

2010 Summer Reading Assignment Ms. Davis: AP Language & Composition

The AP English Language course emphasizes a mix of politics, history, social sciences, current events and non-fiction prose with just a smattering of literary fiction. This class is different from most English classes you have taken before; it will ask you to analyze argument as well as look more closely at the power and beauty language possesses.

You have lots of experience with quality fiction, but you may not have read too much non-fiction. The summer reading list offers you a chance to create a database for yourself that you will use throughout the school year.

PART I: Class Novel

Read *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt and be prepared to take a test on the book during the first week of school. We will be discussing this book in class as our first text, so it is important that you own the book or check it out from a library.

PART II: Nonfiction Book Review

1. Select a non-fiction novel

The AP English Language and Composition course suggests a strong emphasis on nonfiction. Because most of the selections that you have been required to read in the past are fictional novels, I am asking you to read and review a nonfiction work of your choosing. Below is a list of suggested nonfiction novels read by past AP English students and myself (but feel free to select your own):

The Last Lecture by Randy Paus
Lucky by Alice Sebold
Running with Scissors by Augusten Burroughs
Kabul Beauty School by Deborah Rodriguez
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
A Million Little Pieces by James Frey
Black Hawk Down by Mark Bowden
Catch Me If You Can by Frank Abagnale
The Zookeeper's Wife by Diane Ackerman
Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafisi
Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim by David Sedaris
How Starbucks Saved My Life by Michael Gates Gill
Escape by Carolyn Jessup
The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls
Prozac Nation by Elizabeth Wurtzel
Seabiscuit by Laura Hillenbrand
Electroboy by Andy Behrman
Tweak by Nic Sheff
Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer
Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser
Black Boy by Richard Wright

2. Complete journal entries on your non-fiction novel

After selecting your non-fiction novel, choose **eight** of the following journal prompts and respond accordingly. Responses should be typed, and at least one page double-spaced.

- a. **MAKE CONNECTIONS**—Connect the reading to something you’ve experienced or observed in your own life. Connect the reading to something you’ve read previously. Connect the reading to the world beyond Holland, MI and/or the United States.
- b. **EXAMINE AUTHOR’S STYLE, METHOD, TONE, PURPOSE, ETC.**—What is the author’s purpose in any given section, and how is this purpose accomplished? What does the author do that you find appealing and potentially useful in your own writing? What does the author do that you think could be improved upon? What specific uses of language impressed you? Give example of different dialects or colloquial language.
- c. **ANALYZE THE AUDIENCE**—To whom is the author writing? Why do you think this? Are there clues in the writing? What are the clues?
- d. **DICTION**—Diction is another term for “word choice” used on the AP exam; diction refers to selecting the proper words for a particular piece of writing depending on the tone an author is trying to create. Diction can also be formal or informal. Analyze the author’s diction. Why do you think he/she selects certain words? Is the tone formal or informal? Why? Start the journal entry with a list of words that you did not know, and define them.
- e. **QUESTIONS**—Most books will prompt questions for you. Write a list of questions. Pick one or two question(s) and attempt to answer it.
- f. **REACTION**—Some of the writings are about controversial subjects. Write a reaction to the piece. Do you agree or disagree with the author? Support your answer with details from the chapter you are responding to.
- g. **QUOTATIONS**—Copy words, phrases, or sentences from your reading that you like, agree with, find appealing, effective, intriguing, controversial or humorous; discuss the word/quotation. What does it mean to you? What does it make you think about?
- h. **WRITE A RESPONSE**—If you disagree with the position the author has taken in a given passage, write a response in which you defend your position with examples from your experience, observation, or previous reading.

- i. **WRITE A POEM**—One way to “respond” to literature/writing is to write a poem based on the topics/themes/ideas etc. a piece of writing inspires. Experiment with different poetic structures (sonnet, haiku, limerick, free verse, blank verse, etc.)
- j. **RESEARCH**—Use the Internet to find articles related to the topic a writer addresses. Write about what you discovered.
- k. **DISCUSS**—Discuss any/all of the following: flaws or problems with the author’s arguments, interesting passages/stanzas, confusing sections, questions you have after reading a particular passage/chapter, feelings you have after reading the piece.
- l. **COMMENT ON SETTING**—What effect does setting have on the book/chapter? What details concerning setting make the book/chapter vivid? What feelings/emotions does the setting create for you? How would the book/chapter be altered if it took place in a different setting?
- m. **CHAPTER TITLE**—Reflect upon the meaning of a chapter’s title. If the chapters in a particular book are not titled, what would you title them? Why?
- n. **UNIVERSALITY**—To say that a piece of literature is “universal” is to say that its themes and ideas can be understood by human beings around the world regardless of time period, race, culture, nationality, gender, etc. For example, Hamlet contains the universal themes and topics of family, revenge, madness, betrayal, etc. Discuss the universal themes or topics you come across in your reading. Explain the universal quality of your reading to a stranger.
- o. **RECOMMENDATION**—Write a recommendation of the book or a review. What makes a particular book worthy of being read by others? Give examples.
- p. **PARODY**—Take time to parody a chapter or idea by copying the author’s writing style and voice.
- q. **MOTIVATION**—Discuss what motivates a character in a chapter/book to behave in a certain way. If you have a psychology class in your background, discuss characters in terms of their psychological make up.
- r. **IDENTIFY AND DISCUSS STRUCTURE**—What pattern(s) of organization does the author use? What effect does the pattern of organization have on the overall meaning of the work?

- s. **COMPILE**—Put together a list of books and authors of books on a similar topic.
- t. **COMPARE**—Connect your book to other novels, poems, short stories, essays, etc. What are the thematic or stylistic similarities and differences? Also, compare characters appearing in the two books.
- u. **JUSTIFY OR DEFEND**—Justify or defend why the book you are reading should or should not be read at the high school level.

PART III: Newspaper/Magazine Editorial Reading Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to the focus of AP Language: analyzing non-fiction. Throughout the course, you will be required to keep up with current events. This assignment introduces you to the process of looking for reliable, accurate news sources.

a) Over the summer, read, clip and place at least five editorials or commentaries/essays (all nonfiction, not news articles or informative features) from reputable newspapers or issues-based magazines. Editorials means the articles should assert the writer's opinion about a topic. The articles you choose should be about relevant current events happening in the world. You should use at least three different sources (i.e. not all five pieces should come from the same newspaper/magazine). **DO NOT USE SOURCES SUCH AS USA TODAY, PEOPLE, SEVENTEEN, ETC. BLOGS ARE NOT RELIABLE SOURCES, EITHER.**

b) Examples of suggested newspapers/magazines (most, if not all, of which you can access online, sometimes by signing up to the website for free):

• The New York Times • The Washington Post (N) • Times • The Wall Street Journal • The Onion (N) • Newsweek • The New Yorker•

c) After selecting an article, comment on the editorials that made you think and your thoughts about the editorial or the issues via the attached Journalism Column Response sheet. It is sometimes helpful to consider choosing editorials with which you disagree (makes you think more).

Journalist Column Response

Name of Journalist _____

Title of Column _____

Name of Newspaper _____

Date column appeared _____

Thesis or main idea of column:

Supporting reasons, examples, facts, details:

1.

2.

3.

Defend or challenge the writer's thesis (adding background information and research, if necessary):

What is the tone of the article? How does the author convey this tone?

What rhetorical strategies do you find in the article? (Consider techniques that add to the effectiveness of the article). Cite an example of this technique in the text.

1.

2.

3.

Words from the article to define and add to your vocabulary:

Word	Definition

Other thoughts:

PART IV: Talks in the Park

As a class, we will select three non-fiction novels to discuss at various intervals throughout the summer at Centennial Park. E-mail me your top three choices tonight or tomorrow, and I will announce the winners on Friday (they will also be posted on-line at Black River's website). I would love for you to be present for at least one (or more!) of the book talks. Feel free to bring snacks (I'll bring brownies), towels/blankets, and your book. We will meet at the large fountain in the middle of Centennial Park. In case of inclement weather, meet at Centennial Park and then we can discuss moving to an alternate location.

Devil in the White City by Erik Larson Wednesday, July 14th 5:30 p.m.

Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser Tuesday, July 27th 12:00 p.m.

The Zookeeper's Wife by Diane Ackerman Thursday, August 5th 3:30 p.m.

*If you cannot or choose not to attend any of the book talks, I would ask that you still select one of the books and complete four journal responses on that book.