

# ACT Reading

## Course Overview

The ACT Reading Courses were developed by aligning Plato Courseware with the topics that are assessed on the 2016 ACT Test. Each unit aligns to one or more topics within the test. This course focuses on the study of different reading strategies for reading selections from social studies, natural sciences, literary narratives, and humanities. In this course, you will find a variety of lessons and activities to improve your knowledge of these strategies.

## Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Examine the stages and key periods in the development of the English language and learn how writers reflect on conflict in informational texts.
- Investigate examples of cause and effect in literary nonfiction, and explore the historical context of *The Odyssey* and the characteristics of the epic hero.
- Analyze the themes and structure of *The Odyssey*, examine the effect of the epic simile, and identify the characteristics of American Indian stories from early American history.
- Understand how to analyze the historical and cultural significance of literature from the Colonial period, rhetoric in speeches from US history, and seminal American texts from the Revolutionary period.
- Determine the main idea and point of view in Civil War texts, and investigate connections and distinctions between important Civil War events.
- Analyze Civil War documents that contain arguments for and against slavery, and explore how to do a close reading of a nonfiction text.
- Incorporate evidence from informative essays, analyze structure and technical meanings, and evaluate structure and reasoning in texts.
- Evaluate the function and features of informational nonfiction texts, and analyze opinion, bias, and persuasive techniques in informational texts.
- Explore the literary characteristics of realistic fiction, and understand how fiction can revisit and recreate historical events.
- Evaluate the role of scientific discovery and exploration in science fiction, and evaluate points of view and structure.

- Investigate the impact of word choice and structure, examine theme and setting, and analyze literary elements.
- Identify characters and settings, and examine key conflicts in novels.
- Examine Charles Dickens's narrative approach to considering one's past in *A Christmas Carol*, and apply that type of self-exploration to an investigation of your past study, reading, and writing habits.
- Explore how to do a close reading of a nonfiction text, and examine narrative and persuasive essays to determine their characteristics and purposes.
- Explore point of view in memoirs, and practice writing a short memoir.
- Describe the relationship between arguments in literature and writing critically about literature.
- Analyze literal and figurative meaning in poetry, evaluate the emergence of the Revolutionary period in America, and analyze the poetry of that era.
- Examine techniques for delivering a dramatic reading of a poem, important literary features of drama, and the historical context, characteristics, and genres of Shakespearean plays.
- Explore the characteristics of essays about plays, examine the historical and cultural significance of transcendentalist literature, and evaluate the emergence of the realist period and its literature.
- Examine the emergence of the naturalist period and its literature, evaluate naturalist literature, and analyze elements of structure and purpose in writing.
- Explore the development of an "American language," and evaluate the purpose of code-switching in various settings.
- Compare a drama to its film adaptation, and investigate as well as interpret a film adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band."

## General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to do the following:

- Complete basic operations with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- Complete basic operations with presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Docs presentation.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Communicate through email.

For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.

## Course Materials

- notebook
- pencils or ink pens
- computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Microsoft PowerPoint or equivalent

## Course Structure

### Unit 1: Social Studies

#### Summary

In Unit 1, you will learn to examine the stages and key periods in the development of the English language and investigate examples of cause and effect in literary nonfiction. Further, you will study how writers reflect on conflict in informational texts and explore the historical context of *The Odyssey* and the characteristics of the epic hero. You will analyze the themes and structure of *The Odyssey*, examine the effect of the epic simile, and identify the characteristics of American Indian stories from early US history. In addition, you will analyze the historical and cultural significance of literature from the Colonial period, the rhetoric in speeches from US history, and the seminal US texts from the Revolutionary period. You will also determine the main idea and point of view in Civil War texts, and investigate connections and distinctions between important Civil War events. In the latter part of this unit, you will analyze Civil War documents that contain arguments for and against slavery and study how to do a close reading of a nonfiction text.

### Unit 2: Natural Sciences

#### Summary

Unit 2 begins by explaining how to incorporate evidence from informative essays about body image into your own personal advice column. You will analyze structure and technical meaning in texts about the impact that hormonal and chemical changes in the body have on the mood. You will also evaluate structure and reasoning in texts that describe gender development in relation to biology and society. Toward the end of this unit, you will evaluate the function and features of informational nonfiction texts, and analyze opinion, bias, and persuasive techniques in informational texts.

## Unit 3: Literary Narrative

### Summary

Unit 3 introduces the literary characteristics of realistic fiction and explores how fiction can revisit and recreate historical events. You will first examine the role of scientific discovery and exploration in science fiction. Then, you will analyze the point of view and structure in Amy Tan's "Rules of the Game" and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." You will investigate the impact of word choice and structure in two stories with plot twists—O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" and Giovanni Boccaccio's "Federigo's Falcon." You will examine theme and setting in Stephen Crane's "An Episode of War," and analyze the literary elements of Richard Connell's short story "The Most Dangerous Game." You will also identify characters and settings, and examine key conflicts in novels. Later, you will identify and understand external conflict in literary nonfiction. You will examine Charles Dickens's narrative approach to considering one's past in *A Christmas Carol*, and apply that type of self-exploration to an investigation of your past study, reading, and writing habits. This unit also has lessons in which you will learn to do a close reading of a fiction text, and examine narrative and persuasive essays to determine their characteristics and purposes. You will explore point of view in memoirs and practice writing a short memoir. Finally, in the concluding part of this unit, you will explore point of view and theme in Frederick Douglass's "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave."

## Unit 4: Humanities

### Summary

At the start of this unit, you will describe the relationship between arguments in literature and writing critically about literature. Then, you will analyze literal and figurative meaning in poetry. You will evaluate the emergence of the Revolutionary period in America, and analyze the poetry of that era. Further, you will examine techniques for delivering a dramatic reading of a poem, important literary features of drama, and the historical context, characteristics, and genres of Shakespearean plays. This unit helps you explore the characteristics of essays about plays, examine the historical and cultural significance of transcendentalist literature, and evaluate the emergence of the realist period and its literature. You will also examine the emergence of the naturalist period and its literature, evaluate naturalist literature, and analyze elements of structure and purpose in writing. In addition, you will explore the development of an "American language," and evaluate the purpose of code-switching in various settings. Lastly, you will compare a drama to its film adaptation, and investigate and interpret a film adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band."