



OCEAN TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

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Advanced Placement English Language and Composition Summer Assignment 2026

Dear Student and Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to AP Language and Composition! Participation in the eleventh-grade Advanced Placement English program requires the completion of a summer assignment. This work will introduce several key skills and concepts that will be developed and strengthened throughout the course. The assignment is divided into four components, each designed to build essential reading, writing, and critical thinking abilities. Completing each part carefully and with your best effort is important to starting the year prepared and confident.

As part of the summer work, you are required to read two books: *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* by Stephen King and *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote. All assignment instructions, related documents, and rubrics are posted in our Google Classroom. Each component of the summer assignment is also outlined below. Please read all directions carefully to ensure that you meet all expectations and requirements.

DUE DATE: Thursday, September 3rd by 2:00 PM

- All assignment components must be submitted on Google Classroom.
- Submissions via email or Google Drive will not be accepted.
- Late submissions will not be accepted.
- Failure to meet the deadline will result in a zero and may impact your standing in the course.

NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM:

All parts of the summer assignment must be completed individually. You may not work with another student or group of students on any part of this assignment. Any form of cheating, plagiarism, or unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools violates the school's Academic Integrity Policy (see page 16 of the Student Handbook for full guidelines). Students caught cheating or sharing work will be referred for disciplinary action and will receive a 0 for the assignment. In addition, the offense will be noted by guidance and a notation will be placed in the Principal's Academic Integrity file. Please see page 16 of the Student Handbook for additional consequences. Issues of plagiarism/cheating will not only affect your grade but also your NHS eligibility. Be sure to start the year by demonstrating your academic integrity and completing your own work.

Assignment #1: Exploring and Analyzing the Rhetorical Situation

➤ Part I. Exploring the Rhetorical Situation | Taylor Swift's NYU Commencement Speech

In Part I of this assignment, you will analyze the rhetorical situation of Taylor Swift's 2022 NYU commencement speech using the S.P.A.C.E. framework. This activity introduces key concepts in rhetorical analysis and helps you think critically about how language is used to achieve purpose and connect with an audience.

Step 1: Learn About the Rhetorical Situation

- View the provided slideshow on the rhetorical situation and the S.P.A.C.E. framework.
- Use a Google Doc or notepaper to record this information. Keep your notes organized and accessible—you will need them when school begins.

Step 2: Watch and Read

- Watch Taylor Swift’s 2022 NYU Commencement Speech.
- Read the transcript carefully.

Step 3: Guided Annotation

- Watch the video guiding you through the annotations for this speech.
- Follow along and begin annotating your own copy of the transcript.
- Your annotations should include:
 - Notes identifying the speaker, purpose, audience, context, and exigence (S.P.A.C.E.).
 - Comments on important ideas or moments you find significant.

Step 4: Review the Sample Graphic Organizer

- View the completed S.P.A.C.E. graphic organizer for Taylor Swift’s speech to reinforce your understanding of the rhetorical situation.

Step 5: Submit Your Annotations

- Submit your annotated transcript on the Google Classroom assignment.

➤ Part II. Analyzing the Rhetorical Situation | MLK’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

In Part II of this assignment, you will continue building your understanding of the rhetorical situation by examining a classic nonfiction text: an excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963). This assignment builds on the foundational skills introduced in Part I and reinforces how the speaker, purpose, audience, context, and exigence shape a text.

Step 1: Read and Annotate

- Read the excerpt from “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and annotate directly in the Google Doc.
- Your annotations should include:
 - Notes identifying the speaker, purpose, audience, context, and exigence (S.P.A.C.E.).
 - Comments on important ideas or moments you find significant.

Step 2: Complete the S.P.A.C.E. Organizer

- Fill out the S.P.A.C.E. graphic organizer based on your reading and annotations.
- Use the sample graphic organizer from Assignment #1 as a guide.

Step 3: Submit Annotations and Graphic Organizer

- Submit your annotated text and completed graphic organizer on the Google Classroom assignment.

Assignment #2: Mentor Text Study | Stephen King’s *On Writing*

In this assignment, you will explore writing as a craft by reading Stephen King’s *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. This memoir serves as a mentor text, offering insight into how writers develop their skills, habits, and

perspectives. As you read, you will reflect on King's advice about writing and consider how his experiences can help guide your own growth as a writer.

Step 1: Read and Take Notes

- As you read *On Writing*, take notes on key ideas, advice, and insights about the writing process.
- Pay particular attention to King's purpose for writing this memoir and the messages he shares about becoming a better writer.

Step 2: Evaluate Reflection Questions

- Respond to each question in a well-developed paragraph (approximately 6–8 sentences).
- Support your ideas with direct references to *On Writing* and cite quotations appropriately.
- Clearly number each response to correspond with the question number.
- While your responses are written, they will also serve as starting points for class discussions once the course begins, so take time to reflect thoughtfully and express your ideas clearly.

« Reflection Questions:

1. Discuss King's "toolbox" analogy. What "tools" do you find most indispensable when you write? Are there any you would add to King's toolbox? Reference at least one quotation from the text in your response.
2. King describes the dangers of seeking reader feedback—or "opening the door"—too early. At what stage in a writing project do you seek feedback? Who are your trusted first readers, and why? What do you hope to hear from them?
3. King says he doesn't read just to "study the craft," but he still learns about writing through reading. As you start thinking more like a writer, do you notice yourself reading differently? Are you more aware of how authors write and the choices they make? Explain your answer with examples.
4. King says, "bad books have more to teach than the good ones." He believes most writers remember the first book they put down thinking, "I can do better than this." What do you think King means by this? How do you interpret his opinion?

Step 3: Respond to Reflection Questions

- Type your responses on an MLA-formatted document, including a proper heading, Times New Roman 12-point font, double spacing, in-text citations, and a works cited page.
- *On Writing* should be credited appropriately on the works cited page.
- Ensure your writing demonstrates careful attention to grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

Step 4: Submit Reflection Questions

- Attach your document and submit it on the Google Classroom assignment.

Assignment #3: Introducing Synthesis Writing | Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*

In this assignment, you will develop synthesis writing skills, an essential part of this course. After reading Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, you will respond to a modified synthesis prompt using multiple sources to build and support an original argument. This task builds on your experience with literary analysis, research writing, and argumentation while introducing how to combine sources to address a real-world issue.

In Cold Blood, first published in 1966, is often credited with creating the "nonfiction novel" genre. It examines the

real-life murders of a Kansas family while exploring justice, morality, and the U.S. legal system. Capote blends factual reporting with literary storytelling, based on extensive research and interviews. You previously explored similar themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, a close friend of Capote. While both authors address justice and human nature, this assignment will build on that foundation and encourage you to examine how Capote approaches these ideas differently.

Step 1: Read *In Cold Blood*

- Read Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* carefully.
- As you read, take notes using the reading focus questions as a guide. Be sure to record specific examples, quotations, and patterns that relate to each focus area.

« Reading Focus:

- The Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception:
 - How does Capote present the media's coverage of the Clutter murders and the trial?
 - How does narrative journalism differ from objective reporting?
 - What influence does media attention have on public opinion, the investigation, and the legal process?
- Humanizing Crime and Criminals:
 - How does Capote portray the murderers?
 - Does he humanize them? Villainize them?
 - How does the book complicate traditional ideas about “good” and “evil” in crime narratives?
- Justice and Morality in the American Legal System:
 - How is the criminal justice system depicted (e.g. fairness, punishment, and the death penalty)?
 - What moral questions does the book raise about punishment, redemption, and retribution?

Step 2: Learn About Synthesis Writing

- Review the synthesis writing guide to learn how writers use multiple sources to develop and support a well-reasoned, original argument. The guide includes: an overview of synthesis, a sample exam prompt, a comparison to research papers, and a real-world prompt with a sample essay.
- As you read the sample essay, note how the writer introduces a clear argument, connects ideas across sources, and integrates and cites evidence effectively.

Step 3: Review the Prompt

- Review the synthesis prompt and consider how it connects to themes addressed in *In Cold Blood*.
- **Note:** You are *not* responding to this prompt now; you will revisit it at the start of the school year when it serves as your opening writing benchmark.

« Prompt:

Media coverage plays a powerful role in shaping how the public understands crime, criminal investigations, and the justice system. Some argue that it promotes transparency and accountability. Others believe it distorts public opinion and threatens fairness in legal proceedings.

Write an essay in which you develop a position on the extent to which media coverage should influence public opinion and/or the criminal justice process. Use all three sources to support your argument. Refer to them by title or by the identifiers Source A, Source B, and Source C. You are not required to cite *In Cold Blood*, but your understanding of the text should inform your thinking.

Step 4: Evaluate the Sources

- To prepare for this prompt, carefully read and annotate the three sources.
- Note that this is a modified synthesis prompt. As you learned from the synthesis writing guide, standard

synthesis prompts include 5–7 sources and require students to use at least three to support their arguments. This prompt includes three sources total, all of which you will be expected to use in your essay.

- As you read, consider how each source could be used to support a position on the role of the media in shaping public opinion and influencing the justice system.

« **Sources:**

- An excerpt of “The News Media's Influence on Criminal Justice Policy: How Market-Driven News Promotes Punitiveness”
- Photograph from “The Impact of Media on Public Perception of Crime and Criminal Justice”
- “The Karen Read Trial and TikTok Bias”

Step 5: Submit Reading Notes and Annotated Sources

- Submit your reading notes and annotations for all three sources on the Google Classroom assignment.

Summer Assignment Submission Checklist

Be sure to submit each of the following assignments on Google Classroom by Thursday, September 4th by 2:00pm. As a reminder, late submissions will not be accepted for any reason.

Assignment #1: Exploring and Analyzing the Rhetorical Situation

Part I. Exploring the Rhetorical Situation | Taylor Swift’s NYU Commencement Speech

- ☐ Annotated transcript

Part II. Analyzing the Rhetorical Situation | MLK’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

- ☐ Annotated text
☐ Completed S.P.A.C.E. graphic organizer

Assignment #2: Mentor Text Study | Stephen King’s *On Writing*

- ☐ Responses to reflection questions (typed on an MLA-formatted document)

Assignment #3: Introducing Synthesis Writing | Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*

- ☐ *In Cold Blood* reading notes
☐ Annotated sources

By returning the signed course contract, you acknowledge that you have read, understood, and agreed to the expectations, deadlines, and academic integrity policies outlined in this letter.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us by email. Good luck, and have a happy and healthy summer!

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