LEVELS OF THOUGHT: WHAT CONSTITUTES AP LEVEL ANALYSIS

A common problem of students entering AP for the first time is the frustration at receiving lower grades without a clear understanding of the proverbial "what the teacher wants." Chances are, if you're here, you have become adept at deciphering what high school teachers want, but now you must learn what the college professor is going to want. Here is a list of levels to be striven for, from highest to lowest. They don't correspond exactly to letter grades, but they do represent behaviors and expectations for successful Advanced Placement English students.

LEVEL 6 - EVALUATION: The learner forms a judgment based on facts, examples and specific criteria. When we win a Pulitzer Prize for our thoughtful criticism of literature, then we are fully at this level. All other levels (see below) have been achieved and the learner has arrived at this highest level of critical thinking. None of us (instructors included) operates totally on this plain.

LEVEL 5 - SYNTHESIS: This is where AP students need to be working. This is where the great thesis statement comes from. It demands that we think about the literature in a NEW way, far more than pointing to the text. It requires combining ideas from many areas and time periods of your education, putting them all to use to analyze increasingly more sophisticated concepts in literature. Here the student anchors his/her thoughts in the text with evidence, but thinks beyond the scope of the individual piece. Some helpful verbs to describe what occurs in synthesis: **develop, construct, design, hypothesize, compose**.

LEVEL 4 - ANALYSIS: At this level, the learner is able to break down an idea into its principal parts OR shows similarities between things (main ideas, themes, characters). This is where topic sentences come from. The student can detect the relationships of the parts and the way they are organized. For example, looking for similarities and differences in the text (or between texts) and drawing perceptive conclusions. Some helpful verbs to describe what occurs in analysis: **examine, investigate, analyze, categorize, compare and contrast**

LEVEL 3 - APPLICATION: The learner has done something with what he/she has learned. The student uses the information in a new situation. Some helpful verbs to describe application: **apply, solve, make use of, practice**

LEVEL 2 - UNDERSTANDING: The learner changes the form of the previously learned information by translating it into his own words. The student grasps the meaning and intent of material, understanding, reordering of ideas, making estimates and prediction, grasping the implication of a concept. This involves pointing to the text for proof (absolutely necessary, but not enough in itself). This level is basic to understanding and must be fostered. We must grasp meaning before we can analyze. Useful verbs: **compare, relate, categorize, classify, reword, outline, summarize, select examples.**

LEVEL 1 - KNOWLEDGE: The learner recalls or recognizes information previously presented. You employ this level when you give direct quotations and references to the text in the body of your essay or presentation. Useful verbs: **list, recite, group, name, locate, copy, label, define.**