Summer Reading List for AP Language and Composition 2026 – 2027

Welcome to AP Language and Composition!

According to the College Board course description, the AP English Language and Composition course "engages students in becoming skilled readers of prose written in a variety of contexts, and in becoming skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes". To help you prepare for your coursework and ultimately the AP Language Exam next May, you will be reading and taking notes this summer. These assignments will help you get a jumpstart on your first paper as well as topics and themes we will be discussing in class.

Since AP English Language is devoted to the study of non-fiction prose styles (autobiography, biography, essays, letters, speeches, journals, articles), you need to familiarize yourself with these types of writing. The following selections will get you started, and selections from some of these works will be studied in class.

It is important to note that, since this is a college-level course, the reading lists for AP Language and Composition contains works that may include some mature content. It is also imperative that you do not procrastinate on this reading since you need time to read TWO texts, be able to think about these serious works to understand all the levels of meaning, and to be able to complete your assignment on time.

Required Text:

How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One* by Stanley Fish

In his book, Stanley Fish explores what is a good sentence, various sentence styles, as well as the importance of the first and last sentences in texts. The author offers valuable insights into crafting compelling sentences which is a valuable tool to help you examine the author's craft especially in the rhetorical analysis question as well as helping earn the "sophistication point" on your AP exam.

And…YOUR CHOICE of **ONE** of the following titles -

***In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote**

On November 15, 1959, in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family were savagely murdered by blasts from a shotgun held a few inches from their faces. There was no apparent motive for the crime, and there were almost no clues. As Truman Capote reconstructs the murder and the investigation that led to the capture, trial, and execution of the killers, he generates both mesmerizing suspense and astonishing empathy. [violence, adult language/themes]

All the Right Stuff by Tom Wolfe

Tom Wolfe's The Right Stuff is a non-fiction account of the U.S. test pilots and astronauts who participated in the early days of space exploration. The book explores the mindset and motivations of those who pushed the boundaries of flight, seeking to understand what it takes to have "the right stuff" - the courage, determination, and mental fortitude required to embrace the immense risks of space travel. [discussions of violence, sex, and death, as well as depictions of alcohol consumption, smoking, and some profanity]

***The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness* by Sy Montgomery**

In this astonishing book from the author of the bestselling memoir, *The Good, Good Pig*, Sy Montgomery explores the emotional and physical world of the octopus—a surprisingly complex, intelligent, and spirited creature—and the remarkable connections it makes with humans. From New England aquarium tanks to the reefs of French Polynesia and the Gulf of Mexico, she has befriended octopuses with strikingly different personalities—gentle Athena, assertive Octavia, curious Kali, and joyful Karma. [animal death]

Assignment:

Upon your return to school, you will be given a writing assignment where you will apply the advice given in Stanley Fish's book. You will be analyzing the syntax and diction from Capote, Wolfe, or Montgomery's novel to determine their style and effect on readers.

Please take notes on the subject matter including - facts, quotes, summaries, paraphrases, interpretations, and reactions/reflections. There is no formal notetaking sheet for this assignment. You may use your own format.

Summer Reading List for AP Language and Composition 2026 – 2027

When taking notes, consider the following as you are reading:

- According to Stanley Fish's definition of what constitutes a good sentence, what were some powerful sentences in the novel that you chose? How are those sentences significant to understanding the literal and inferred meanings in the text that you chose?
- Are these sentences written using the subordinating, additive, or satirical style and to what effect?
- Does the author write in inverted, periodic, or use more cumulative sentences in his or her writing and to what effect?
- What kind of organizational structure do these sentences make up that contribute to a particular writing style and the understanding of the reader?
- How would you define/describe the writing style of the author of the book you selected to read?