

Briarcliff High School

AP Seminar – 2026

For your summer assignment, please choose an *interesting, current* topic or issue in the world and cultivate a text set of **eight** sources on this topic. Each source should provide a **different** perspective on the topic. This is due on the first day we meet in August.

You must have:

- Three news articles
 - These three articles must be from differing perspectives
 - These three articles must be recent (published within the last seven years)
- 1 movie/film
 - This could be fictional OR real (i.e., a documentary)
- 1 TED talk
- 1 YouTube video (not a TED talk)
- 1 podcast
- 1 image

Written requirements (to be done on the next page):

Each text from the set will require a 100 - 200 word summary of the source, including salient points, an explanation of the argument contained in the source and who is making the argument, and an explanation of how it connects to at least one of the other sources from the set.

You will also need to write a 500 word explanation of the text set, including background information on your chosen topic, why you are interested in it, and why it matters. You are welcome to use sources from the text set to help support your answers to these questions.

It is highly recommended that you do not leave this assignment until the end of the summer, but rather explore resources over the course of the summer holiday. This is meant to be an enjoyable deep-dive into a topic that you *actually find interesting*, so please take full advantage of the opportunity and figure out what you care about in the world!

Struggling to find topics of interest? Check out in-depth reports on topics found in places like NPR, The Week, The Economist, the New York Times, and Nature.com, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Look elsewhere, too! Google News also has an excellent “Beyond the Headlines” feature that offers a glimpse of interesting topics that are not headline news. An example of a topic/issue is “Homelessness” or “Wealth and Poverty” (which you cannot do since they are the examples).

<u>Text Set</u>		
	Link	Summary (see requirements in the green box on page 1)
Article 1		
Article 2		
Article 3		
Movie/Film		
TED Talk		
YouTube		
Podcast		
Image		
Explanation of the Text Set (see requirements in the green box on page 1)		

Twelve Ways To Mark Up A Book

Books are a fantastic way to gain knowledge. With books, one can learn new techniques, gain new skills, and learn from role models who have been to where one wants to be and can show the way. There are many different ways to read books and just as many ways to remember their salient points. One of the most effective ways to get the most out of a book is to mark it up. There is no standard way to mark up a text, but below are a few ways that students have found effective in marking up a textbook so that one can see the important points quickly, make it more memorable, and make it easy to pick up years later and re-acquaint oneself with the major concepts.

What Not To Do

- Don't use a highlighter – Quality marking isn't done with a fat-tipped highlighter. You can't write, which is an important part of marking the text, with a large marker. Get yourself some fine point colored pens to do the job.
- Don't mark large volumes of text – You want important points to stand out. Although we all know that everything can't be important, we often highlight all of the text on the page. You want to find the 20% of the text that is important and mark that.
- Don't take the time to mark up items that you read on a daily basis – (e.g., magazines, newspapers), unimportant or irrelevant items.
- Don't mark the obvious – Don't waste time marking up things that are already in your knowledge-base or skill set. If you already know it, you don't need to mark it.

What To Do

- Mark the text with a pencil, pen, or, even better, colored fine-tipped pens – Remember, you are not highlighting, you are writing.
- Know your preferences – Some of you have an aversion to mark directly in the text. Books are precious things to many people and they want to protect them from damage and even the wear and tear of everyday use. If this describes you, grab some Post-It brand notes and do your marking and writing on them. This also gives you the advantage to move and reorganize them should you see fit. As for me, I like to mark directly on the page. I find that my books become more valuable to me when I add my contributions to the information that they contain.
- Underline the topic sentence in a passage – Remember, each paragraph has one topic sentence. The rest is supporting information and examples. Identify the topic sentence to find it easier.
- Use codes – Flag text with codes (e.g., Question marks to indicate disagreement, Exclamation marks to note agreement or to flag a strong statement, triangles to indicate a change in thinking, or a star for the topic sentence).
- Write the passage topic in the margin as a reminder – Just a word or two.

- Write questions in the margin – When you don't understand something or when you don't understand the author's thought process on a particular topic; write the question in the margin as a reminder to settle the question.
- Circle new and unfamiliar words – Look them up as soon as possible.
- Add your or other author's perspectives in the margins. Other authors have surely written on the subject. What do they say? Do they agree with this author? If not, what do they say? Add these in margins.
- Add cross-reference notes to other works on the same topic – Use the author's name and a shortened version of the other book's title.
- Add structure to a narrative text – Use 1, 2, 3, 4...or an outline format I. A. B. C. 1, 2, 3, a, b, c...to add a structure that you understand.
- Draw arrows to related ideas – Or unrelated ideas...
- Summarize – Add your own summary after the last paragraph. That simple exercise will crystalize your thinking on the topic. If you can't write it, you don't understand it.

Extras

Post-It Notes are great ways to also mark locations within books, much like bookmarks do. With Post-It Notes, however, you can write on them so you can see where you are turning before you start flipping through the pages. One can also use colored paper clips to identify pages or chapters that are important.

Conclusion

The idea is to enter, by way of your markings, into a conversation with the author so that his knowledge is added to yours so that a synthesis occurs and you gain a new understanding.

A new — or new looking — book is a treasure. In my experience, however, I have found that a well-marked book becomes more like a treasured friend — one that you enjoy seeing again and again. It becomes much more enjoyable than a sterile copy that comes straight from the bookstore. Don't be afraid to mark up the books that you love.