



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

*to strengthen teaching in public schools®*

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2005 Volume III: War and Civil Liberties

---

## **Citizen Voices in Peace and War: A Portal into Ap English Lit**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.03.05, published September 2005

by Barbara McDowell Dowdall

This unit initiates an Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition course. We begin with issues of civil liberties in students' lives - in school, in their communities, and in our country now at war. Using primary philosophical and governmental documents, students will observe the chronological evolution of ideas and gain the confidence to grapple with Advanced Placement level literature.

Every day, students meet with various kinds of authority that, without their input, regulate and define their options. In response, young people seek to understand and test, in the words of John Stuart Mill, "... the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over an individual." As a bridge from their personal experience to literature, the unit provides opportunities to learn first about persons familiar such as our namesake, Asa Philip Randolph, who have engaged in the struggle for liberty. The unit then considers the activist expressions and experiences of poet Langston Hughes. We conclude with a survey of readings that simultaneously voice questions regarding the legitimacy of power and that initiate students into the world of Advanced Placement multiple choice and essay questions.

(Developed for AP English Literature, grade 12; recommended for AP English Literature, grade 12)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)