

AP Language and Composition Summer Assignment 2026 Olathe Northwest High School

Welcome to AP Language and Composition! You are about to begin a very challenging and rewarding language arts course that may result in college credit, depending on your score on the AP exam. Your journey starts with this summer assignment, which is designed to achieve a few goals:

1. To help your AP Lang teacher have a better idea of where you are and how to help you improve.
2. To give you a sample of the different types of writing we'll be doing this year.
3. To make sure your writing skills, study practices, and learning abilities stay sharp over the summer.

To make certain your summer efforts move you toward these goals, this year's summer assignment asks students to produce a writing sample in the form of a full synthesis essay and demonstrate careful reading skills on some ACT practice questions. On the following pages, you will find your instructions and materials, but **reach out via email if you have any questions or concerns this summer:**

Dr. Jeff Fouquet (foo-kay): jfouquetonw@olatheschools.org

As you look over these materials, the main question on most of your minds will likely be, "Will we be turning this in for a grade?" and "When is it due?" **You should have this summer assignment completed in its entirety by the first day of school this fall**, as we will reference these materials early in the year. As far as the grade goes - **yes, you will receive three or four separate grades (totaling 100 pts.) for completing the summer assignment.** Specific grading information can be found on the next page.

Please note that this summer reading assignment is indicative of the summer reading requirements of AP programs all over the United States; therefore, it is important that we maintain high standards. This assignment not only keeps you sharp, but it also reveals what kind of student(s) you are, and whether or not you'll be able to handle the hard work expected in this advanced placement, college-credit course.

You are completing these assignments individually, not in a group of friends, and each assignment will be submitted to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. If you decide this is too much work and wish to change your schedule, contact your counselor as soon as possible. And no AI or ChatGPT, Ravens; I'll catch you. 😊

This summer assignment is meant to be challenging because the course it precedes certainly will be. That being said, I have full confidence in all of you and I'm excited to see what kind of writer(s) you are. Good luck, enjoy your summer, and I look forward to seeing you in the fall!

AP Summer Help Night

ONW Raven's Nest

Wednesday, August 5th from 4-7pm

Come meet with your AP teacher, get your questions answered, and receive feedback on your work before it is due. **No appointment necessary!**

Grading Information

Part 1: The Rhetorical Situation

- Your task is to analyze the rhetorical situation of an assigned speech (see page 3).
- The resulting five paragraphs of response will be worth 8 points each for a total of **40 possible points**.
- Each of these responses must be labeled, typed, and neatly formatted.
- Your response need not be more than 5-7 sentences per paragraph. Your document for these five responses cannot exceed two typed pages.
- Responses determined to be less than adequate will be graded as such, revisions will be assigned, and students may be assessed a late penalty.

Part 2: AP Synthesis Essay

- Each student will complete the synthesis essay to the best of their ability (see pages 4-13).
- The resulting five-paragraph essay will be **worth 40 possible points**.
- To receive full credit, each essay must include an introduction with a thesis, three body paragraphs with claims and evidence, and a conclusion. **This is a college-credit course**; if your first essay is not **at least 1.75 pages** (but **no more than 3 pages**), you are not doing enough to develop your arguments.
- Essays determined to be less than adequate will be graded as such, revisions will be assigned, and students may be assessed a late penalty.

Part 3: ACT Reading Practice Questions

- There are two ACT readings, and 10 questions per reading (see pages 14-18).
- **Choose any 5 questions per reading** and justify your response with good evidence and reasoning.
- Responses that receive full credit must be accurate and must be justified with evidence from the text.
- Each of your 10 responses will be worth 2 points, for a **total of 20 points**.
- Responses determined to be less than adequate will be graded as such, revisions will be assigned, and students may be assessed a late penalty.

Total Points Possible

- For the entire AP Language summer assignment, **there is a maximum of 100 possible points**.
- Any of these components could be followed up by a future writing assignment or group project. Any future work will be considered a separate assignment with separate points.
- Providing responses and essays that are determined to be less than adequate (essentially, a summer assignment that shows very little effort) will likely result in a D as the first grade of the semester.

REMINDER: You are to work on these assignments individually; these are not group projects, and they will be submitted to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. If you decide this is too much work and wish to change your schedule, please contact the counselors as soon as possible.

If you decide to use AI, you should absolutely change your schedule – I love kids and I love teaching, but I won't tolerate lazy thinking or intellectual "outsourcing." In this class, we use OUR brains, not a machine's.

If you have any questions or concerns about the grading or point distribution for this summer assignment, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Fouquet (jfouquetonw@olatheschools.org).

Part 1: The Rhetorical Situation

Your sophomore teachers have invested a lot of time having you study and consider the rhetorical situation (see diagram below). Your understanding of each of these five elements (speaker, audience, message, purpose, and exigence) will play an enormous role in your success in AP Language, so I want to see how comfortable you are analyzing these elements in a short text.

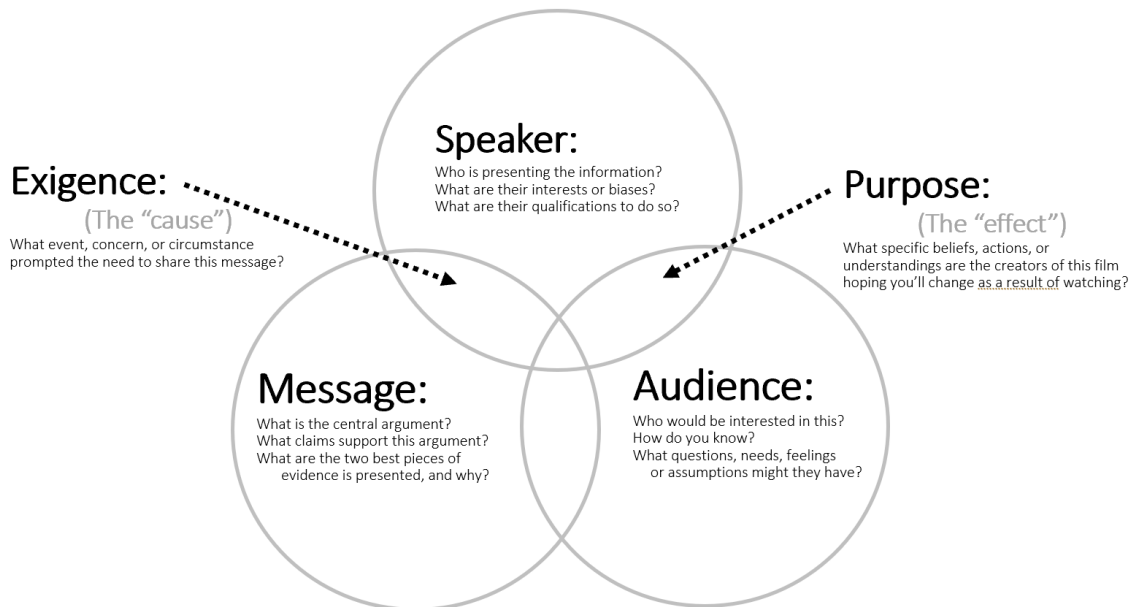


Figure 1: The Rhetorical Situation, as taught in 9th and 10th grade at Olathe Northwest High School.

Go to this website: <https://www.planetary.org/worlds/pale-blue-dot>

Once you have read and considered the context (intro information) and the speech (in the gray box), **write a paragraph analyzing each of these five elements for a total of FIVE paragraphs, making sure you've answered all the sub-questions I've provided.**

Each of your responses should be clearly labeled, and each paragraph should be treated as an individual response (as opposed to being a cohesive, five-paragraph essay). Your responses should demonstrate careful, analytical thinking and impressive writing. For example, when considering "**AUDIENCE**," very few texts are made "for the general public." Each written work targets a specific subgroup or "type" of person who has related interests or concerns. What kind of people is *that* audience made up of? What are *that* group's common characteristics, concerns, or beliefs? How do you know?

In this day and age, this is *exactly* the kind of assignment students might ask ChatGPT to help them with. After all, it would save so much time and thinking: **DON'T**. You are not here to "complete tasks" - you are here to share your level of understanding so that I know how to **IMPROVE YOUR THINKING** and **MOVE YOUR SKILLS** to the next level.

Part 2: AP Synthesis Essay

For this part of your summer assignment, you will be writing a full synthesis essay based on a prompt from the AP Lang exam. **Your essay must be five paragraphs long**, including an introduction and conclusion. **Each of the three body paragraphs must contain claims and evidence** that support your thesis. Proofreading and neat formatting are also expectations in a college-credit class, so be diligent in your preparation. Below is a brief description of the synthesis essay you'll be working on, and on the following pages you will find the corresponding prompt and materials.

Synthesis Essay Description:

The synthesis essay portion of the AP Lang exam requires examinees to write a complete essay in response to an arguable prompt using at least three of six or seven possible sources. These sources include printed material, such as articles or research studies, as well as images, charts, graphs, calendars, lists of data, etc.

You must come up with a stance on the given prompt, then write a five-paragraph essay using at least three of the sources as evidence, quoting and citing as necessary. **This is a college-credit course**; if your essay is not **at least 1.75** pages (but **no more than 3** pages), you are not doing enough to develop your ideas.

The **best** five-paragraph essays usually show the following characteristics:

- An introduction
- A clear thesis statement that answers the prompt
- **Each paragraph has a clear, compelling claim**
- Evidence is embedded; **no “dumped” quotes**
- Strive for a mixture of short quotes, longer quotes, and paraphrase
- Commentary or analysis that connects your evidence to your claim
- A blend of sources in each body paragraph
- Consistent format for all citations
- A conclusion that drives home the point of the essay

Please follow the instructions on the page with the chosen prompt; I also want you to highlight, circle, or make note of any of the skills in the list above you feel you don't completely understand.

You may type this essay using Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Please save your work, and come to the first day of class this fall with your assignment completed according to the instructions above.

2026 ONW AP Language Synthesis Essay

Introduction

As the Internet and access to social media become increasingly widespread, there has been considerable debate about whether easy access to technological forms of communication are beneficial to children and teenagers. While some commentators see benefits to children from digital media, others say that "screen time" is psychologically damaging.

Assignment:

Carefully read the six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the role, if any, that digital media should play in the lives of young people.

- Source A (Mohammed)
- Source B (Grunwald report)
- Source C (Mosley)
- Source D (UHls)
- Source E (Childtrends.org)
- Source F (Pew Charitable Trust)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least 3 of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. **Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.**
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Source A:

Saro Mohammed, Ph.D., "Is technology good or bad for learning?", *Brookings*, May 8, 2019

I'll bet you've read something about technology and learning recently. You may have read that device use enhances learning outcomes. Or perhaps you've read that screen time is not good for kids. Maybe you've read that there's no link between adolescents' screen time and their well-being. Or that college students' learning declines the more devices are present in their classrooms.

If ever there were a case to be made that more research can cloud rather than clarify an issue, technology use and learning seems to fit the bill. This piece covers what the research actually says, some outstanding questions, and how to approach the use of technology in learning environments to maximize opportunities for learning and minimize the risk of doing harm to students.

The Good

I have frequently cited mixed evidence about blended learning, which strategically integrates in-person learning with technology to enable real-time data use, personalized instruction, and mastery-based progression. One thing that this nascent evidence base does show is that technology can be linked to improved learning. When technology is integrated into lessons in ways that are aligned with good

in-person teaching pedagogy, learning can be better than without technology.

A 2018 meta-analysis of dozens of rigorous studies of ed tech, along with the executive summary of a forthcoming update (126 rigorous experiments), indicated that when education technology is used to individualize students' pace of learning, the results overall show "enormous promise." In other words, ed tech can improve learning when used to personalize instruction to each student's pace.

Further, this same meta-analysis, along with other large but correlational studies (e.g., OECD 2015), also found that increased access to technology in school was associated with improved proficiency with, and increased use of, technology overall. This is important in light of the fact that access to technology outside of learning environments is still very unevenly distributed across ethnic, socio-economic, and geographic lines. Technology for learning, when deployed to all students, ensures that no student experiences a "21st-century skills and opportunity" gap.

More practically, technology has been shown to scale and sustain instructional practices that would be too resource-intensive to work in exclusively in-person learning environments, especially those with the highest needs. In multiple, large-scale studies where technology has been incorporated into the learning experiences of hundreds of students across multiple schools and school systems, they have been associated with better academic outcomes than comparable classrooms that did not include technology. Added to these larger bodies of research are dozens, if not hundreds, of smaller, more localized examples of technology being used successfully to improve students' learning experiences. Further, meta-analyses and syntheses of the research show that blended learning can produce greater learning than exclusively in-person learning.

All of the above suggest that technology, used well, can drive equity in learning opportunities. We are seeing that students and families from privileged backgrounds are able to make choices about technology use that maximize its benefits and minimize its risks, while students and families from marginalized backgrounds do not have opportunities to make the same informed choices. Intentional, thoughtful inclusion of technology in public learning environments can ensure that all students, regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language status, special education status, or other characteristics, have the opportunity to experience learning and develop skills that allow them to fully realize their potential.

The Bad

On the other hand, the evidence is decidedly mixed on the neurological impact of technology use. In November 2016, the American Association of Pediatrics updated their screen time guidelines for parents, generally relaxing restrictions and increasing the recommended maximum amount of time that children in different age groups spend interacting with screens. These guidelines were revised not because of any new research, but for two far more practical reasons. First, the nuance of the existing evidence—especially the ways in which recommendations change as children get older—was not adequately captured in the previous guidelines. Second, the proliferation of technology in our lives had made the previous guidelines almost impossible to follow.

The truth is that infants, in particular, learn by interacting with our physical world and with other humans, and it is likely that very early (passive) interactions with devices—rather than humans—can disrupt or misinform neural development. As we grow older, time spent on devices often replaces time spent engaging in physical activity or socially with other people, and it can even become a substitute for emotional regulation, which is detrimental to physical, social, and emotional development.

In adolescence and young adulthood, the presence of technology in learning environments has also been associated with (but has not been shown to be the cause of) negative variables such as attention deficits or hyperactivity, feeling lonely, and lower grades.

Multitasking is not something our brains can do while learning, and technology often represents not just one more "task" to have to attend to in a learning environment, but multiple additional tasks due to the variety of apps and programs installed on and producing notifications through a single device:

The Pragmatic

The current takeaway from the research is that there are potential benefits and risks to deploying technology in learning environments. While we can't wrap this topic up with a bow just yet — there are still more questions than answers — there is evidence that technology can amplify effective teaching and learning when in the hands of good teachers. The best we can do today is understand how technology can be a valuable tool for educators to do the complex, human work that is teaching by capitalizing on the benefits while remaining fully mindful of the risks as we currently understand them.

Source B:

The following facts are from a private research survey entitled *"What Parents Think About Mobile Devices for Early Childhood and K-12 Learning."*

- One in Five Children Don't Use Any Mobile or Portable Devices
- Almost one in five children (18 percent) don't use any family-owned mobile or portable devices. Younger children are most likely to be non-users, with 29 percent of K-2 parents and 16 percent of parents of students in grades 3-5 reporting that their children do not use any family-owned mobile or portable devices. Still, 18 percent of middle school students and 9 percent of high school students are non-users of these devices as well, their parents report.
- This does not mean that families of non-users do not use any technology, or that their parents don't own portable or mobile devices; 52 percent of parents of non-users report that they have smartphones, and 60 percent say they have some type of mobile device in their homes.
- Parents of non-users report mixed views about mobile devices. The majority of these parents (61 percent) "completely" or "somewhat agree" that mobiles open up learning opportunities that their child did not have before. These parents also agree, though not as strongly as other parents, that mobile devices have the potential to provide many learning benefits. On the other hand, parents of non-users are less likely to agree that mobile devices are a great way to engage students in the classroom. More than one in four parents of non-users (28 percent) "completely" or "somewhat disagree" with this potential benefit, compared to 17 percent of parents overall.
- Parents of non-users are less willing to be responsible for school-owned devices; only about one-third of parents (31 percent) say they are willing to be responsible for school-owned devices, compared to about half of parents (51 percent) overall.
- Their parents are less likely to have a college degree and less likely to be enamored or savvy with technology.

Source C:

Tonya Mosley, "A 'No Technology' School: The Waldorf Approach", *Seattle Refined*, September 16, 2014

On the first day of school, Tracy Bennett and staff members at Seattle's Waldorf High School stood on the shores of Lake Washington to welcome one of its students. The high schooler had swam across the lake from his home on the eastside to class at his high school's new home in Magnuson Park.

Several other students rode in on their bicycles, and only a handful arrived by car.

"That's our students," chuckled Bennett, the head of administration at the only Waldorf high school in the state. "They're always on the move."

Educators at the Waldorf School in Seattle take a lot of pride in showing off just how handy, athletic and artistic their students are. The high school students are, after all, on the last leg of their Waldorf experience—a culmination of 12 years of education almost entirely free of television, video games, computers and smartphones.

The Waldorf philosophy is simple: Students do not benefit from using computer devices before the age of 12.

The Waldorf approach has been around since 1919, but in our tech-obsessed world its stance on media and electronic devices seems to resonate more than ever according to Bennett. Elementary students are discouraged from using all forms of technology, even at home. In middle school, students are introduced in controlled environments. In high school, students are encouraged to use technology as a tool for learning. Like the middle and elementary students, the high schoolers are given breaks to play games with each other—with classes offered like woodworking, sculpture and how to make root beer and sauerkraut.

"It's the fastest growing movement in the world," says Bennett. But what may be even more surprising is the type of parents that choose this type of education. According to Bennett, a good number of them work for tech companies like Microsoft, Amazon and Google. "They want their children to be children. We are not anti-technology. We just believe it is one tool in the box."

Brenda Baker, admissions and coordinator for Waldorf continues. "It's about developing and honing the power of observation. Our students are highly curious and creative. The sensory experience gets to the heart of learning. Bringing in technology at a later age gives them the tools to discern the best times to use it."

This summer the high school moved into its new home tucked away in North Seattle's Magnuson Park. It is an unlikely location, housed just off the banks of Lake Washington and surrounded by public wetlands and sports fields. As part of the curriculum, the students will have access to many of the park's amenities. "This area fits into our curriculum nicely because our kids will have access to real life experiences."

Waldorf High School costs about \$21,000 a year, and about 30 percent of the students receive financial aid. Baker says you do not have to attend Waldorf to experience the benefits of cutting down on technology.

"Maybe put the phone away during dinner with your kids. It's all about finding ways to be human and connect on a human level."

Source D:

Yalda Uhls, "The Internet Will Not Turn Your Teen into a Brain-Dead Zombie", Zocalo Public Square

I come bearing good news: Our teens are not growing into brain-dead zombies or emotionally stunted sociopaths. After more than a decade of research by child psychologists like me, we have discovered that the kids are all right. In study after study of emotional and intelligence indicators, 21st-century children use media to connect with their friends and learn about the world, just like those of us who were children of the 20th century did.

But you don't have to take it from me. The proof is in the past. Every time a new technology is introduced, it becomes a cultural battleground. And ultimately, we come to a truce. Take this one example:

Near the end of the 19th century, a new medium was unleashed upon the world. Children took to it like ducks to water, and this terrified adults. Young people everywhere spent hours on end immersed, while simultaneously ignoring the grown-ups in their lives. Understandably, parents were alarmed and worried that this new medium and its racy content were ruining young minds.

Change 19th to 20th, and I could be talking about the Internet. So what was this addictive content? Romantic novels.

Example two comes from Azriel L. Eisenberg, writing in the "American Journal of Psychiatry":

This new invader of the privacy of the home has brought many a disturbing influence in its wake. Parents have become aware of a puzzling change in the behavior patterns of their children. They are bewildered by a host of new problems, and find themselves unprepared, frightened, resentful, helpless. They cannot lock out this intruder because it has gained an invincible hold of their children.

What was this dreaded intruder that Eisenberg wrote about in 1936? The radio. Example three

comes from an academic study on parents' reactions to a new media:

One mother reports that her children are aggressive and irritable as a result of over-stimulating experiences, which leads to sleepless nights and tired days.

Overstimulation and aggression? Her kids must be addicted to social media and violent video games. But this article was written in 1950. She's talking about TV.

In the second decade of the 21st century, with more information at our fingertips than any time in history, you can find evidence of all of these old fears and trends and studies online. But we still haven't managed to assuage our concerns about kids today, who have adopted their generation's media with ardent fervor.

In a recent Pew poll, 73 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds reported they had smartphones, 52 percent said they spent time with friends playing video games, and 24 percent said they go online "almost constantly." What are we to make of these statistics? Each time I speak to adults, parents, teachers, and anyone who cares about kids, they express their worry about the "addictive" nature of digital media and mobile phones and the dangers kids are exposed to online. Meanwhile, Silicon Valley evangelists claim their new devices and apps are going to make the world a better place. Who is right, and who is wrong? The answer is somewhere in the middle: digital media are a new environment that has both positive and negative effects on our children and our society.

While research on the Internet and the developing brain is in the nascent stages, we can learn about our brain's ability to successfully adapt to new environments from past research. Studies show that our brains are incredibly plastic, and never more so than in early childhood and adolescence. This means our brains rapidly attune to new surroundings—whether we're moving to a new city or to a new kind of virtual environment. Moreover, we are learning that our brains adapt to new social worlds, too:

As tweens and teens use the Internet and video games to connect with friends, their social brains are adapting quickly to this new environment. Remember, humans adapted and thrived in many different habitats and climates over thousands of years; as the digital natives continue to develop, so will their ability to adapt successfully to the online environment.

We may finally be at a tipping point, one we have seen with every introduction of new media. New data from respected social scientists around the world continues to demonstrate that children are adapting and sometimes thriving as they embrace 21st-century media; these small and incremental changes may be building to permanent change. Perhaps now the hysteria will finally come to an end. Encouraging signs point to a leveling out of the national conversation.

For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics just published new key messages for families regarding media and technology use. While they didn't go so far as to change their recommendations on the amount of screen time that is healthy for children, they did state that the quality of the media content is more important than time spent. They also made it clear that online relationships are essential for adolescent development. Ultimately, their message was that media is just another environment—like the playground—where children will spend time, but require careful supervision to do so safely.

Childhood is still childhood. I couldn't have put it better than K.G., a first-grade teacher whose words have become an Internet meme: "Yes, kids love technology, but they also love Legos, scented markers, handstands, books and mud puddles. It's all about balance."

It's time for adults—digital immigrants to the next generation's natives—to adapt, step in, and be that balance. Instead of focusing our energy on being "for" or "against" technology, let's guide children in how to use it wisely and safely. Let's help them make the most of this new place they love, while continuing to teach them the importance of face-time, discipline, and moderation. Judging by history, when this generation grows up, they'll be busy coping with their own fears of whatever new thing their kids are using.

Source E:

The following information was summarized from a report by Childtrends.org.

While bullying existed long before the internet, the rise of smartphones and social media has brought a new and more public arena into play for this aggressive behavior.

Nearly half of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 (46%) report ever experiencing at least one of six cyberbullying behaviors asked about in a Pew Research Center survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022.¹

The most commonly reported behavior in this survey is name-calling, with 32% of teens saying they have been called an offensive name online or on their cellphone. Smaller shares say they have had false rumors spread about them online (22%) or have been sent explicit images they did not ask for (17%).

Some 15% of teens say they have experienced someone other than a parent constantly asking them where they are, what they are doing or who they are with, while 10% say they have been physically threatened and 7% of teens say they have had explicit images of them shared without their consent. In total, 28% of teens have experienced multiple types of cyberbullying.

Defining cyberbullying in this report

This report measures cyberbullying of teens using six distinct behaviors:

- Offensive name-calling
- Spreading of false rumors about them
- Receiving explicit images they did not ask for
- Physical threats
- Constantly being asked where they are, what they are doing, or who they are with by someone other than a parent
- Having explicit images of them shared without their consent

Teens who indicate they have personally experienced any of these behaviors online or while using their cellphone are considered targets of cyberbullying in this report. The terms “cyberbullying” and “online harassment” are used interchangeably throughout this report. Age and gender are related to teens’ cyberbullying experiences, with older teen girls being especially likely to face this abuse.

Teens’ experiences with online harassment vary by age. Some 49% of 15- to 17-year-olds have experienced at least one of the six online behaviors, compared with 42% of those ages 13 to 14. While similar shares of older and younger teens report being the target of name-calling or rumor spreading, older teens are more likely than their younger counterparts (22% vs. 11%) to say someone has sent them explicit images they didn’t ask for, an act sometimes referred to as cyberflashing; had someone share explicit images of them without their consent (8% vs. 4%); or been the target of persistent questioning about their whereabouts and activities (17% vs. 12%).

While there is no gender difference in having ever experienced online abuse, teen girls are more likely than teen boys to say false rumors have been spread about them. But further differences are seen when looking at age and gender together: 15- to 17-year-old girls stand out for being particularly likely to have faced any cyberbullying, compared with younger teen girls and teen boys of any age. Some 54% of girls ages 15 to 17 have experienced at least one of the six cyberbullying behaviors, while 44% of 15- to 17-year-old boys and 41% of boys and girls ages 13 to 14 say the same. These older teen girls are also more likely than younger teen girls and teen boys of any age to report being the target of false rumors and constant monitoring by someone other than a parent.

There are also differences by household income when it comes to physical threats. Teens who are from households making less than \$30,000 annually are twice as likely as teens living in households making \$75,000 or more a year to say they have been physically threatened online (16% vs. 8%).

Beyond those differences related to specific harassing behaviors, older teen girls are particularly likely to say they experience multiple types of online harassment. Some 32% of teen girls have experienced two or more types of online harassment asked about in this survey, while 24% of teen boys say the same. And 15- to 17-year-olds are more likely than 13- to 14-year-olds to have been the target of multiple types of cyberbullying (32% vs. 22%).

Source F:

The following information was summarized from “Teens, Social Media, and Mental Health,” published by the Pew Charitable Trust.

The Pew Research Center has conducted multiple studies to understand how teenagers use social media and how it affects their mental health. Together, findings from 2023 and 2025 show that social media is a major part of teen life, with both meaningful benefits and growing concerns.

Social media use is widespread and frequent. In 2022, 95% of teens reported using YouTube, while about two-thirds used TikTok, and around six in ten used Instagram (62%) and Snapchat (59%). Teens use these platforms daily, and some report being online “almost constantly.” This high level of use helps explain why social media plays such a key role in teens’ social and emotional experiences.

Teens’ opinions about social media are mixed and have become more cautious over time. In 2025, 48% of teens say social media has a mostly negative effect on people their age, up from 32% in 2022. At the same time, only 14% say it negatively affects them personally, while 58% describe its impact on their own life as neutral. This pattern—seeing more harm for others than for themselves—has remained consistent across studies and suggests that teens are increasingly aware of risks but may not always feel personally affected.

Concerns about time spent online have also grown. In 2025, 45% of teens say they spend too much time on social media, compared with 36% in 2022. In earlier findings, about 36% already felt they spent too much time online, while most others believed their usage was about right. Additionally, more than half of teens (54%) say it would be difficult to give up social media, showing how deeply integrated it is in their daily routines.

At the same time, teens report many positive experiences. Large majorities say social media helps them feel connected and supported. For example, earlier data shows 80% feel more connected to friends’ lives, 71% say it gives them a place to express creativity, and 67% feel supported during tough times. Similarly, the 2025 report finds that 74% feel more connected to friends and 63% value social media for creativity and self-expression. These findings show that social media can play an important role in helping teens build relationships and express themselves.

However, negative experiences are also common. Some teens say social media contributes to stress, comparison, and emotional pressure. For example, 38% report feeling overwhelmed by drama, 31% feel left out, and 29% feel pressure to post content that gets attention. About 23% say social media makes them feel worse about their own life. In the 2025 findings, teens also report impacts on mental health, sleep, and confidence, especially when comparing themselves to others.

Gender differences appear consistently across both reports. Teen girls are more likely than boys to experience both the positive and negative sides of social media. They are more likely to use platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, and also more likely to report feeling overwhelmed, left out, or negatively affected in terms of confidence and mental health. In 2025, girls were again more likely than boys to report negative effects on mental health (25% vs. 14%), confidence (20% vs. 10%), and sleep (50% vs. 40%).

The research also highlights differences between teens and parents. Parents tend to be more concerned about the risks of social media, especially its impact on mental health and exposure to harmful content. Teens, however, often see their experiences as more balanced. In earlier findings, 39% of teens said their social media experiences are better than their parents think, while only 27% said they are worse. In 2025, this gap continues, with parents more likely to see social media as a major cause of mental health problems and teens less likely to agree. There is also a communication gap, as 80% of parents say they are comfortable discussing mental health, compared with 52% of teens.

In addition, teens express concerns about privacy and control. About 60% say they have little or no control over the personal information social media companies collect about them, although many are not highly concerned about this issue. This suggests that while teens are aware of data collection, it is not always a top priority compared to social and emotional experiences.

In summary, these combined findings show that social media is deeply embedded in teen life and has a complex impact. It provides important benefits such as connection, creativity, and support, but it also brings challenges like overuse, social pressure, and mental health concerns. Teens are increasingly aware of both sides, and their experiences vary based on factors such as gender, usage patterns, and communication with parents.

Part 3: ACT Reading Practice

Here you will gain some exposure to the reading portion of the ACT. You are all going to be juniors this year, meaning that the ACT is about to become very important to your college and scholarship aspirations. Not only that, but the ACT Reading portion also has much in common with some of the multiple-choice questions on the AP Lang exam. Either way, this will be great practice for the year ahead, and it will help to keep your critical thinking skills sharp.

The readings and questions below are taken directly from ACT Reading practice tests, but you will notice that the multiple-choice options have been taken away. **You must respond to any five of the following ten questions per passage (for a total of ten responses) in short-answer format, including evidence from the text to support your answer.** Answering the questions in this format will not only help you prepare for the ACT, but it will also prepare you for some of the common practices and critical thinking exercises we'll be doing this year.

Let me remind you one more time: there are two readings and twenty total questions on the following pages, **but you are choosing any five per passage (for a total of ten responses).**

Please type your responses in Microsoft Word or Google Docs, and be prepared to turn them in on the first day of class this fall. You should respond in complete sentences, use proper punctuation and capitalization, and support your responses fully and adequately. **None of your responses should exceed six typed lines.**

Below is a model response. Ignore the substance of these lines; the format is the focus.

1. Which statement best describes what the chief of the crows represents in this passage?

Sample response: *The chief of the crows represents the collective wisdom of the group. In paragraph two it says he is responsible for making decisions that his ancestors would see as good for this community, which is why he flies so swiftly to the source of their food. If everyone is going to follow, he must act wisely.*

These responses should be in their own document, separate from your rhetorical analysis responses and separate from your synthesis essay.

Do your best, but I can help with the final formatting before you are asked to submit these responses.

ACT Reading: Passage 1

This passage is a re-telling of a traditional American Indian legend. Use the passage below to answer any five of the ten questions, and use evidence from the text to support each of your answers.

“The Black Crow”

In ancient times, the people hunted the buffalo on the Great Plains. These huge animals were their source of food and clothing. With stone-tipped spears, they stalked the great beasts through the tall grasses. It was difficult and dangerous work, but they were forced to do it in order to survive.

At that time, there were many crows flying above the plains, as there are today. But unlike the crows we see now, these birds were white. And they were friends to the buffalo, which caused the hunters no end of travail. The white crows flew high above the plains, where they could see all that was happening below. And when they saw that hunters were approaching the herd, they would warn the buffalo. Swooping down low, they would land on the heads of the great beasts and call out to them: "Beware! Beware! Hunters are coming from the south! Caw, caw. Beware!" And the buffalo would stampede, leaving the hunters empty-handed.

This went on for some time, until the people were hungry, and something needed to be done. A council was convened, and the chief of the people spoke to them. "We must capture the chief of the crows, and teach him a lesson, he said. If we can frighten him, he will stop warning the buffalo when our hunters approach, and the other crows will stop as well."

The old chief then brought out a buffalo skin, one with the head and horns still attached. "With this, we can capture the chief of the crows," he said. And he gave the skin to one of the tribe's young braves, a man known as Long Arrow. "Disguise yourself with this, and hide among the buffalo in the herd," the chief told Long Arrow. "Then, when the chief of the crows approaches, you will capture him and bring him back to the tribe."

So Long Arrow donned the buffalo skin disguise and went out onto the plains. Carefully, he approached a large herd of buffalo and mingled among them, pretending to graze upon the grasses. He moved slowly with the herd as they sought fresh food, and he waited for the great white bird that was the chief of the crows.

The other braves made ready for the hunt. They prepared their stone-tipped spears and arrows, and they approached the grazing herd of beasts, hiding in ravines and behind rocks to try to sneak up on them. But the crows, flying high in the sky, saw everything. The chief of the crows saw the men in the ravines and tall grasses, and eventually he came gliding down to warn the buffalo of the approaching hunters.

Hearing the great white crow's warning, the herd ran from the hunters. All stampeded across the plains except Long Arrow, still in his disguise. Seeing that Long Arrow remained, and thinking that he was a buffalo like all the others, the great white crow flew to him and landed upon his head. "Caw, caw. Hunters are approaching! Have you not heard my warning? Why do you remain here?" But as the great bird cried out, Long Arrow reached from under his disguise and grabbed the bird's feet, capturing him. He pushed him into a rawhide bag and brought him back to the tribal council.

The people debated what to do with the chief of the crows. Some wanted to cut his wings, so that he could not fly. Some wanted to kill him, and some wanted to remove his feathers as punishment for making the tribe go hungry. Finally, one brave strode forward in anger, grabbed the rawhide bag that held the bird, and before anyone could prevent it, threw it into the fire.

As the fire burned the rawhide bag, the big bird struggled to escape. Finally, he succeeded in getting out of the bag and managed to fly out of the fire, but his feathers were singed and covered with black soot from the fire. The chief of the crows was no longer white; he was black - as crows are today.

And from that day forward, all crows have been black. And although they fly above the plains and can see all that transpires below, they no longer warn the buffalo that hunters are approaching.

Type your responses, and make sure none of your responses exceed six typed lines. Be sure to study the model below so you have the best chance of maximizing your points.

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1. According to the passage, why did the people use stone spears to hunt the buffalo?
2. Based on context clues, the word "travail" most likely means what?
3. Which statement best describes what the chief of the crows represents in this passage?
4. Which of the following best describes the people's motivation for wanting to capture the chief of the crows?
5. Long Arrow's activities among the herd while disguised imply what about him and/or his intentions or goals?
6. In this tale, what significance do the rawhide bag and stone-tipped spears have toward the story or the characters therein?
7. Why might the chief of the crows have landed upon Long Arrow's head after seeing the other buffalo stampede away?
8. Once the bird has been caught, what emotions are revealed by the people's deliberations about how to deal with him?
9. What does the story tell us about why Long Arrow was selected for this task?
10. Based on this story, what could we infer about the American Indians' thoughts or feelings toward crows? What did they think of crows, and how can you tell?

ACT Reading: Passage 2

This passage is an excerpt from *Sailing Alone Around the World*, by Joshua Slocum. Use the passage below to answer any five of the ten questions, and use evidence from the text to support each of your answers.

I had not been in Buenos Aires for a number of years. The place where I had once landed from packets in a cart was now built up with magnificent docks. Vast fortunes had been spent in remodeling the harbor; London bankers could tell you that. The port captain after assigning the *Spray* a safe berth with his compliments sent me word to call on him for anything I might want while in port and I felt quite sure that his friendship was sincere. The sloop has been well cared for at Buenos Aires; her dockage and tonnage dues are all free, and the yachting fraternity of the city welcomed her with a good will. In town, I found things not so greatly changed as about the docks and I soon felt myself more at home.

From Montevideo I had forwarded a letter from Sir Edward Hairby to the owner of the "Standard," Mr. Mulhall, and in reply to it was assured of a warm welcome to the warmest heart, I think, outside of Ireland. Mr. Mulhall, with a prancing team, came down to the docks as soon as the *Spray* was berthed, and would have me go to his house at once, where a room was waiting. And it was New Year's Day, 1896. The course of the *Spray* had been followed in the columns of the "Standard."

Mr. Mulhall kindly drove me to see many improvements about the city, and we went in search of some of the old landmarks. The man who sold lemonade on the plaza when first I visited this wonderful city I found selling lemonade still at two cents a glass; he had made a fortune by it. His stock in trade was a wash tub and a neighboring hydrant, a moderate supply of brown sugar, and about six lemons that floated on the sweetened water. The water from time to time was renewed from the friendly pump, but the lemon went on forever, and all at two cents a glass.

But we looked in vain for the man who once sold whisky and coffins in Buenos Aires; the march of civilization had crushed him -- memory only clung to his name. Enterprising man that he was, I fain would have looked him up. I remember the tiers of whisky barrels, ranged on end, on one side of the store, while on the other side, and divided by a thin partition, were the coffins in the same order, of all sizes and in great numbers. The unique arrangement seemed in order, for as a cask was emptied a coffin might be filled. Besides cheap whiskey and many other liquors, he sold "cider" which he manufactured from damaged Malaga raisins. Within the scope of his enterprise was also the sale of mineral waters, not entirely blameless of the germs of disease. This man surely catered to all the tastes, wants, and conditions of his customers.

Farther along in the city, however, survived the good man who wrote on the side of his store, where thoughtful men might read and learn: "This wicked world will be

destroyed by a comet! The owner of this store is therefore bound to sell out at any price and avoid the catastrophe.” My friend Mr. Mulhall drove me round to view the fearful comet with streaming tail pictured large on the merchant's walls.

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1. Based on the passage, what was “the Spray” and how could you tell?
2. Since his previous visit, where in Buenos Aires does the narrator say the greatest changes have occurred?
3. The author was shown around Buenos Aires by Mr. Mulhall. How did he come to know Mr. Mulhall?
4. Based on the passage, what was “the Standard” and how could you tell?
5. Based on context, the author uses the word “landmarks” to refer to what in particular?
6. Based on the word choice, character interactions, descriptions, etc., what would you say is the overall tone of this excerpt?
7. Based on the passage, what can you infer about the narrator’s feelings regarding being back in Buenos Aires?
8. Based on the passage, what is Mr. Mulhall’s attitude toward the narrator and his presence in Buenos Aires?
9. Based on the passage, what is the narrator’s relationship with the city of Buenos Aires? Is he from there originally? Has he visited frequently? Is he merely a tourist? How can you tell?
10. Based on the passage, how would you describe the city of Buenos Aires in 1896? What are the positive aspects of the city? What does the narrator enjoy about being there?