

Advanced Placement English Language & Composition
Summer Assignment to prepare for the '25 - '26 school year

AP Language & Composition will ask you to closely examine and question not only the choices a writer makes, but ultimately, the world around you. You will inevitably come to view every text, every advertisement, and every argument differently. Although we will primarily focus on non-fiction in this class, we will read at least one work of fiction throughout the year.

In September, you will have the option of signing up for dual enrollment with this course.

This summer reading assignment will give you an introduction to the type of reading you will experience and the degree of close reading necessary for success in the course. The class requires you to delve deeply into readings, to grapple with the issues a writer presents, and to question a writer's intent, purpose, and bias. This course will often require that you read a piece more than once, and your summer readings will demand similar attention from you. Give yourself plenty of time to fully analyze readings. When it comes to reading a book, read the entire book, including the preface and afterword in order to fully understand the context of the piece.

When you start to acquire the books you need to read this summer, keep in mind that you can borrow many of these from me, you can check them out from a library, or you can purchase your own copies. Some full texts are even available as pdfs online; our school network doesn't always allow us to access those, but you might be able to access them from your home network. You could also check whether certain books are available as an audiobook or eBook on [MackinVIA](#), which we have access to through our school library.

Annotate the books as you read; you can do this by using sticky notes if you are borrowing the book, writing directly on the text/in the margins if the book is yours, or keeping handwritten notes in a journal. The annotations you make while reading will ensure that you are actively reading and will help you review for the assessments on the summer reading. When using a journal, please indicate the page, passage, or quote each annotation is referring to.

An annotation is simply a note that is made while reading a text. Actively reading a text involves questioning, reflecting, reacting, commenting, and making connections. TALK to the text. Respond to what you're reading. There is no such thing as a correct or incorrect annotation, so do not stress over them. Please read [this](#) and [this](#) for further explanation regarding annotations and close reading.

You will want to make sure you are actively reading and taking notes that will help you remember these works because **during the first week of school, there will be a quiz on the required reading (from assignments 1 & 2) and you will work on in-class essays that connect your nonfiction books of choice (from assignment #3) to excerpts of speeches that I'll introduce you to at the time of the formative assessment.** You can use your **handwritten** notes (whether they are annotations in the margins of a novel you own, annotations on sticky notes in a novel you didn't want to write in, or handwritten notes in a physical journal you kept while reading) while working on your in-class essays. These will all be significant (weighty) formative assessments, and you will not have the opportunity to retake these assessments.

Nothing is due during the summer and I will not collect or check your annotations or journals; just read and annotate your 3.5 books by the first day of class. Bring your handwritten annotations on your nonfiction books of choice to class each day during the first week or two of school. **Please fill out this Google Form by June 20th to let me know which 2 books you plan to read for Assignment #3; this will help me prepare for the summer reading assessments.**

There are over 30 books to choose from for Assignment #3, so take your time deciding which two to read! Check out brief descriptions and reviews of each work on Google, Amazon, or Goodreads. If you don't currently appreciate nonfiction, my sincerest hope for you is that you'll discover a love for it this summer. So, choose your books wisely! Maybe by the end of August, one or all of the following quotes will resonate with you!

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.” – James Baldwin

“When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.” – Maya Angelou

“Some books are so familiar that reading them is like being home again.” – Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

“I love the solitude of reading. I love the deep dive into someone else’s story, the delicious ache of a last page.”—Naomi Shihab Nye

“Reading makes immigrants of us all. It takes us away from home, but more important, it finds homes for us everywhere.” – Jean Rhys

“Books are a uniquely portable magic.” – Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*

Don’t hesitate to email me with any questions! I look forward to working with you next year!

Enjoy your summer!

Mrs. Nicole Dennes (dennic@share.wilsonsd.org)

Please read the following [class policies & announcements](#) before reviewing the summer work.

Summer Work:

***Assignment 1 - On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft by Stephen King**

*Immensely helpful and illuminating to any aspiring writer, this critically lauded, million-copy bestseller shares the experiences, habits, and convictions that have shaped King and his work. Part memoir, part master class by one of the bestselling authors of all time, this work serves as a revealing and practical view of the writer’s craft, comprising the basic tools of the trade every writer must have. King’s advice is grounded in his vivid memories from childhood through his emergence as a writer, from his struggling early career to his widely reported, near-fatal accident in 1999—and how the inextricable link between writing and living spurred his recovery. Brilliantly structured, friendly and inspiring, **On Writing** will empower and entertain everyone who reads it—fans, writers, and anyone who loves a great story well told.*

I have some copies that can be checked out over the summer. I also found [a pdf of the entire novel online](#) and downloaded it to My Drive.

As you read the biographical parts of the book, annotate the text or take notes in a journal and pay particular attention to passages you feel illustrate pivotal moments in the author’s increasing awareness of how storytelling, creativity, reading and/or writing defined his sense of self and his voice as a writer.

As you read the parts that provide writing advice, annotate the text or take notes in a journal and pay particular attention to what you consider to be the top “take-aways” (the advice you appreciate most and plan to apply to your own writing from now on). **Strive to summarize each little chapter in the “Toolbox” and “On Writing” sections with a key piece of advice.**

***Assignment 2 - Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us about the Art of Persuasion by Jay Heinrichs**

***You only need to read chapters 1 through 14 or 15, depending on the edition you are reading. Read through whichever chapter is called “Spot Fallacies” in the edition you have.**

What makes an argument work? Jay Heinrichs’ book provides you with insights into the nuts and bolts of persuasion by building on a foundation of classical rhetoric but then linking it to the tricks of great speakers in recent history as well as to pop culture. Throughout the course, you will examine exemplary writings and analyze what makes them effective. Then, ideally, you’ll soon be using these strategies in your own work.

*Editions 1 through 4 are all fine. I think the online copy below is the first edition.

I have some copies that can be checked out over the summer. I also found [a pdf of the entire novel online](#) and downloaded it to My Drive for you in case it helps. **Plus, there are 3 audiobook copies available on [MackinVia](#).*

As you read, annotate the text or keep a journal and jot down notes about parts you found particularly interesting, impactful, helpful, and/or memorable. Notes in a journal can be in any format (bullet points, phrases, paragraphs, etc.). Most importantly, **pay attention to (& take notes on) the definitions/terms (effective parts of communication/arguments & logical fallacies)** provided throughout the reading.

***Assignment 3 - Nonfiction books of choice (2)**

We read and analyze the writing choices of others in order to be more intentional about the choices we make in our own writing. We also read about others’ experiences because if you choose to take the College Board exam, you are at a significant advantage if you have a wide variety of references you can draw from while making an argument. Being a history buff, keeping up with current events, and/or reading nonfiction will all help.

But, above all, we read the following in order to broaden our worldview. The act of reading more doesn’t only foster more effective readers and writers; it also fosters more informed, more critically thinking, and ultimately, more empathetic people. And while reading nonfiction, especially memoirs, *can* deepen our understanding of rhetoric, it *undoubtedly* deepens our understanding of the human experience.

Choose ANY **two** of the following 32 books to read and annotate. To best prepare for the year, strive to include annotations from the categories listed on [this Google Doc](#).

I’ve divided the 32 choices into categories to help you make your selections, but please know that many of the choices fit into multiple categories. I tried my best to categorize each one based on its primary focus.

****behind a title below = I have copies you can borrow.**

Choices:

For the memoir enthusiasts:

Memoirs that focus on overcoming personal adversity:

A Place to Stand: The Making of a Poet by Jimmy Santiago Baca

Between Two Kingdoms: A Memoir of a Life Interrupted by Suleika Jaouad**

Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, & My Journey from Homeless to Harvard by Liz Murray**

I'm Glad My Mom Died by Jennette McCurdy**

Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body by Roxane Gay

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou**

Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness by William Styron**

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave by Frederick Douglass**

Memoirs that explore personal identity, family dynamics, &/or cultural influences:

Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning by Cathy Park Hong

My Invented Country: A Memoir by Isabel Allende

Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts by Maxine Hong Kingston**

Crying in H Mart by Michelle Zauner**

All Over but the Shoutin' by Rick Bragg**

Reflective memoirs about revelatory, life changing experiences:

Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder by Salman Rushdie

Becoming by Michelle Obama

Finding Me: A Memoir of Radical Honesty and Self-Discovery by Viola Davis

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates**

For those who are interested in reading...

About major historical events, struggles for political freedom, &/or social justice movements:

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond

Forty Autumns: A Family's Story of Courage and Survival on Both Sides of the Berlin Wall by Nina Willner

A Thousand Miles to Freedom: My Escape from North Korea by Eunsun Kim

About science, scientific discoveries, medicine, bioethics, and/or healthcare inequities:

Everything is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection by John Green

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot**

About true crime, investigative stories, and/or uncovering hidden truths through research and journalism:

The Devil's Highway: A True Story by Luis Alberto Urrea

Counting Coup: A True Story of Basketball and Honor on the Little Big Horn by Larry Colton

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote**

Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity by Katherine Boo**

Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI by David Grann**

Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith by Jon Krakauer**

MORE BELOW →

About human endurance / the experiences of those who have survived war or conflict:

The Mosquito Bowl: A Game of Life and Death in World War II by Buzz Bissinger

The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown**

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand**

A collection of essays (personal reflections/insightful reviews on various aspects of human existence):

The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human Centered Planet by John Green**