PERFECTION LEARNING WEBINAR · EDITED TRANSCRIPT

Opening Moves

The First Weeks of AP English Courses in Classrooms

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Facilitator: Dr. Brandon Abdon, Senior Author, AP® English Language & Composition, AP® English Literature and Composition
Guest panelists: Gina Kortuem (AP Literature) · Stephanie Kirk (AP Language)
Host: Ashley Rolf, Content Marketing Lead, Perfection Learning

> **About this edition.** This is a lightly edited version of the automated webinar transcript, prepared for reading rather than for verbatim citation. Filler words, false starts, and repeated phrases have been removed; sentences have been joined into paragraphs; section headings and timestamps have been added for navigation. Obvious speech-recognition errors in proper nouns and terminology have been corrected where the intended reference was clear (for example, *Frayer model*, *Lit and More*, *Niswonger Foundation*, *zeugma*). A few names remain uncertain and are marked *[sp?]*. Substance, meaning, and speaker attribution are unchanged. For exact wording, refer to the original recording.

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TONIGHT'S PANEL

Dr. Brandon Abdon

FACILITATOR

More than 15 years teaching AP English Language and Literature, college composition, literature, and teacher education courses in high schools and universities. Spent five years as Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for the AP English courses at the College Board, and has served as an AP Exam reader. Senior author of Perfection Learning's AP English Language and AP Literature and Composition course books by AMSCO.

Stephanie Kirk

GUEST PANELIST — AP LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

A graduate of Maryville College and WGU with more than 20 years in the classroom. She began in Charlotte, North Carolina, moved to Austin-East Magnet High School in Knoxville, Tennessee, and now teaches at Heritage High School in Maryville, Tennessee. Her teaching philosophy grew out of her work with TAP and NIET's System for Teacher and Student Advancement; she believes all students can learn, and that a teacher's role is to meet students where they are and get them where they want to be. She currently teaches English, Seminar, and AP Language and Composition, and sponsors student council. She is also lead AP Lang teacher for the Niswonger Foundation, an AP Lang reader, and an APSI consultant, and leads professional development on ed tech platforms.

Gina Kortuem

GUEST PANELIST — AP LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

A teacher, mother, and educational resource creator whose website, *Lit and More*, is a space for sharing ideas and new resources and building a community of creativity and growth. She has taught AP Literature, basic and honors grades 9–10, Shakespearean literature, world literature, British literature, journalism, and creative writing. She also coaches one-act theater and writes plays.

1. Welcome and Housekeeping

00:00 — 02:49

Ashley Rolf: Welcome, everyone. I'm Ashley Rolf, Content Marketing Lead for Perfection Learning. We're excited to have you join us for tonight's webinar, *Opening Moves: The First Weeks of AP English Courses in Classrooms*. It's my pleasure to introduce our facilitator for the evening, Dr. Brandon Abdon, along with our guests, Stephanie Kirk and Gina Kortuem.

Ashley Rolf: Before we begin, a few quick housekeeping items. Throughout the webinar, please direct any questions or comments for Brandon, Stephanie, and Gina to the chat at the bottom of your screen — we'll be monitoring throughout the presentation. Second, a recording of this webinar, the slide deck, and a quiz to earn a participation certificate will be sent tomorrow to the email you used to register. Thank you again for joining us. I'll pass it off to Brandon.

2. Opening Remarks

02:49 — 05:00

Brandon Abdon: Thank you so much, Ashley, and thank you to everyone else for being here. We had a huge registration group this time around, and I know a lot of people register because they'll get the recording and the materials — that's absolutely true, and not everybody is able to join us live. It's the beginning of school, it's a Wednesday night, and a lot of people have things going on.

Brandon Abdon: Stephanie, Gina — it's hard to believe some people have been in school for a month now. Susan Barber started the first of the month; I remember talking with her about that. And I was on the phone today with a friend who teaches in British Columbia, and they don't start back until next week. It's crazy to think about where we already are.

Brandon Abdon: I'm just blown away that both Gina and Stephanie agreed to be here. I know they don't want to hear me say that, but I'm really excited they're joining us so we can spend some time on this — and hear from some of you, too, because that's one of the things I most enjoy about these sessions: hearing from you teachers as participants, and about the things you're doing in your classrooms.

Brandon Abdon: At the very end we have a couple of shout-outs and some things to share about what I'm working on, what Gina's working on, and what Stephanie's working on. You'll get those in the links in the PowerPoint that comes by email a little later on.

Brandon Abdon: I'm going to hand it over to Gina first, but as she's talking, please use that chat — ask questions, make comments. That's why we're here. And if you've attended these webinars before, you know we try to find time for you to think and write, just like we would for our students. We'll do that in the middle: time to process, to share some of the things you do, and then a Q&A as well. Gina, over to you. Thanks for being here — and I love your library cardigan.

Gina Kortuem: Thank you. I've got an Ophelia shirt on and the library cardigan — it's all lit-themed today.

3. Gina Kortuem: Starting the Year in AP Literature

05:09 — 15:44

Gina Kortuem: Thank you for having me. That intro was perfectly done, and I didn't even write it, so thank you for saying all those nice things.

Gina Kortuem: This is my 21st year of teaching, and I've taught AP Lit all of those years. I tell people when I lead sessions like this that the skills I've gained are mostly the product of failure. I tried a lot of things. I went in pretty green at the beginning, so much of this was learned by doing it wrong the first time — and that's really okay. It's what we tell our

students, too: try things; if it doesn't work, what did we learn from it? So a lot of what I'm sharing is not what I started out doing, but after two decades in the classroom, these are my go-to strategies for the first few days and weeks.

Interpretation, not the one right answer

Gina Kortuem: One thing I see is that I get a lot of math and science students who take as many AP classes as possible — for the GPA boost, or because they're simply good students. Many of them are genuinely curious and may be wonderful readers, but our course is unusual in how much it emphasizes interpretation. When students come in looking for the one right answer, I have to work against that early, because our answer is often "yes, that's right, but that's also right." That can make them uncomfortable.

Gina Kortuem: So I try to spend those first few days — really the first week — emphasizing different interpretations. You can't just say, "this means this, because I think so, obviously." We want evidence to back it up. Last year I did something called the AP Lit Olympics, which included a whole lesson on *what does it mean, and how do you know?* In the past I've taught a lesson I called Literature as a Verb, based on something David Miller, the former Chief Reader for AP Lit, once said. It centered on three questions: what does it mean, how do you know, and why does it matter? We'd apply those questions to all kinds of literature. If a student could come up with an interpretation and get evidence behind it, that was a valid interpretation. And if my interpretation differs from yours but we can both support ours from the text, then both are valid.

Gina Kortuem: So the first few days are about cultivating creative perspectives and making students comfortable — getting to the point where I can say, "I've read this six times and never got that interpretation, and that's really creative." It's such a gorgeous course, because we get to help students form their own perspectives and then work on being persuasive enough to prove them.

Making room for independent reading

Gina Kortuem: I also try to work in a lot of my own favorite kinds of stories — excerpts from favorite prose passages and so on. Just today in my AP Lit class, we're on a modified block schedule, and today was our first block period, and we spent the entire time picking books for independent reading. I laid the room out in a circle and put little labels on…

Brandon Abdon: Wait, wait, wait — Gina. You may have just blown a bunch of people's minds. This is AP. How do you have time for independent reading?

Gina Kortuem: I would say — sorry, my son just walked in.

Brandon Abdon: We don't care, no big deal. And just to say, I love it, I think it's great — I'm just playing host here. But I get a lot of pushback from people who say they don't have time for that, so I'd love you to talk more about it.

Gina Kortuem: Sure, and thank you for asking. I want to model for my students that being a reader makes you a good reader — and being a reader makes you a good writer. If I model that I value their reading time, and I actually give them reading time, that time is usually better spent than another quiz or another essay.

Gina Kortuem: I also love hooking people up with their next favorite book. I love being the matchmaker. Even 30 minutes a week of independent reading gives me a chance to say, "Oh, you liked that? Let's find something else." Or, "You didn't like that? Good to know — put it back, you won't like that one either." That's what the book tasting was about: giving everyone a taste of all these different types of books and trying to match them not just with today's book, but with the kinds of books they'd want to read all year, because we want to keep reading. I'm going to keep giving them that time.

Gina Kortuem: I'm also honest with them about the trade. I tell them, "I'm sacrificing 30 to 40 minutes of instructional time to give you a chance to read. If we waste it — if we're going to sleep or work on other things on our computers — then I'm not going to do this, and you'll read on your own time." So far, that sacrifice has paid off every year. My students honor it, and they read. And it gives me a chance to share some of my favorites. I urged a girl to read *Rebecca* today, and I'm so excited to hear what she thinks. Every year, someone needs to read *Rebecca*.

The AP Lit Olympics: rigor without drudgery

Gina Kortuem: The last thing follows on what you said, Brandon. Sometimes if something is associated with AP, it can carry a taste of boring, or stale, or hard. We do want our classes to be rigorous, but they don't need to be hard for the sake of being hard, and they don't need to be hard just because they're AP. So I try to include elements of fun as much as possible in the first few days.

Gina Kortuem: This past week we did the AP Lit Olympics, which will be linked later and which anyone can replicate. It was five short, skill-based mini-lessons. In one, I gave students a prose excerpt with a sentence missing, and asked: what do you think that sentence *did*? Not "guess the missing sentence" — what was the *function* of that sentence? It's really hard to get students to think about the function of anything. They just say "simile." Well, what's the function of the simile? Asking it this way got answers like, "I feel like we need something here — I bet it establishes his character," or, "I think it's introducing the conflict."

Brandon Abdon: That's a great place to be at the beginning of the year.

Gina Kortuem: It was day two. It was so interesting. They immediately assumed it was "guess the sentence," and I said no — tell me what you think the sentence *does*. Then, after I showed them the actual sentence, I said, "Now take a chance to persuade me that your original answer was still right." So they'd say, "Well, it doesn't really talk about the character, but you know what? It could."

Brandon Abdon: I like the way you phrased it, too. You say what it *does* — not what it *means*. It's doing something; it's having an effect; it's functioning in some way. We get to what it means later, because first we get to talk about how it functions.

Gina Kortuem: Right. And because these were such short lessons, there's time to get into much more of that later. They were meant to be snippets that modeled the kind of thinking we'd do all year. I had five events, because it was the Olympics — the first four in teams and the last one individual. I made it so cute; I gave them little medals I cut out. It was the beginning of school, so you have time for that. But it was so engaging and so fun, and I loved seeing that kind of thinking. Even where they were weak, that was helpful for me: we need more practice with this, this was really hard for them, now I know we can circle back to that skill later.

Gina Kortuem: All of it was under the guise of fun. There was no homework for the first three days, which was controversial, but I got so much more out of those lessons — I got to see how their critical thinking worked, how they worked in small groups, where they were ready to go, and where we could use more work. So it's okay to take a break from the rigor sometimes and just play around with things, because I think it pays dividends later.

Brandon Abdon: What you're saying there is really important, and I know a lot of teachers are already thinking about it. It's been a huge shift since I first started consulting back in 2000-whenever. People used to think the rigor had to come from the amount of work. Not necessarily — and remember, the more work you give them, the more work you give yourself. It's the *type* of work we're doing. Even something as simple as, "I'm not going to let you just stop at identifying it; you're going to have to tell me what the function is, and explain it." Pushing that kind of thinking. So I'm glad you didn't give them homework.

Gina Kortuem: Me too. It saved me some time, also.

Brandon Abdon: A lot of people are reacting to your Olympics activity in the chat, and I already saw someone — Jeannie B. — talking about things she does. You'll get some time to write about it later, and maybe you'll share it with us. Anything else to add right now, Gina?

Gina Kortuem: I don't think so. I was getting overwhelmed by the chat, so I closed it. I'll go back and look and try to respond to some things.

Brandon Abdon: No worries — that's why I'm here.

4. From the Chat: Baseline Assessments and Cheating

15:45 — 20:30

Brandon Abdon: I see one question here that's timeless. Melanya asks: do you give a formal baseline, or just these "taster"/Olympic-type activities? And if a formal baseline, what does it look like and when do you do it? I think she may be referring to a pretest.

Gina Kortuem: That's a good question. I do with my honors sophomores. I haven't had the need to in AP Lit because of the structure at my school: my Lit kids have all come from AP Lang, and I'm so fortunate, because there's so little I have to do in terms of teaching a lot of writing — the Lang teacher has already taught it. So I don't have a formal assessment or intro activity just to see where they are. But if I didn't have that setup, I probably would collect a writing sample in the first couple of days. I think that would be a really good idea.

Brandon Abdon: Yes — just to collect a writing sample, to see what they're writing and what they're willing to do. It's not necessarily testing their analysis capabilities yet.

Gina Kortuem: Right. With the sophomores this year, I framed it as, "Hey, I'm just giving you a writing assignment." I expected them to replicate a lot of the analytical writing they're supposed to do in ninth grade. Some of them didn't. Then the next day we did what I call an *essay autopsy*: we went through the expectations for analytical writing, and they went back and critiqued their own work — "this thesis is really bad," or "I didn't have any evidence." I didn't grade the first piece until I had also graded the autopsy, and I barely had to give any feedback, because most of them had already seen their own errors before I needed to point them out. And if a student wrote "my thesis was awesome" and I didn't think it was, now we have something to talk about — we can talk about how to improve it. That was another way to save time: they provided most of the feedback for me.

Brandon Abdon: There's another comment here from Stuart about the multiple-choice quizzes in AP Classroom: how do you mitigate cheating? You can't. If it's on the internet — even if it's in AP Classroom — it's out there. So what I coach a lot of teachers to do is have an honest conversation with the kids: we're doing this so I can see where you are and teach you better. If you cheat, you're hurting yourself. And you really are. There's no way around it. Gina, Stephanie, do you want to chime in?

Gina Kortuem: The personal progress checks were designed not to be scored — or to be completion scores — for the longest time, and I think that reiterates the point. I do them all in class. Same message: this isn't meant to penalize you. I haven't decided yet, but I may keep them as completion scores, because I'd rather have students go through that hard work and scrutiny in class than stress about a score at the end of it.

Brandon Abdon: That's one of the reasons the personal progress checks were built that way. But the quizzes — even the quizzes — can be found. If you create quizzes, those questions are in AP Classroom, somebody somewhere has assigned them, kids have gone home and put them into a chat, and they will find the questions. So do them in your classroom. Stephanie, anything to add, or just ditto?

Stephanie Kirk: It's out there. I actually use the lockdown browser that's installed with AP Classroom, and that has helped a lot. But I have the honest conversation, too — the elephant in the room. You can cheat if you want to, because let's be real: you could use a different desktop, or use your phone in your lap and I don't notice. So I think the honest conversation up front is the main thing.

Stephanie Kirk: I noticed the comment mentioned length of time, and looking at time spent can help. What you do with the data supports it, too. For my class, it's not really the progress check itself — it's the data that comes from it, and then what we do for reteaching, learning, and growth. Once students see that it's truly about growth and mastering skills, they're more willing to take that risk.

Brandon Abdon: And showing that time — not the student names, just the time — and saying, "Look, there are 30 of you in here, and six of you took less than a minute on this." You had to have cheated. You don't have to cheat; that's not the point. You're just hurting yourself and hurting everybody else in the class. They think they're getting away with something, they think they're cool, and then they realize you're saying, "I'm not going to chase you down. I've got better things to do."

Brandon Abdon: Gina, you mentioned your essay autopsy. You're going to have to share that now — people are clamoring for it.

Gina Kortuem: It's on the to-do list for this weekend. Every week I try to take something and think, "Oh, that was kind of good, I should share that," and then over the weekend I put it on the blog on my website. It should come out Sunday or Monday.

Brandon Abdon: Great. And everybody, we have links in the slideshow that will take you straight to Gina's website, *Lit and More*. It's fantastic. My colleague at Perfection Learning just dropped it into the chat as well.

Brandon Abdon: I see a lot of other things popping in here — people from all over the country and all over the world have joined us. I think I saw some people joining from Central America. Welcome, everybody, I appreciate you.

5. Stephanie Kirk: Opening Moves in AP Language

21:20 — 29:48

Brandon Abdon: Stephanie, I'm going to hand it over to you now. And again — we did not coordinate these slides. But everything Gina said and everything Stephanie is about to say are things I'd be saying too, so I'm glad. I especially like

number two here: model, don't just teach, these moves. Go for it, Stephanie.

Stephanie Kirk: Thanks for having me as well. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and talk about AP Lang. I think it's one of the most important courses we offer, and like Gina said, it segues right in — whether you do Lang and then Lit, or Lit and then Lang, they align.

Moving beyond backward design

Stephanie Kirk: We've been in school since the end of July, so I'm one of those people who has been at it a while. As I get started, I always think about moving *beyond* backward design. Backward design was the big thing when I was in school forever ago. But one of the basic principles I learned from the TAP program is that I have to do the assignment first.

Stephanie Kirk: We know what the AP Exam is going to look like and what kinds of texts will be on it. I have that general outline; my CED — the Course and Exam Description — tells me all of that, including the percentage for each strand. But it needs to go deeper. I need to sit on the other side. I need to sit where my students are seated.

Stephanie Kirk: So every year, the first thing I do is think about the exam, yes, but I also think about my course evaluations from the previous year's students. I go back to the Chief Reader reports and look at what students have done well. I reflect on my own time at the reading and the discussions I had there. And I really use my instructional skill report: I go back to my weekly agendas, look through everything we did, and ask where the data is. I do use AP Classroom — Classroom is my textbook — so I compare my AP Classroom data with the mock exams. I joined Brandon with the mock exams for AdvanceKentucky. I put all of those pieces together.

Stephanie Kirk: Then I go back to the AP Classroom videos, and I start right there by watching them again. And here's what I've seen this year: you should all watch these videos again. A lot of them were updated last year, so watch them. If you have an assignment you've historically paired with those videos, double-check it before you put it out for your kids.

Stephanie Kirk: That's what I use as the backward design. So when I say, "We're going to look at this text" — I always use Patrick Henry, that's always one of our first, and I'm paired with APUSH, which is a huge plus — Patrick Henry is one of the first daily videos, so we can look at it with the students. Then I go through and do the assignment myself. That helps me in so many ways. It helps me teach in a way that addresses the misconceptions while I'm building or revising the lesson. Because I'm sure you've all had the same experience: I might teach the same text, but I'm not teaching it the same way this time as last time, because I've learned and grown and I see it differently. That intentionality of skill building really matters.

Modeling moves that create transfer

Stephanie Kirk: That pushes me right into number two, which is very intentional: teaching the moves that create transfer opportunities. I'm teaching for transfer. I always tell my students, "We are going *through* the test. I'm not teaching you *to* the test, I'm teaching you *through* it."

Stephanie Kirk: That's why, when we look at samples from AP Classroom or AP Central — those three most recent sets — I remind them those were written under duress. Then let's talk about real-world writing. A student has put the best of their effort into 40 minutes; how do we revise that, revamp it, and show the writing process as it works in the real world? Modeling those moves really helps students transfer. This isn't just about an assignment.

Stephanie Kirk: So I look at guided questions, and at process versus product. We might look at sample essays and focus on something like sophistication — we'll color-code the sample essays for sophistication, compare the way the point is earned, and then color-code our own. But what I really value here is the freedom to focus on paragraph-level writing first. Units 1, 2, and 3 all specify the paragraph level, which lets me really focus on claims and evidence, and on the ideas in the commentary. We can model those processes and look not just at critical thinking but at problem solving, in a way students can apply beyond my classroom.

Stephanie Kirk: Once I started really modeling it — modeling process as well as product — I noticed students applying the process to the songs they listen to, the conversations they have with their friends and their moms, the TV shows they watch. And we talk about all of that.

Fostering curiosity — and getting out of the way

Stephanie Kirk: That pushes me into the third one: I need to foster intellectual curiosity. But I don't want students to be merely engaged. Engagement is great — I really do want you engaged in what we're doing — but I want you to have the *agency* to take control. And that means sometimes I have to shut up and get out of the way.

Stephanie Kirk: A big example of this is anytime there's a major event. The three of us were talking about this before we started: being in East Tennessee, Dolly is our patron saint — that's what we call her. We were working on Patrick Henry when the news of her family's statement about her passing came out. The students were talking about it and were very curious, and they wanted to watch it.

Stephanie Kirk: So you know what I did? I put Patrick Henry aside. We had just made these beautiful slides about strategies, rhetorical devices, and choices — what is he doing, why is he doing it, how is it creating audience movement? Those exact same slides moved right over. We used the video, we analyzed it, we talked about it, and the students got to see the rhetoric. One of my kids said, "I really think it's cool that the old dead guy stuff is still happening today." Nobody had really talked about that with them; nobody had really thought about it. And I thought, this is a win. We were able to talk about it through the lens of a video that was deeply personal to many people in the room — but it was *getting out of the way* that allowed that to happen.

Stephanie Kirk: You can do that with anything. Students were talking about Jimathy *[sp?]*, and a friend of mine pointed out the opportunity to talk about the rhetoric around it: how do we as a society talk about disability? So the next time a kid mentioned it in class, what do you think we did? We talked about the way society addresses these things.

Stephanie Kirk: Sometimes it's about recognizing the learning moment. You've fostered this intellectual curiosity, students are starting to ask questions — questions I hadn't even thought of — and they're taking that agency. My job is to get out of the way. I might have started with my scaffold way back when I was doing backward design, but even scaffolds need an exit strategy.

6. Modeling How to Think

29:48 — 31:33

Brandon Abdon: A lot of people really appreciated the Dolly reference, and we'll come back to that in a moment — being from Eastern Kentucky, I'm right there with you. But the idea of modeling rather than just teaching, and of fostering curiosity and then getting out of the way, is central.

Brandon Abdon: When I'm working with what I call my baby teachers — pre-service teachers, the student-teaching population — one of the things I try to get across is that they are not participants in the conversation. I think they want to feel like they're having these conversations with the kids, and they don't see themselves as an authority figure with a certain kind of ethos. The moment they start sharing their own views, they direct kids in certain ways. So I say: no, you're a mediator and a moderator. You're modeling how to think, because they don't know how to think yet. You're an expert — not necessarily in a particular author or genre, but in teaching, and in getting people to think about things a certain way and then write about them. So I'm glad to see all of that playing out here.

7. Reintroducing the Basics of Writing

31:33 — 36:26

Brandon Abdon: A question came up a moment ago relating to writing, and I know both of you can address it. Give me a moment to find it.

Stephanie Kirk: We're both relying on you, because Gina and I both closed the chat.

Gina Kortuem: I reopened it, but I can't find it either.

Brandon Abdon: No worries, there's a lot going on. Here it is. Katie L. asks: how do you introduce or review the basics of writing in these first few weeks? She goes on to say she knows her kids will need a refresher on the claim-evidence-commentary structure, and practice applying it to fiction. Katie L. is teaching Literature, but this would be useful from both of you, because of how kids come to us. Either they're confident, and that's why they're taking AP — "oh, I can do this" — or somebody encouraged them to take it and they're scared, and they don't know what they don't know, or what they can do. Stephanie, I'll start with you.

Stephanie Kirk: The first thing we do is have students write — I have them do a brain dump. We talk about AP Lang as the transition from tenth grade through eleventh and twelfth and into college freshman-level writing. So I start students with the physical arrangement of an outline. They're used to saying "thesis statement," so we talk about the thesis statement, and then I say, "Here in AP Lang world, we're going to call this your *primary claim*." Then I ask, "So what do we do to claims?" And they'll tell me: evidence. So we physically draw out the parts of argumentation. I'm not going to blow their

minds and call it Aristotelian argument yet.

Brandon Abdon: Thank you. You don't hand out excerpts from the *Poetics* the first week?

Stephanie Kirk: Never, actually. Not at all. But that's the step we take, because they're used to saying things like "topic sentence." I say, "Okay, cool — let's have a topic sentence, let's have a transition, maybe an ideas-based transition in front of that topic sentence, and let's call this your *sub-claim*. Now what do we do?" I just take what they already know and change the language. I want to boost their confidence while I'm reviewing writing structures that are already in place. And by focusing on the paragraph, it really helps students move through the what, the why, and the how as they put a paragraph together. Besides, I don't know about you, but I can grade 100 paragraphs so much faster than I can grade 100 essays. That's what I can really look at closely.

Brandon Abdon: Gina?

Gina Kortuem: Something that's really helped in my school — I'm in a very small school — is that we've all tried to use the same phrases for writing, from ninth grade and even lower on through twelfth. All of us have APE in our classrooms: Assert, Prove, Explain. And we also all use those three questions I mentioned: what does it mean, how do you know, and why does it matter?

Gina Kortuem: "Why does it matter" is usually the hardest for kids. And going from Lang to Lit, or Lit to Lang, it's still the same question — we're just applying it differently. If it's a speech: why does it matter? Well, there are people listening to this speech because they want to know the direction of their country; or this is effective because it was a major moment for our culture. When it's fiction, just because it's fiction doesn't mean it doesn't still matter. So then we get to have a really good conversation about the human condition.

Gina Kortuem: I love starting with a really old text. The first poem we did was "This Is Just to Say." They asked, "Why did you pick this?" And I said, "Well, what's the mood?" And they said, "It feels like he's sorry, but not sorry." And I asked, "Is that ever relatable? Have you ever gotten in trouble for stealing something from your sister and said, 'Oh yeah, sorry — but I look so cute in it'?" And they said yes. So we can talk about how relatable feelings persist. It can be fun or it can be serious, but there are still relatable moments. Or: "Oh, this poem's about loneliness. Do you think people are still lonely?" Obviously. So "why does it matter" is still very important; we just relate it to the human condition instead of necessarily to a historical moment. Having that common language and that repeated question that applies across levels has helped them make the switch from Lang to Lit really easily.

8. Shared Language and Color-Coded Paragraphs

36:26 — 40:30

Brandon Abdon: I love that you're thinking about unified language across grades, because one of the hardest things for kids to do — and I do a lot of work with kids on executive functioning — is to shift. Not only from teacher to teacher — you call it a claim, the social studies teacher calls it a thesis, another teacher calls it a position — but also from year to year. Last year's English teacher called it this; this year's English teacher calls it that. We've all taught those lessons where we know they learned it last year, and then we use the other word and they say, "Oh yeah, we learned that." Well, it's the same thing. So I love that vertical alignment, Gina, and getting that language in place.

Brandon Abdon: The other thing you both talked about was the what, how, and why. I was coaching a teacher on this last week: we were getting into the rhetorical situation, and getting students — not necessarily writing paragraphs yet — to think about the appeals, and about what the person does, how that works, and why it matters. Exactly what you were both talking about. I'll put this as a link in the document as well.

Brandon Abdon: I'm not a big fan of showing students the very high-performing essays from the exam, because it can be scary. What I do encourage is taking a paragraph you've written in class, or one you're modeling as Stephanie described, or one that somebody in the class did really well with, and breaking it down: okay, here's the what, here's the how, here's the why. This one is from the 2025 Lang set — if you're a Lang teacher, it was the "being present in the moment" question — and this was a 1–4–1 sample. You see this in these essays: this is what kids have done because it's what teachers have taught. The teacher may not have taught "what, how, why" by name, but they've taught the idea of it, because the kids are doing it. I'll make sure to share all of this, linked in the document.

Stephanie Kirk: Brandon, I'm going to add to that. You're modeling it for students there, but think about how it empowers them when they apply that process themselves. Applying it to your own work is a little bit scary, so bring in that same process: model it with the sample that's been created, then have students apply it with their accountability buddy in peer

editing. That empowers them to apply it on their own. Now they're taking ownership of it — not just in their own writing at home, but live, when you're doing timed essays as you get closer to the exam. There's something beautiful about having students annotate and color-code their own writing exactly the way you just showed.

Brandon Abdon: Right — and you mentioned the accountability buddy. There's also having the pair, or the small group, write their own paragraph together. You've written one as a whole group; now the small group writes one and highlights the parts. Then, for a third paragraph, you write it individually, and you've got those two other models to work from.

Gina Kortuem: I want to echo that, because it's so brilliant. We do a lot of highlighting too. I do a rehash every time we do an on-demand essay: after I've scored it, I go through what we did well and what we could work on. Early in the year, one of the things we do is I hand back their papers — usually I print them — and we use three colors of highlighters. And they'll say, "Oh, I cooked on this," and then they'll realize, "I don't have any quotes. I don't have any quotes in my second paragraph." If they can make that realization before I have to point it out, again, it eliminates my feedback. And once they realize it themselves, they say, "That'll never happen again. I'm not doing that again." So it's really beneficial across the spectrum, whenever and however you do it.

9. Participant Sharing Break

40:30 — 45:22

Brandon Abdon: I think it's important that everybody remembers what we're talking about here works in both classes. Not just for analysis, but for argument development if you're teaching Lang, and especially for synthesis — not just the what, how, and why that support the argument, but making certain students are integrating their sources. That's when audience and readers really matter, especially if you've got a small group or accountability buddies, which I'm going to dream about tonight, Stephanie. It's a new term for me.

Brandon Abdon: Now, this part is for those of you attending. I usually take about three minutes for this; I'll shorten it to two so we have enough time. Pick one of these questions — you can respond to more than one if you want — and put it in the chat. We'd like to hear from some of you, and get a chance to hear you share your great ideas, because we know you're trying things with your kids. You've heard from other great colleagues who tried things too, and you decided you'd try it, and maybe this is the first year you tried it and it bombed. Well, that's okay. You're going to screw it up the first time.

Brandon Abdon: One of my bosses years ago, whom I really trusted, told us that when we pitched him something. He said, "I think this sounds great, but just know you're going to mess it up the first time." It was hard to hear, but it was also relieving, because it meant perfection wasn't expected. So please feel like this is a safe space to share that sort of thing too.

Brandon Abdon: The three of us will be quiet for about a minute or two while you put that in the chat. And I'm going to ask you: don't hit enter until time is up. If everybody hits enter at different times, others who want to read along can't keep up. Let's wait until everybody's done and the timer's out, and then we'll all hit enter. Here we go.

[A timer plays over shared audio.]

Brandon Abdon: Creepy bells at the end — we go from upbeat elevator music to *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. All right, go ahead and hit enter, everybody, and take some time to look back through. Gina and Stephanie, if you see anything you'd like to hear somebody talk more about, let me know and Ashley will invite them to come off mute.

10. Making Vocabulary Stick

45:22 — 49:47

Gina Kortuem: Can I jump on one? There's one that's mostly a question I have myself, so if anyone has good suggestions I'd love to hear them. It was about how to make vocabulary engaging, which I find so hard across the board.

Gina Kortuem: Two things I've seen work — though I should do them more. One is drawing a picture of the concept of the word. I remember in middle school we were learning Spanish words, and the word for chair is *silla*, and I drew a picture of someone falling out of their chair and someone else saying "silla." I've never forgotten it, because I had to draw that picture. So if you have hard-to-memorize concepts, setting them to an image can help. The other is charades: I've played charades with a series of words, where students act out the word as a review. Those are maybe not groundbreaking, but I'm also looking for strategies here.

Brandon Abdon: I'll echo Gina, and I know it's old school, but old school things work: the Frayer model. If you're not

familiar with it, I'll pop one up on the screen in a second, and I think when you see it you'll say, "Oh, we know that." If we're teaching certain vocabulary terminology as *concepts*, the Frayer model is a great way to do it. Now, we don't have time to fill one out for every word people don't know.

Brandon Abdon: So when I'm thinking about language kids encounter in a text, I spend a lot of time on something else — even with my college students. One of the first things we did last week when classes started: I gave them a passage, but I had blacked out words that a lot of people don't know. And we had a conversation about the text *without* those words. The kids were on it. They could see that they don't have to read every single word, or freak out when they see a word they don't know. That may sound anti-English-teacher, but it's actually a very strong literacy tool for helping kids become more comfortable as readers. Stephanie, any thoughts?

Stephanie Kirk: I was going through the comments about vocabulary. On the one about giving students lists of terms — I think you have to start with some grace there. Everybody asks us what terms we use with our kids, and I always fall back on the ones they've encountered in the past.

Stephanie Kirk: The Frayer model is a good one — I hadn't thought about it in a while, to be honest. For vocabulary, we actually build it in with our SAT and ACT work, so we have word lists, and we focus on word parts and etymology. I don't care that you know it's Latin; I care that you know what *dicere* means, so you can recognize "dic" in different words. That's how we talk about it.

Stephanie Kirk: I noticed someone mentioned the Play-Doh activity. That's a good one too — you can use Play-Doh in your classroom for all sorts of things, and I think that's another good way to establish vocabulary.

Stephanie Kirk: And Brandon, there's an article — I don't remember exactly how to attribute it, and I should have Googled it just now — about a paragraph that helps students realize they have invisible bias. It was a big deal; I can't remember which major academic article. But it was similar to what you described: give students a paragraph with words blanked out. It's a Mad Libs-type activity where students put a word in the blank and then talk about the power of the words — what's the difference between you using this word and you using that one? That fill-in-the-blank activity can help too. And then, of course, there's the vocabulary work where students look at the ladder of abstraction — the paint chips with the colors. That type of activity can help as well.

Brandon Abdon: Thank you for that. What I want to point out is what everybody has been talking around: there are two things going on with vocabulary. One is kids knowing the words they read, and the only way to get that is to read more. You can do SAT and ACT study, but you never know for sure — so just go back to freshman year and take four years of Latin and Greek and you'll be fine. No, that's not feasible.

Brandon Abdon: The second is concept understanding: the key words and terminology from the course. And still, to this day, if you Google "what should I teach in AP Language," you get these long lists of terms. Everyone: if it's not in the Course and Exam Description, they don't have to know it. You can still teach it — but remember, terms like *zeugma* and *synecdoche* and *anaphora* aren't in there. You can still do them if you want. You don't have to.

11. Two Participant Activities

49:47 — 57:00

Celebrity apologies — Melanya M.

Brandon Abdon: Ashley, can we take Melanya M.? And Melanya, I probably butchered your name. If you could come off mute and talk a little about what you do with apologies, I think this is really interesting.

Melanya M.: This is probably a hybrid of things from Garden of English and things I've seen in the Facebook group. If you search the AP Lang Facebook group, there are people who have compiled massive lists of celebrity apologies for kids to unpack and analyze. But I find my students are particularly familiar with Travis Scott's Astroworld incident, and they've seen his very bad online apology, so they get a real kick out of evaluating what he did wrong in terms of assessing and responding to his rhetorical situation. Then I have them rewrite his apology and justify their choices.

Brandon Abdon: What an interesting way to get kids thinking. I love the apologies idea — it's such a great way to get kids to think about rhetorical situation without pushing them to think about rhetorical situation, because they're thinking about who the speaker is, what they've done, and what the context is for the thing that has happened. Thank you, Melanya, I appreciate you.

Brandon Abdon: Gina, Stephanie, anybody else you'd like to bring off mute? We don't have a ton of time left, and there's a lot to sort through — some really cool ideas.

The zombie apocalypse scenario — Kimberly D.

Gina Kortuem: I want to hear about this zombie apocalypse thing, because it sounds amazing. It's from Kimberly D.

Brandon Abdon: Ashley, can we take Kimberly off mute? I saw that in passing too and then lost it.

Gina Kortuem: It makes me think — I'm teaching *Lord of the Flies* for the first time this year, and I've heard about similar activities for that.

Brandon Abdon: Kimberly, go ahead, tell us about it.

Kimberly D.: It's a pre-made activity — I don't even remember where I got it years ago. Basically, it's the end of the world. World leaders could see that zombies were going to take over, so they picked 100 random three- and four-year-olds and put them in a cryogenic state in a bomb shelter. There are enough supplies — air, food, water — for seven adults to stay there with those children. But only enough for seven.

Kimberly D.: There's a list of 12 adults who have made it to the bomb shelter, but only seven can stay, because the seven who were originally chosen all died suddenly in a plane wreck. Every individual on the list of 12 has a positive attribute — they're a chemical engineer, or a teacher, or a pastor, or they were in the military, something positive. But every one of them also has a negative: a recovering alcoholic, hemophilia, you name it.

Kimberly D.: So students read through the scenario and individually choose which seven adults they would keep to provide for these children once the zombies are dead and they're raising the next generation. But that also means there are five they are basically sending out of the shelter.

Kimberly D.: The fun part is that they really have to think it through, because everyone has a positive attribute — but everyone also has baggage. Some of them are married, and you want to keep one of the spouses, but does that mean you keep the second when the second might not be the healthiest person to raise the next generation?

Kimberly D.: So it really gets students to see where they are automatically biased, and to look for bias in the document. And it gets at what rhetoric is. Rhetoric is about questioning — we've done that since the first day of school. Rhetoric means to question everything: not just "the author uses this," or "the author used the appeal of ethos or pathos," but *why*.

Kimberly D.: They have to debate within a group about who to keep, and finally compromise. But they have to agree on their *why*. It's a joke now in our classroom, because Amy was not a good person — but there was one group who said, "We have to keep Amy." In fact, we got a brand-new student on Monday, and I had our students introduce themselves, and one of them said, "And I am still an Amy fan, no matter what the rest of the class said, because I really felt like she could educate the next society."

Kimberly D.: So it's a fun activity, and it's a great way to make them look for bias while also explaining their why and working with other students. And it fits that transition period when you're still waiting for schedules to be finalized and you don't yet know for sure who you've got for the rest of the year.

Brandon Abdon: So you don't lose a lot if kids miss it, and they're not losing a lot either — but it still helps create the atmosphere for the class. Do you get kids saying, "Oh, that is such an Amy thing to say," or "You need to quit acting like Brandon"? I could see that.

Kimberly D.: It carries all year long. They'll continue to refer to Bobette and Amy all year.

12. Brandon's Framework: Access, Rigor, and Classroom Culture

57:00 — 1:01:22

Brandon Abdon: I remember doing something like that in my first semester of college, some years ago, and it was all about argument and developing our claims. I can see where that could be really valuable. And it goes along with some of what I have here — which I won't go too far into, because what Gina and Stephanie have said overlaps a lot of it.

Start with access

Brandon Abdon: When I say start with access, I mean: what can we do to show all kids a couple of things? First, there's the

kid who is in the class because a counselor pushed them, or their parents made them, or last year's teacher encouraged them — but they're scared and don't think they belong. How are you going to show them that they do?

Brandon Abdon: Second, there are the kids who want to overthink it — the ones who think, "This is AP English, so I have to write way up here and use words I don't know." The *plethora* kids, I like to call them: the kids who try to sound smart when they write. I want to show them they don't have to be at that level all the time. So I like to use texts that seem almost too easy. Somebody mentioned car commercials in the chat — I think that's great. I used to use infomercials. My kids used to be intimately familiar with the famous infomercials from the late '90s and early 2000s, like the Slap Chop. We'd introduce those kinds of things so students would say, "Oh, I can do this, I do get it," before we start transferring, as Stephanie said.

Make the diagnosis feel like learning, not testing

Brandon Abdon: I talk about finding out what students can do, but making the diagnosis feel like learning, not testing. So put text in front of them and see what they can do. I use a phrase a lot: *notice and wonder*. What do you notice?

Brandon Abdon: That's not what I was taught. When I went to my first APSI, they said, "Read this and find the metaphors. Now read it again and find all the significant diction." Well, what do you mean, find the significant diction? Instead: notice and wonder. And this works for Lang or Lit, either one. What stands out to you? A student will say, "I don't know what you mean." Just — you're reading this. What's the most significant word on the page? What's the most significant image on the page? Because they bring something to it, and kids will surprise you with what they can do. It also helps me see what kids are willing to do and able to do. Which is why I go back to what Gina said: what does this *do*, not what does this *mean*. I appreciate that distinction a lot.

Build the course around thinking, not around the exam

Brandon Abdon: Finally, build the course around thinking, not around the exam. Stephanie got right at that: we're not teaching to the test, we're teaching through it. I put that in the chat — I love that, Stephanie, thank you. If you do what you're supposed to do from August through May, or September through May, whatever it is, then that one day in May is going to be fine.

Brandon Abdon: I still encounter teachers who do a free response every Friday. That might be helpful, I don't know, but I don't know that you need to do that. You can email me if you want and we can talk more about it.

Brandon Abdon: And to Kimberly's point: that activity gets them into arguing, but it also builds the classroom culture before you need it. Kids thrive on routine, we thrive on routine — even in an AP class. I think it's a wrong assumption that because these kids are in an upper-level class, one that's supposed to be college-level, they know how to organize and structure everything. I don't think that's the case. I *know* that's not the case, at least not all the time. So please feel free to reach out to me with any questions about that. I'll also add a link to that document I showed earlier.

13. Resources, Shout-Outs, and Closing

1:01:22 — end

Brandon Abdon: We'll go just a couple of minutes past. Stephanie, tell us quickly what you've got. Oh my gosh, I just noticed the space cats.

Stephanie Kirk: We made that on Canva — that's all Canva right there. So on the left, I've got some sessions. I'm doing AP and Practice with the College Board, I'm doing Seminar, ELA, and Lang as well, so those are set up so you can do all five of them, à la carte, whatever you choose. That QR code takes you to the College Board where you can see all of the offerings available to you.

Stephanie Kirk: And on the right-hand side is AdvanceKentucky. I love AdvanceKentucky. I think they have a great program.

Brandon Abdon: She's not just saying that because I'm from Kentucky — it's a program that's been around for a while.

Stephanie Kirk: It is, and I absolutely love the opportunity to do a lot with them and to bring my class to AdvanceKentucky. This year I'm going to be doing the AP Lang Master Series with Erika Johnson, and there are some spaces still open if you're interested. Our focus this year is concurrent credit. If you're like me — you're the AP teacher, trying to figure out how to work with dual enrollment as schools pull these pieces together — that's what we're looking at this year: AP Lang and concurrent credit.

Brandon Abdon: Thank you for that, Stephanie. Gina, go for it.

Gina Kortuem: I'm not an AP consultant yet, but the application is pending, so hopefully that's coming soon.

Brandon Abdon: Stephanie knows some people, so maybe.

Gina Kortuem: Susan told me she's going to hook me up, so hopefully I'm made in the shade — but we'll see. While we're waiting for that to process, you can check out my website. I post blog posts weekly, definitely at the beginning of the year; as theater starts to get crazy it's sometimes a couple of times a month. I try to share out as many ideas as I can. Sometimes they're teaching strategies, sometimes reading lists. More than half of the posts are geared toward teaching AP Lit, but I also teach five preps a year, so I have a variety of other classes. Small school, lots of preps. Small classes, though — I only have eight in my AP Lit class.

Brandon Abdon: You can't say that too loudly. People get angry.

Gina Kortuem: I know. It's a dream. It's a dream to have. I can try anything I want with these guys.

Brandon Abdon: You just lost your ethos with half the audience.

Gina Kortuem: I'm sorry — but five preps! That's the balance. So visit the website, and hopefully you'll find something helpful or inspiring there.

Brandon Abdon: Gina and I have talked about this — I'm not a huge fan of Teachers Pay Teachers in general, but Gina does some great stuff there, so I'm going to plug her. Check that out.

Brandon Abdon: I also wanted to say: please share this if you'd like to. You can copy the link address and donate a dollar to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. If you're not familiar with the Imagination Library, you should look into it — there's a wonderful story behind it. It guarantees one book a month for any child, every month of their life, until they turn five. It's such a great thing to do, so please feel free to share it and check it out.

Brandon Abdon: I have some blogs you can access on Perfection Learning's website related to the beginning of the year — here's one, "So You're Teaching AP English Next Year," and another on what AP English teachers must know about their students on day one, plus some others. We also have guest posts, from a couple of people who are here tonight as attendees, sharing their reflections on the AP Language and AP Literature readings. You can go check those out, and watch social media — I'll be reposting them soon.

Brandon Abdon: This is the cover of the new book we have coming out very soon: *Foundations of Advanced Composition*. It's really targeted at freshmen and sophomores, built around AP, SAT, and ACT, with specific lessons. If you're interested, you can click here for more information. We're not doing pre-orders yet, but we're close — so close that I have the entire manuscript on my computer and need to finish reviewing it by the end of this week. We'll get there.

Brandon Abdon: And Perfection Learning sponsors this and takes care of organizing everything, so please check out the English work we have going on for AP Lang and AP Lit — and they do other things as well.

> *Similar to what Gina said earlier, I always like to remind all the teachers I work with: we are risk takers and mistake makers. So take a chance. You're probably going to screw it up the first time, and that's all right. That's why you apologize to first period the next day — because you figured it out by the end of the day. So let them know.*

Brandon Abdon: Here's how you can reach out to us; I've added Stephanie's email as well. Please feel free to reach out, everybody. Thank you so much. I'll stick around if there are a couple more questions. I won't ask Stephanie or Gina to stay, because it's after seven — but you're welcome to, ladies. Thank you all so much. I'm going to hand it over to Ashley to wrap us up.

Ashley Rolf: Thank you so much, Brandon, Stephanie, and Gina, for your time and insights this evening. I think a lot of our guests are coming away with a lot of great ideas. As a reminder, this recording, the slide deck, and a quiz will be emailed to you tomorrow, along with a survey — so please take the survey, let us know how we did, and let us know any ideas you have for future webinar topics. That's it from me. Thank you for joining us, and have a great week.

Brandon Abdon: Thank you, Ashley.

Appendix: Ideas, Activities, and Resources Mentioned

Compiled from the discussion for quick reference. Descriptions are summarized from what speakers said in the session.

Activities and routines

AP Lit Olympics. Five short, skill-based mini-lessons run as Olympic "events" in the first days of school — four in teams, one individual, with paper medals. Low-stakes, no homework, but reveals critical thinking, group dynamics, and skill gaps. *Gina Kortuem*

The missing sentence. Give students a prose excerpt with one sentence removed and ask what that sentence *did* — its function — rather than asking them to guess its wording. Then reveal it and invite students to argue that their original answer still holds. *Gina Kortuem*

Book tasting. Arrange labeled book stations around the room and let students sample widely to choose independent reading for the whole year, not just the next book. *Gina Kortuem*

Essay autopsy. Students write a piece cold; the next day the class reviews the expectations for analytical writing and students critique their own drafts against them. Grade the draft and the autopsy together — students surface most of their own errors, which cuts teacher feedback time. *Gina Kortuem*

Three-color highlighting. Return printed on-demand essays and have students highlight components in three colors so they discover gaps themselves ("I don't have any quotes in my second paragraph"). Extend it by color-coding released samples for a specific point, such as sophistication. *Gina Kortuem and Stephanie Kirk*

Gradual-release paragraph writing. Write one paragraph as a whole class, one in small groups or with an "accountability buddy," and one individually — highlighting the parts each time, so students have two models before writing alone. *Brandon Abdon and Stephanie Kirk*

Blacked-out vocabulary passage. Hand out a passage with difficult words removed and discuss the text without them, so students learn they don't have to know or panic about every word. *Brandon Abdon*

Frayer model. An "old school" but effective graphic organizer for teaching course terminology as concepts rather than definitions to memorize. *Brandon Abdon*

Draw the word / vocabulary charades. Have students sketch the concept behind a word, or act words out in a charades-style review. *Gina Kortuem*

Etymology and word parts. Build vocabulary through roots ("recognize *dic*") alongside SAT/ACT word lists, rather than through memorized labels. *Stephanie Kirk*

Fill-in-the-blank diction activity. A Mad Libs-style paragraph where students supply words and then discuss the power and connotation of each choice; connected to an article on invisible bias. *Stephanie Kirk*

Ladder of abstraction with paint chips. Use graduated paint samples to make degrees of abstraction concrete. *Stephanie Kirk*

Celebrity apologies. Analyze a badly handled public apology — Travis Scott's Astroworld statement, for example — then have students rewrite it and justify their rhetorical choices. Large compiled lists circulate in the AP Lang Facebook group. *Melanya M.*

Zombie apocalypse bomb shelter. A scenario with twelve candidates and room for only seven; each has a strength and a liability. Students choose individually, then debate and reach group consensus on a shared *why*. Surfaces automatic bias and reframes rhetoric as questioning. Characters become long-running class reference points. *Kimberly D.*

Notice and wonder. Instead of "find the metaphors," ask what stands out — the most significant word or image on the page — as a diagnostic that feels like learning rather than testing. *Brandon Abdon*

Deliberately easy texts. Open with car commercials, infomercials, or similar accessible texts so students build confidence before transferring skills to harder material. *Brandon Abdon and chat participants*

Teaching into the moment. When a major event captures student attention, move the same analytical slides onto that text rather than pushing through the plan. *Stephanie Kirk*

Shared language mentioned

- **APE** — Assert, Prove, Explain (used school-wide, grades 9–12).

- **What does it mean? How do you know? Why does it matter?** — three questions applied across both Lang and Lit; adapted from a David Miller session ("Literature as a Verb").
- **What, how, and why** — used to break down a strong student paragraph rather than a top-scoring released essay.
- **Primary claim / sub-claim** — renaming "thesis statement" and "topic sentence" to bridge prior learning into AP Lang.
- **Teaching *through* the test, not *to* it.**

Resources and programs named

- *Lit and More* — Gina Kortuem's website and blog (weekly posts, largely AP Lit).
- AP Classroom — personal progress checks, quizzes, daily videos (many updated last year), and the built-in lockdown browser.
- Course and Exam Description (CED) — the authority on required terminology.
- Chief Reader reports and released samples on AP Central.
- AP Lang Master Series with Erika Johnson, focused this year on concurrent credit; AdvanceKentucky; College Board APSI and "AP and Practice" sessions.
- Garden of English and the AP Lang Facebook group.
- *Foundations of Advanced Composition* — forthcoming Perfection Learning book for freshmen and sophomores built around AP, SAT, and ACT.
- Perfection Learning blog posts on starting the year, plus guest reflections on the AP Language and AP Literature readings.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library — one book a month for a child until age five.

Closing thought

> *We are risk takers and mistake makers. So take a chance. You're probably going to screw it up the first time, and that's all right.*
>
> — Brandon Abdon