

AP English Language & Composition Summer 2024 Assignment

There are two parts to your assignment for this summer. Let's start our journey toward rhetoric and reading and richer understanding of the voice and value in the American thought-scape.

PART I: Ideas and Arguments in Discussion

Sign up for the AP English Language and Composition Schoology Course for access to pdfs of the articles referenced. Course access code: KPBJ-KSBZ-RJHK

In addition to reading works of fiction, this course will examine topics and arguments in public discourse. Understanding the issues and the strategies writers use involves reading widely and from a variety of perspectives, including about issues and topics of interest in fields such as science, economics, and psychology.

Start with the following essays; consider the main idea and how the writer establishes and supports central claims. Then, consider what you find particularly surprising or compelling.

What are you curious to know more about?

1. [“Letter From a Birmingham Jail”](#) by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)
2. [“Ghosts”](#) by Vauhini Vara (Believer, 2021) or Act One of [“The Ghost in the Machine”](#) by Tobin Low (This American Life, Dec. 2021)
3. [“I Didn’t Want It to Be True, but the Medium Really Is the Message”](#) by Ezra Klein (New York Times, Aug. 2022)
4. [“The Meaning of ‘Sir’ and ‘Ma’am”](#) by Tracy K. Smith (The Atlantic, Nov. 2023)

Consider an issue or topic addressed in one of the above essays that interests you. Locate at least **four other substantial pieces** that address this topic (at least 300 words long—no maximum length; one source may be a comic or political cartoon or a podcast episode).

You may also choose to read a nonfiction book or memoir that relates to the topic.

If you opt for articles or essays, focus on **argument or opinion pieces**, not news stories or informational articles. Select pieces that address a range of opinions or perspectives about the topic. The goal is to see ways this issue is addressed and discussed by people who may have different perspectives or agendas. Make sure to draw from at least two different sources or publications.

Save a pdf of each article or piece in an electronic folder OR as links on a document. You will need to be prepared to submit the full text and write a response about that addresses your thinking about the topic the first week of school.

Suggestions for sources:

The Atlantic (US ideas magazine)

The Economist (UK news magazine)

The Washington Post (US newspaper)

The Guardian (UK newspaper)

Time (US news magazine)

The New York Times (US newspaper)

The New Yorker (US ideas magazine)

Longform.org, “Best Of” archives

NOTE: Sports, lifestyle, or popular culture/entertainment magazine are not recommended unless the writing you are using from them is substantial *and* develops an opinion or argument.

PART II: America in Fiction

Take some time this summer to immerse yourself in a work of rich and compelling literature that addresses some aspect of what it means to be American. Each of these stories addresses, in some way, an individual finding community within the United States. While these stories are individual in scope, together they add to the richness and complexity of the voices and values of the United States.

Choose at least **one** selection from the list below to read. Check out reviews or summaries or ask for recommendations to find a work that best fits your interests and comfort level.

You will have assignments in the fall directly pertaining to this novel and This novel will serve as the core text for a literary research paper.

As you read, consider the following:

1. What did you find valuable about this novel? What scenes or passages do you find particularly memorable?
2. What elements of writing or style did you find compelling? How does it compare to other works you have read at St. Mary's?
3. How does this work influence your understanding of American identity?

Irving, John	<i>A Prayer for Owen Meaney</i>
McCarthy, Cormac	<i>All the Pretty Horses</i>
Morrison, Toni	<i>The Bluest Eye</i> or <i>Beloved</i>
Silko, Leslie Marmon	<i>Ceremony</i>
Steinbeck, John	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> or <i>East of Eden</i>
Tan, Amy	<i>The Kitchen God's Wife</i> or <i>The Bonesetter's Daughter</i>
Wharton, Edith	<i>The Age of Innocence</i>

In the pursuit of understanding what it means to be human, in humanities courses, including English classes, rigor often manifests in complex, provocative, sometimes ambiguous, personally and emotionally challenging material and discussions.

Books in English courses, including these summer reading selections, will include ugly and beautiful moments and reveal stories of complex individuals in nuanced and, we believe, compelling ways.