

Welcome to AP English Language and Composition!

Before your year begins, it is necessary to explain expectations for your work, attitude, and comportment as AP scholars. You are obviously the best English students; otherwise, you would not have chosen the rigorous coursework this class demands. You are expected to be dedicated and self-disciplined, teachable and self-motivated. Although one of the ultimate goals is that you pass the exam, this course is also an essential aspect of becoming an effective writer, communicator, and critical thinker; all skills that will benefit you far beyond the classroom.

One of the keys to performing well in the course is being “well read.” As you read more widely, your vocabulary becomes broader and richer. Exposure to a variety of literature will allow you to recognize sophisticated writing styles and to emulate their correctness in your own writings. Another key to performing well is developing a writing style which incorporates depth of thinking in analysis of a writer’s techniques, methods, and style, and presenting intelligent papers about such concepts. A final key to passing the exam is understanding different methods of argument and using relevant, accurate research to support your argument. While the course does incorporate minor projects, the ultimate focus will be on content, purpose, and writing.

When you read anything, whether it be a book, an article, or a tweet, you need to learn to see through the manipulation to the author’s argument and purpose. What is the author claiming? How do you know? Who is their intended audience? What do they want the outcome of this work to be? How do they convince you of their purpose? These (and many more) are the types of questions that we ask in AP Lang, and they are the types of questions you need to ask in your summer reading.

As you read through your book(s) this summer, annotate for the author’s purpose and how it is developed.

Assignment: Choose any of the following books to read and annotate. This will be your anchor text in analysis for the first few weeks of school. Be sure to read closely and take purposeful annotations as these are imperative to starting the year off well.

1. *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (stories of Bryan’s experiences with the corrupt criminal justice system in America)
2. *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote (true-crime in prose – story of family’s mysterious murder)
3. *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls (story of childhood with eccentric, bordering on abusive parents)
4. *The Soloist* by Steve Lopez (a former Julliard student is discovered living on Skid Row)
5. *Life Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes, and Autism* by Ron Suskind (boy with autism only communicates through Disney movies)
6. *Parkland* by David Cullen (teenage students fighting to change gun laws after experiencing mass shootings)
7. *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander (mass incarceration in the current generation)
8. *Devil’s Highway* by Luis Urrea (true story of men trying to cross the Mexican border into Arizona)
9. *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State* by Nadia Murad (Murad’s story of being kidnapped by the Islamic State)
10. *We Won This Game* by Robert Andrew Powell (Pop Warner football in Miami run by race, politics, money)

A Note on Taking Notes:

Making purposeful annotations is nonnegotiable in AP Lang. For this course, future high school courses, and your college career, developing your own annotation style will help you internalize information, read closely and critically, study efficiently, and curate evidence and examples to support your own writing. You are highly encouraged to write directly in your books and/or to develop a note taking system that you can use consistently and succinctly. Annotating is meant to be undertaken *while* you are reading and only pause your comprehension for a short moment. Annotating never needs to be perfect, it just needs to be consistent and useful to you. With that being said though, here are some suggestions:

Take E.P.I.C. Notes:

Entertaining: Anything you find interesting, funny, scary, etc.

Poetic: Lines or sections that are poetic to you; these might be lines you quote or refer to later in a paper

Important: names, dates, places, details that you feel are important and may need to reference later

Confusing: Anything that confuses you that you want to discuss in class; could be related to a detail in the book or a broader topic

TQEs:

Thoughts: details or parts of the book that catch your attention and make you... think!

Questions: questions you have about a part of the book or a broader topic

Epihanies: “aha!” moments; something in the text that is new or surprising idea

SPACECAT:

Speaker: the author of the piece

Purpose: the author’s goal in the piece

Audience: who the author is speaking to

Context: background/surrounding circumstances of the piece i.e. time period, cultural events, speaker credentials, etc.

Exigence: the specific event that prompted the piece to be crafted

Choices: *how* the author is developing their argument

Appeals: aspect of the audience the author is appealing to: logic, emotions, and/or credibility

Tone: the author’s attitude towards the subject and/or audience

More helpful suggestions can be found here: <https://owl.excelsior.edu/orc/what-to-do-while-reading/annotating/annotating-creating-an-annotation-system/>