

AP Lang Blogging

Think Like a Writer

One common downfall of most high school English classes is that all the writing we assign is inauthentic. You're told exactly what to write about, how long it has to be, how many paragraphs to break it into, how to format it, and even the steps you need to take to get there. The only person who will ever read it is your teacher, and your primary concern is saying exactly what they want you to say so that you can get the grade you want. Sound familiar?

Right. But that's not how *real* writing works. Real writing involves thinking on your own. Having something that you *want* to say and then figuring out how to best say it for the audience you're trying to reach.

When students become accustomed to writing only for narrowly prescribed school situations, their ability to think for themselves becomes stifled. They are more comfortable being told what to do rather than figuring it out on their own, and therefore aren't improving their skills at communicating their own ideas.

Preparing you for college means we are training you to be independent thinkers and writers who engage with the world around you and contribute to the conversation. So in AP Lang, one of my goals is to provide you with many opportunities to **own** your writing: *you* figure out what *you* have to say, *you* determine how to best organize it, and *you* publish it for an authentic audience who will engage with your ideas, rather than evaluating it against a rubric.

So this semester in AP Lang, we are going to be doing one such assignment. Yes, the irony is not lost on me; this is an assignment that will have due dates and some requirements. But it also gives you all of the freedom of choosing what to write about (mostly) and how to organize it, as well as giving you a real audience to write for.

In AP Lang, you are going to be posting weekly "essays" to a class blog. To establish solid writing habits, one must write often. While blogging may seem a little 2006, but it still happens on a daily basis by many. At its base, it just means self-publishing your writing, on a regular basis, onto a platform that others can read and interact with. Blogging does have some particular unique conventions that we'll talk about, so let's get started.

Post Topic Ideas

Sometimes I will assign a specific topic; most of the time, you will have several options to choose from. For choice options, ideas will range from a word, an article, a quote, a few prompts, a ted talk or possibly a podcast as well. You may choose any of the given topics. If you want to choose a topic from any previous week, that is just fine as well. As we proceed, if you have a topic idea outside of the ones provided, please reach out and ask.

Writing Blog Posts

Content: weekly challenge with several topics. Keep some things in mind:

- Each post needs to have a point, not just a diary, journal or rambling thoughts.
- Ask yourself, what do I really want to *say* this week, rather than “ugh, I need to write something for an assignment.” The redefinition will impact the authenticity of your writing.
- Know your audience (your classmates and your teacher)
- No hate-speech or bullying of any kind.
- Avoid political rants and divisive moral/societal issues; this isn’t the place for that
- Must be your original work
- These should be written in your voice; humor is fine (though not required); stilted academic-ese is not. Blog posts are written in natural language, not formal academic English. However, they must be proofread!

Format: How a post looks on the screen is dictated by the platform, but here are my expectations

- 250-500 words
- **Title must start with the WEEK # and your first name;**
- **Then include a MEANINGFUL TITLE that indicates your blog topic**
- Must be clearly and intentionally organized; use short, readable paragraphing
- Each post must include picture (I’ll show you how to do this)
- As needed, posts should include hyperlinks to attribute necessary information

FYI - extra blog posts (beyond the required number) is good for your skills and your soul - and maybe your grade. Without the promise of grade influence, write more if you choose. It will only help you in the long run.

Comments

You will also be reading and responding to at least two classmates’ blog posts each week. To receive full credit, you must make **at least 2 comments** per week on your classmates’ blogs, though more are certainly acceptable. Comments must be thoughtful and reasonably developed responses that “add to the conversation.” Short and sweet is NOT the goal of commenting. Be thoughtful, be specific.

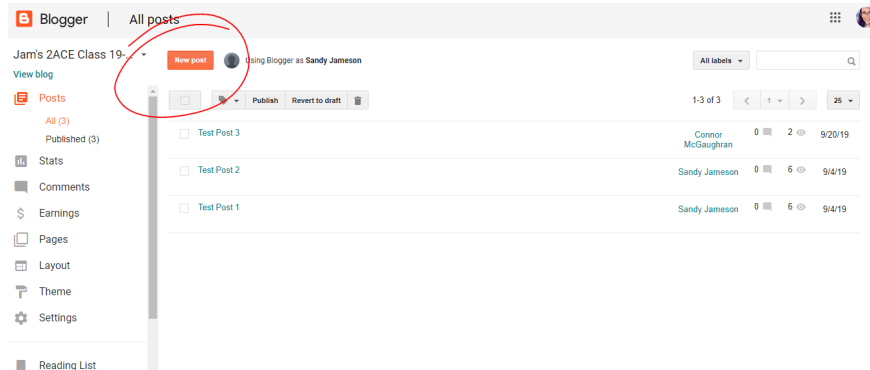
You’ll track your comments on the shared google classroom assignment doc. Please log them as you make them so you get credit for doing them on time. You cannot wait until the end and then do all of them because the point of blog posts is to get readers and responses quickly. This will be a little complicated at first, but once you understand the process, it will be easy - as long as you keep up with it.

Quality Comments

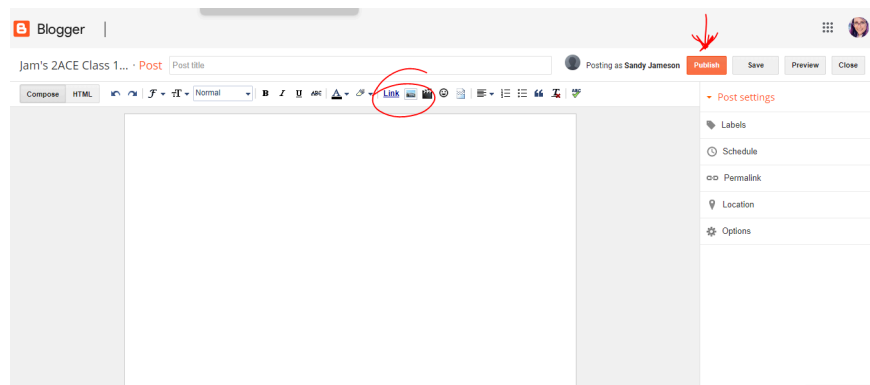
As you post your work, you will be excited to see your classmates' thoughts and connections - especially when they are quality comments. Short and vague comments feel like burnt waffles; they are waffles and those are yummy, but they’re empty and disappointing. Be real. Be specific. Keep the conversation going, if you can. Of course, always be appropriate. And don’t give someone burnt waffles.

How to Post on Blogger

1. Students will post a new blog entry every week and respond (comment) to the work of two students. We will track the posts and comments - more on that later.
2. Log into your email to find the invite to your assigned blog. Accept the invite by clicking on the link. You are now a co-author on your section's blog. When you make posts, it will show up under your name, but all of the posts from each section will be grouped together.
3. This is the blogger dashboard. You'll see all previous posts lined up on the list. This list will get very long, very quickly. To make a new post, click on the obvious button.



4. This is the compose screen. It's pretty self-explanatory. You can add images and links using the appropriate buttons. You can add tags to indicate the topic discussed. Formatting can sometimes get wonky, so always make sure to preview before posting.



5. To insert more than one photo, use "insert table." I often choose the 1x3 option. Then drag your photos to each box.
6. Make sure to hit **PUBLISH** when you're finished. Hitting *save* makes it a draft, but doesn't make it viewable on the blog.
7. Simple troubleshooting - top left corner you will see this "< >" If you click that and choose compose view, this might solve your editing problems.

THIS IS 250 WORDS

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring which I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone, and feel the charm of existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine. I am so happy, my dear friend, so absorbed in the exquisite sense of mere tranquil existence, that I neglect my talents.

I should be incapable of drawing a single stroke at the present moment; and yet I feel that I never was a greater artist than now.

When, while the lovely valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few stray gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, I throw myself down among the tall grass by the trickling stream; and, as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants are noticed by me: when I hear the buzz of the little world among the stalks, and grow familiar with the countless indescribable forms of the insects and flies, then I feel the presence of the Almighty, who formed us in his own image, and the breath of that universal love which bears and sustains us, as it floats around us in an eternity of bliss.

And then, my friend, when darkness overspreads my eyes, and heaven and earth seem to dwell in my soul and absorb its power, like the form of a

THIS IS 500 Words

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring which I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone, and feel the charm of existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine. I am so happy, my dear friend, so absorbed in the exquisite sense of mere tranquil existence, that I neglect my talents.

I should be incapable of drawing a single stroke at the present moment; and yet I feel that I never was a greater artist than now. When, while the lovely valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few stray gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, I throw myself down among the tall grass by the trickling stream; and, as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants are noticed by me: when I hear the buzz of the little world among the stalks, and grow familiar with the countless indescribable forms of the insects and flies, then I feel the presence of the Almighty, who formed us in his own image, and the breath of that universal love which bears and sustains us, as it floats around us in an eternity of bliss.

And then, my friend, when darkness overspreads my eyes, and heaven and earth seem to dwell in my soul and absorb its power, like the form of a beloved mistress, then I often think with longing, Oh, would I could describe these conceptions, could impress upon paper all that is living so full and warm within me, that it might be the mirror of my soul, as my soul is the mirror of the infinite God!

O my friend -- but it is too much for my strength -- I sink under the weight of the splendour of these visions! A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring which I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone, and feel the charm of existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine. I am so happy, my dear friend, so absorbed in the exquisite sense of mere tranquil existence, that I neglect my talents.

I should be incapable of drawing a single stroke at the present moment; and yet I feel that I never was a greater artist than now. When, while the lovely valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few stray gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, I throw myself down among the tall grass by the trickling stream; and, as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants are noticed by me: when I hear the buzz of the little world among the stalks, and grow familiar with the