A 5-10 page paper synthesizing texts seniors have read in English 4. That curriculum includes Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, Gardner's *Grendel*, essays on language, and many poems. Students have great choice about which texts they choose to synthesize, and how they do so. This paper is assessed by the student's own English 4 teacher, and counts as 50% of the final exam grade.
- (2) A 15-minute individual oral exam in which each student answers questions about his or her synthesis paper, discusses other texts from English 4, and works with a poem new to the student. This oral exam, guided by a rubric, is assessed by an English 4 teacher who was not the student's own teacher, and counts as the other 50% of the final exam grade.

WHEN?

- Students receive the entire packet describing the paper and the exam during the first week of school. Their parents receive a copy in the mail.
- During the semester, students submit annotations of the texts they are reading, and write several "mini-synthesis" papers of shorter length, but requiring similar competencies. The annotations become important for students in connecting texts as the semester proceeds.
- The paper itself is due, this year, on Thursday, January 12. The oral exams are scheduled for the last few days of the semester and throughout final exam week.

WHY?

- We have significant qualitative (and emerging quantitative) evidence that the competencies required for this project are stretching our students to challenging yet achievable standards that will serve them well beyond our school borders. They are analyzing, synthesizing, making important interpretations and connections all along the way.
- The oral exam assesses students' language skills in a truly authentic experience.

HOW?

Over the past seven years, we have worked hard on supporting students through this important process. If students have questions, the best resource for them is their own English 4 teacher.

FURTHER INFORMATION?

- You may access the complete English 4 packet through any of the English 4 teachers' eBoards.
- You may talk to any of us: Chris Angell, Jonathan Budd, Janice Garvey, or Alison Malayter.
- If you are interested in observing oral exams in January, just e-mail Jonathan!