

AP Language and Composition
Summer Work 2026-27

1. Join the AP Language and Composition Remind account before you leave school for the summer (see below for instructions). I will contact you in July, before your junior year officially begins, and you might need to contact me. You may also reach me via email at taylorju@boe.richmond.k12.ga.us.
2. **Carefully** read Part One of the non-fiction novel *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote. When I say “carefully read,” I mean that this process should not be quick or cursory. You should read closely and think deeply about the story. Annotating what you read is a good way to get in the habit of reflective questioning, something we will work on all year. If the copy of the book is not yours to keep, you can either write notes in a separate notebook or make annotations on sticky notes that can be removed from the book later. Below is a picture of the copy I want you to purchase. It is published by Vintage International, and the ISBN is 978-0-679-74558-7. You can read a different edition, but this is the one we will be using in class, and I will have activities that require you to refer to specific page numbers. I want us all to be on the same page, literally. 😊



3. After you have finished reading “The Last to See Them Alive,” type an essay in MLA format on the following topic:

In Part One of *In Cold Blood*, “The Last to See Them Alive,” Truman Capote alternates between the ordinary, routine lives of the Clutter family and the chaotic, predatory movement of Dick Hickock and Perry Smith. Analyze how Capote uses this juxtaposition to reveal the characters of these very different people as well as to inspire sympathy or antipathy for them. Your paper should contain specific quotes from the book to support your argument and should be between 700 – 100 words.

On the second day of school, I will take up this work. While I expect you to proofread your essay (and I do not mind if you use Grammarly or AI for this), I ask that you use technology *only* to identify grammar and punctuation errors. Don’t, for instance, ask ChatGPT to enhance your vocabulary or to create or critique your content. You will be writing several timed essays this year, all in class, and you won’t have the opportunity to use technology as an aid in your writing. It is therefore critical that you learn to trust your writing instincts. In addition, I need to get a sense of your writing style and can only do this if what you give me is authentically your voice. Don’t worry if it feels imperfect; you will get stronger as a reader and writer this year. Trust me.

You will find throughout the year that I have very strong opinions on misrepresenting yourself or others. The use of outside resources has its place in education, but when you are still building skills, it is harmful. As such, I want to reiterate that for the study of this book or anything else we read in AP Language and Composition, there is to be no collaboration with other students or reliance on the internet, movies, or secondary sources such as Sparknotes, Shmoop, Wikipedia, etc. Unless I specifically recommend it, working with other students - or using any sources other than the primary text(s) and your own thoughts - will be considered cheating. I create my own reading-check assessments by looking at the online reading guides that students often use in place of reading the story, so don’t rely on them. Reading guides are intended to do just that: *guide* your reading. They are not intended to *replace* your reading of the text, and if you rely exclusively on them to learn the book, your understanding of it will be limited. Be smarter than that! Reading and evaluating the text yourself is the only way to develop critical and analytical skills.

If you do use AI on this essay or get help from your peers/share work with your peers, understand that I am unlikely to recommend you for the AP exam. Moreover, I will not write you a reference or recommendation letter this or next year.

4. Take a reading-check assessment of “The Last to See Them Alive” on the second or third day of school. For this assessment, you will be expected to know the names of the people Capote describes in his story; the events that he chronicles from their lives; and, in some cases, the specific details that might reveal important facts about their history or character. I will not ask obvious or “easy” questions. The more closely you read Part One, the better you will do on the first reading check. That close read will make the remaining quizzes easier as well, because you will have a good sense of the book’s foundation.
5. If you have any questions or just want to discuss an aspect of *In Cold Blood* with me before school starts, feel free to send me a Remind message or an email.

I hope you have a wonderful summer!



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