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October 30, 2025

From: Mrs. Suzanne M. Mahar
AP Literature and Composition Instructor

Re: Holland Tate - Letter of Recommendation

Holland is one of my most improved AP Literature students; in my twenty-nine year career, I had never experienced a trajectory quite like Holland's.

Initially, Holland struggled as a writer. I was seriously concerned that AP Lit was not the best placement; her foundational writing skills - grammar, syntax, and especially mechanics - were well below expectations. Yet, when it came to interpreting text, Holland knew how to excavate a work and think critically about it. The skill disconnect was profound. At first I thought the accumulation of mechanics errors was from lack of effort or conditioned reliance on insightful ideas outweighing fundamental requirements, something I see in my freshman classes. When Holland and I met to discuss her writing pattern, it changed everything. She *had always* relied on her content to earn a B or better, but with AP Lit accountability, those B essays would earn a D or F. It was a difficult truth to accept. In her end of the course reflection, Holland noted:

I knew that of all my classes AP Lit would be one of the hardest classes. I knew that my writing skills were not the strongest. I assumed my thinking and ideas would once again boost my grade. I was shocked and hurt when you returned my first essay. There was so much green ink on it. I asked to go to the bathroom because I was afraid of crying. When I returned, class had moved on to our reading discussion, and I felt some confidence return. The next essay was not an improvement. You said to the class that everyone has writing moves that work and moves that need to go. Trust in the process. Implement the feedback. And remember, corrections are not suggestions. It felt like you were talking to me, but I also knew it was bothering me because it was true. I had tricked myself into believing that mechanics corrections were suggestions. It was avoidance. When you asked to meet with me, I was committed to staying in the class. I did the hard work. All the time I felt like I was drowning was completely worth it. I slowly gained confidence in developing my skills, but each improvement was an accomplishment. I could see the results. I have never been in a class quite like this lit class, and I will carry what I learned through the rest of my academic career.

When I checked the AP exam scores in July, I was hoping for Holland to earn a 3, but I prepared myself for a 2. She earned a 4. I immediately emailed her a congratulatory note. All of that green ink was worth it.

I highly recommend Holland Tate for her character, perseverance, maturity, and dedication to the learning process. She understands the importance of instruction, feedback, and corrections for skill development. She learned the importance of teachability.

Sincerely,
Suzanne M. Mahar