

About AP Lang

Advanced Placement Language & Composition provides students with a comprehensive experience in studying American literature and prepares them for the Advanced Placement Language and Composition exam. Students will read a wide variety of American prose styles from many disciplines and historical periods and consider how selections of American fiction and non-fiction highlight stylistic decisions. Students learn to understand and appreciate the diverse ways that American authors make meaning in oral, written, and visual texts. Students also identify elements of literary and rhetorical style and use them in their own writing. Through the process of reading, writing, and discussing texts, students become skilled in composing for different audiences and purposes. The course is designed to enable students to analyze complex American texts and to write highly effective and stylistically sophisticated expository writing. AP Language and Composition emphasizes the teaching of writing strategies and requires students to write essays that proceed through several stages or drafts, with revision aided by teacher and peers. Students write in forms such as narrative, exploratory, expository, and argumentative and on a variety of subjects such as personal experiences, public policies, imaginative literature, and pop culture. As the course progresses, students become aware of their own writing process through self-assessment against AP standards for writing, and assessments by their peers and their teacher. Completion of assigned summer reading and writing is a course requirement.

Exam Overview

The AP English Language and Composition Exam will test your understanding of the literary concepts covered in the course units, as well as your ability to analyze texts and develop written arguments based on your interpretations.

Summer Reading Assignment

Each student should read TWO of the following books this summer, ONE from the "Fiction" list, and ONE from the "Nonfiction" list. Please do some initial research on the titles to help you select books that are interesting to you, and offer a good challenge for new learning. Please also note that these books are contemporary works, written mostly for adults, and that many of them contain mature situations and conflicts such as rape, slavery, and other forms of violence, as well as some use of profane language. Level of difficulty also varies in these books, so, again, do some research before picking to make sure you have a good fit. There are many published reviews of each book online, and the list through Sora, below, has good initial descriptions.

Fiction:

- Caleb's Crossing by Geraldine Brooks
- There There by Tommy Orange
- The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien
- The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
- The Water Dancer by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- Let the Great World Spin by Colum McCann
- The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger
- Americanah by Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie
- Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut
- Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng
- Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi

Nonfiction:

- A Voyage Long and Strange by Tony Horwitz
- In Cold Blood by Truman Capote
- Eating Animals by Jonathan Safran Foer
- Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston
- Educated by Tara Westover
- Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo" by Zora Neale Hurston
- Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life by William Finnegan
- Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Women, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- Spirit Run by Noé Alvarez
- The Wordy Shipmates by Sarah Vowell

Some guidance for note-taking: It is a good idea to take notes as you read, keeping track of such things as:

- How people and characters are related to others
- Emerging thematic patterns
- What you notice about how the text is structured
- Questions you have as you read
- Research you did to help answer any of these questions
- Consider how the perspectives offered in the book challenge or reinforce your sense of American identity

More specific lens for note-taking/journaling: In his semi-autobiographical novel, *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien claims that "story-truth is truer sometimes than

happening-truth... What stories can do, I guess is make things present. I can look at things I never looked at. I can attach faces to grief, and love, and pity, and God." In another part of the novel, he states that "if truly told, [a story] makes the stomach believe." Note elements of the books you chose that feel particularly "true" to you. How does the author "make things present" for you? **Take notes in preparation to discuss why some particular passages made "your stomach believe." What do you appreciate about how the author uses language and storytelling to do so? What argument is the author making about American identity?**

Your notes should prepare you to write analytically about these books in class on the first day of school. Also, use the glossary provided below to prepare for our discussion of the summer reading.

Glossary of Key Terms:

Rhetoric: The effective use of language; also, the study of effective language use. The term can also be used negatively, as when it is said that a particular argument is really just using rhetoric, that is, using words persuasively (perhaps by making emotional appeals) without making a solid argument.

Argument: Writing that attempts to prove a point through reasoning. Argument presses its case by using logic and by supporting its logic with examples and evidence. Evidence: The facts that support an argument. Evidence takes different forms depending on the kind of writing in which it appears, but generally is concrete, agreed-upon information that can be pointed to as an example or proof.

Audience: As actors have audiences who can see and hear them, writers have readers. Having a sense of audience is important in writing because we write differently depending on who we think will be reading our work. If the audience is specific, we write in such a way that will appeal to a small group; if it is general, write in such a way that as many people as possible will listen to, and be able to hear, what we have to say.

Purpose: The author's goal or aim in writing a given piece.

Tone: refers to the author's attitude toward the reader (e.g. formal, intimate, pompous) or to the subject matter (e.g. ironic, light, solemn, satiric, sentimental).

Diction: refers to the choice of words used in a literary work. A writer's diction may be characterized, for example as formal, colloquial, abstract, concrete, literal or figurative. Imagery: refers to the use of language in a literary work that evokes sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or "concrete" objects, scenes, actions, or states as distinct from the language or abstract argument or exposition. The imagery of a literary work thus comprises the set of images that it uses to appeal to senses (including, but not limited to sight).

Symbol, Symbolism: A symbol is something that stands for something else. Unlike allegory, symbolism is multi-dimensional—it may convey a number of meanings. The symbol of the great white whale in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, for example, may stand for the devil, nature, the forces of the universe or ? Style: The way a writer writes. Any of the choices writers make while writing—about diction, sentence length, structure, rhythm, and figures of speech—that make their work sound like them. The tone of a particular work can be due in part to a writer's style.

Voice: A writer's unique use of language that allows a reader to perceive a human personality in his or her writing. The elements of style that determine a writer's voice include sentence structure, diction, and tone. The term can also be applied to the narrator of a selection.

Assessment: During the first week of school, you will write an essay on the summer readings. This timed writing assessment will require you to draw on your nuanced understanding of the assigned readings.