

2017 – 2018 Summer Reading List & Assignments - AP LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION

*Unless otherwise noted, any full version of a text is acceptable.
Each assignment will be due on the first day of school.
Any student who would like to earn +5 **bonus points**
may turn in his/her project at Open House.*

AP Language and Composition

Summer Reading: *On Writing Well - William Zinsser*

In – class Readings: *The Great Gatsby* – F. Scott Fitzgerald
 The Old Man and the Sea – Ernest Hemingway
 To Kill a Mockingbird - Harper Lee
 A Separate Peace – John Knowles
 The Chosen – Chaim Potok

Amusing Ourselves to Death – Neil Postman
The New Oxford Guide to Writing – Thomas S. Kane
On Writing Well - William Zinsser

(optional - for your own study)
Cracking the AP English Language & Composition Exam, 2017 Edition – The Princeton Review

Did you know that many of the best professional writers were once journalists at some point in their writing careers? Writers such as Mark Twain, Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Tom Wolfe, John Steinbeck, Truman Capote, E.B. White, and Jon Krakauer all worked as cub reporters on newspapers and magazines. Even Charles Dickens, the most famous writer of his time, began his writing career as a journalist.

Please know that AP English Language is NOT a journalism course—it’s a writing course. But journalistic writing is just “good writing,” plain and simple. In AP Language, you will learn to use some of the same rhetorical strategies journalists use in their writing. Why? For one thing, journalists understand how to write for the reader. They know how to capture a reader’s attention and keep that attention to the end of the piece. They know how to anticipate their reader’s questions and to explain complicated topics. They know how to present background information to help the reader comprehend and how to deftly argue their positions. They know how to communicate. And being able to communicate with a reader is the most important part of writing for an audience—including those college professors you will soon meet.

So although the AP English Language and Composition course is not “journalism,” it includes writing assignments that teach the clear, concise style and research skills of the journalist and reading assignments that demand close reading and high-level thinking—all skills you will use in your academic future.

I look forward to working with you next year. I’m confident that what you learn in AP composition will serve you well in your future.

Summer Reading Assignments

The following summer assignments are designed to get you started at looking at yourself as a writer and examining the way writers write. These two assignments—the On Writing Well annotations and the “Why I Write” essay assignment— will launch our semester-long discussion of writing and the rhetorical choices writers make.

1) *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser

You will need to obtain a copy of the book and read the assigned chapters. Annotate the text as you have been taught in previous classes.

Required Chapters:
Chapters 1-10
Chapters 20-25

See the rubric at the end of this document.

2) Read and annotate George Orwell’s “Why I Write”

- a) Annotate the essay as you have been taught in previous classes. Annotate for both content and structure. (See Orwell’s “Why I Write” essay as an attachment to these directions.)
- b) Write a 600-800 word essay titled “Why I Write,” modeled upon Orwell’s essay. You will structure your essay as he does. You may agree or disagree with what Orwell says and reveal what your own thoughts, experiences and successes have been. Note that this essay is autobiographical: please include background about yourself as a writer, an analysis of your motives as a writer, and a section on the power (or challenges) of writing in your own life as Orwell does.

See the rubric at the end of this document.

*If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email.
I cannot guarantee that I will respond quickly as I tend to shut down some of my connectivity over the summer.
abeaver@nrcaknights.com*



Why I Write

George Orwell

From a very early age, perhaps the age of five or six, I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer. Between the ages of about seventeen and twenty-four I tried to abandon this idea, but I did so with the consciousness that I was outraging my true nature and that sooner or later I should have to settle down and write books.

I was the middle child of three, but there was a gap of five years on either side, and I barely saw my father before I was eight. For this and other reasons I was somewhat lonely, and I soon developed disagreeable mannerisms which made me unpopular throughout my schooldays. I had the lonely child's habit of making up stories and holding conversations with imaginary persons, and I think from the very start my literary ambitions were mixed up with the feeling of being isolated and undervalued. I knew that I had a facility with words and a power of facing unpleasant facts, and I felt that this created a sort of private world in which I could get my own back for my failure in everyday life. Nevertheless the volume of serious — i.e. seriously intended — writing which I produced all through my childhood and boyhood would not amount to half a dozen pages. I wrote my first poem at the age of four or five, my mother taking it down to dictation. I cannot remember anything about it except that it was about a tiger and the tiger had 'chair-like teeth' — a good enough phrase, but I fancy the poem was a plagiarism of Blake's 'Tiger, Tiger'. At eleven, when the war of 1914-18 broke out, I wrote a patriotic poem which was printed in the local newspaper, as was another, two years later, on the death of Kitchener. From time to time, when I was a bit older, I wrote bad and usually unfinished 'nature poems' in the Georgian style. I also attempted a short story which was a ghastly failure. That was the total of the would-be serious work that I actually set down on paper during all those years.

However, throughout this time I did in a sense engage in literary activities. To begin with there was the made-to-order stuff which I produced quickly, easily and without much pleasure to myself. Apart from school work, I wrote *vers d'occasion*, semi-comic poems which I could turn out at what now seems to me astonishing speed — at fourteen I wrote a whole rhyming play, in imitation of Aristophanes, in about a week — and helped to edit a school magazines, both printed and in manuscript. These magazines were the most pitiful burlesque stuff that you could imagine, and I took far less trouble with them than I now

would with the cheapest journalism. But side by side with all this, for fifteen years or more, I was carrying out a literary exercise of a quite different kind: this was the making up of a continuous 'story' about myself, a sort of diary existing only in the mind. I believe this is a common habit of children and adolescents. As a very small child I used to imagine that I was, say, Robin Hood, and picture myself as the hero of thrilling adventures, but quite soon my 'story' ceased to be narcissistic in a crude way and became more and more a mere description of what I was doing and the things I saw. For minutes at a time this kind of thing would be running through my head: 'He pushed the door open and entered the room. A yellow beam of sunlight, filtering through the muslin curtains, slanted onto the table, where a match-box, half-open, lay beside the inkpot. With his right hand in his pocket he moved across to the window. Down in the street a tortoiseshell cat was chasing a dead leaf, etc. etc. This habit continued until I was about twenty-five, right through my non-literary years. Although I had to search, and did search, for the right words, I seemed to be making this descriptive effort almost against my will, under a kind of compulsion from outside. The 'story' must, I suppose, have reflected the styles of the various writers I admired at different ages, but so far as I remember it always had the same meticulous descriptive quality.

When I was about sixteen I suddenly discovered the joy of mere words, i.e. the sounds and associations of words. The lines from *Paradise Lost* —

So hee with difficulty and labour hard

Moved on: with difficulty and labour hee.

which do not now seem to me so very wonderful, sent shivers down my backbone; and the spelling 'hee' for 'he' was an added pleasure. As for the need to describe things, I knew all about it already. So it is clear what kind of books I wanted to write, in so far as I could be said to want to write books at that time. I wanted to write enormous naturalistic novels with unhappy endings, full of detailed descriptions and arresting similes, and also full of purple passages in which words were used partly for the sake of their own sound. And in fact my first completed novel, *Burmese Days*, which I wrote when I was thirty but projected much earlier, is rather that kind of book.

I give all this background information because I do not think one can assess a writer's motives without knowing something of his early development. His subject matter will be determined by the age he lives in — at least this is true in tumultuous, revolutionary ages like our own — but before he ever

begins to write he will have acquired an emotional attitude from which he will never completely escape. It is his job, no doubt, to discipline his temperament and avoid getting stuck at some immature stage, in some perverse mood; but if he escapes from his early influences altogether, he will have killed his impulse to write. Putting aside the need to earn a living, I think there are four great motives for writing, at any rate for writing prose. They exist in different degrees in every writer, and in any one writer the proportions will vary from time to time, according to the atmosphere in which he is living. They are:

(i) *Sheer egoism*. Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on the grown-ups who snubbed you in childhood, etc., etc. It is humbug to pretend this is not a motive, and a strong one. Writers share this characteristic with scientists, artists, politicians, lawyers, soldiers, successful businessmen — in short, with the whole top crust of humanity. The great mass of human beings are not acutely selfish. After the age of about thirty they almost abandon the sense of being individuals at all — and live chiefly for others, or are simply smothered under drudgery. But there is also the minority of gifted, willful people who are determined to live their own lives to the end, and writers belong in this class. Serious writers, I should say, are on the whole more vain and self-centered than journalists, though less interested in money.

(ii) *Aesthetic enthusiasm*. Perception of beauty in the external world, or, on the other hand, in words and their right arrangement. Pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story. Desire to share an experience which one feels is valuable and ought not to be missed. The aesthetic motive is very feeble in a lot of writers, but even a pamphleteer or writer of textbooks will have pet words and phrases which appeal to him for non-utilitarian reasons; or he may feel strongly about typography, width of margins, etc. Above the level of a railway guide, no book is quite free from aesthetic considerations.

(iii) *Historical impulse*. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity.

(iv) *Political purpose*. — Using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples' idea of the kind of society that they should strive after. Once again, no book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do

with politics is itself a political attitude.

It can be seen how these various impulses must war against one another, and how they must fluctuate from person to person and from time to time. By nature — taking your ‘nature’ to be the state you have attained when you are first adult — I am a person in whom the first three motives would outweigh the fourth. In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer. First I spent five years in an unsuitable profession (the Indian Imperial Police, in Burma), and then I underwent poverty and the sense of failure. This increased my natural hatred of authority and made me for the first time fully aware of the existence of the working classes, and the job in Burma had given me some understanding of the nature of imperialism: but these experiences were not enough to give me an accurate political orientation. Then came Hitler, the Spanish Civil War, etc. By the end of 1935 I had still failed to reach a firm decision. I remember a little poem that I wrote at that date, expressing my dilemma:

*A happy vicar I might have been
Two hundred years ago
To preach upon eternal doom
And watch my walnuts grow;
But born, alas, in an evil time,
I missed that pleasant haven,
For the hair has grown on my upper lip
And the clergy are all clean-shaven.
And later still the times were good,
We were so easy to please,
We rocked our troubled thoughts to sleep
On the bosoms of the trees.
All ignorant we dared to own
The joys we now dissemble;
The greenfinch on the apple bough
Could make my enemies tremble.
But girl's bellies and apricots,
Roach in a shaded stream,
Horses, ducks in flight at dawn,
All these are a dream.
It is forbidden to dream again;*

*We maim our joys or hide them:
Horses are made of chromium steel
And little fat men shall ride them.
I am the worm who never turned,
The eunuch without a harem;
Between the priest and the commissar
I walk like Eugene Aram;
And the commissar is telling my fortune
While the radio plays,
But the priest has promised an Austin Seven,
For Duggie always pays.
I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls,
And woke to find it true;
I wasn't born for an age like this;
Was Smith? Was Jones? Were you?*

The Spanish war and other events in 1936-37 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity.

What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art'. I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book, or even a long magazine article, if it were not also an aesthetic experience. Anyone who cares to examine my work will see that even when it is downright propaganda it contains much that a full-time politician would consider irrelevant. I am not able, and do not want, completely to abandon the world view that I acquired in childhood. So long as I remain alive and well I shall continue to feel strongly about prose style, to love the surface of the earth, and to take a pleasure in solid objects and scraps of useless information. It is no use trying to suppress that side of myself. The job

is to reconcile my ingrained likes and dislikes with the essentially public, non-individual activities that this age forces on all of us.

It is not easy. It raises problems of construction and of language, and it raises in a new way the problem of truthfulness. Let me give just one example of the cruder kind of difficulty that arises. My book about the Spanish civil war, *Homage to Catalonia*, is of course a frankly political book, but in the main it is written with a certain detachment and regard for form. I did try very hard in it to tell the whole truth without violating my literary instincts. But among other things it contains a long chapter, full of newspaper quotations and the like, defending the Trotskyists who were accused of plotting with Franco. Clearly such a chapter, which after a year or two would lose its interest for any ordinary reader, must ruin the book. A critic whom I respect read me a lecture about it. 'Why did you put in all that stuff?' he said. 'You've turned what might have been a good book into journalism.' What he said was true, but I could not have done otherwise. I happened to know, what very few people in England had been allowed to know, that innocent men were being falsely accused. If I had not been angry about that I should never have written the book.

In one form or another this problem comes up again. The problem of language is subtler and would take too long to discuss. I will only say that of late years I have tried to write less picturesquely and more exactly. In any case I find that by the time you have perfected any style of writing, you have always outgrown it. *Animal Farm* was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole. I have not written a novel for seven years, but I hope to write another fairly soon. It is bound to be a failure, every book is a failure, but I do know with some clarity what kind of book I want to write.

Looking back through the last page or two, I see that I have made it appear as though my motives in writing were wholly public-spirited. I don't want to leave that as the final impression. All writers are vain, selfish, and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery. Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand. For all one knows that demon is simply the same instinct that makes a baby squall for attention. And yet it is also true that one can write nothing readable unless one constantly struggles to efface one's own personality. Good prose

is like a windowpane. I cannot say with certainty which of my motives are the strongest, but I know which of them deserve to be followed. And looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a political purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally.

Rubrics for Summer Assignment

Assignment 1 & 2a Rubric:

Annotations

10 = Your annotations reveal compelling evidence that you have delved into the text. An authentic record of your *thinking* is on the page. (This student has gone above and beyond the average annotations or simple markings of a text. A reader can see what you were thinking as you read.)

8 = Your annotations reveal sufficient evidence that you have engaged and interacted with the text. (This student has completed the average annotations or simple markings of a text. A reader can see that you read but not necessarily what you were thinking.)

6 = Your annotations reveal limited evidence that you have engaged or interacted with the text. (There is underlining and highlighting with very limited margin notes. The student made a limited attempt at the task of annotating and engaging with a text.)

4 = Your annotations reveal little, if any, record of engagement or interaction with the text. (This student made a few underlines, highlighted a word here or there. There are no margin notes and little engagement with the text.)

0 = You did not annotate.

Assignment 2b Rubric:

Essay using Orwell's Model

9/A+ Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 essays and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their explanation or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language. These essays are superb, even magical at times.

8/A Effective Essay effectively examines the student's own history and attitudes about writing. The essay is a meaty, thorough written response modeled on Orwell's essay. The student reveals a thorough understanding of Orwell's original essay. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of elements of effective writing. Like a 9, this essay is excellent.

7/A- Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but provide a more complete explanation or demonstrate a more mature prose style. This essay is impressive, cogent, and convincing—well above average.

6/B Adequate Essay adequately analyzes the student's own history and attitudes about writing. The essay is a strong response modeled on Orwell's essay and reveals a solid understanding of Orwell's original essay. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear. Like a 7, this essay is above average but may be less mature in thought or less adept in organization, syntax, or mechanics—just above average.

5/B Essay analyzes the student's own history and attitudes about writing but may provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited—"thinner"—explanations. The essay reveals an understanding of Orwell's original essay but discussion may be superficial, meager, irrelevant, or vague. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas. This essay is average.

4/C Inadequate Essay inadequately analyzes the student's own history and attitudes about writing. The student does not model his or her piece or demonstrates a weak understanding of Orwell's original essay. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but is weak in content, maturity of thought, language facility and/or mechanics, suggesting an immature control of writing. This essay is average to below average.

3/C Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in self-analysis. These essays compound the weaknesses of a 4 essay. Ideas may be presented but not developed fully, demonstrating less control of writing.

2/D Little Success Essay demonstrates little success in analyzing student's own history and attitudes about writing. This essay may misunderstand the prompt, may fail to analyze the student's history or attitudes about writing, or may substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The student reveals a lack of understanding of Orwell's original essay. This prose demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing—weaknesses in content and coherence and/or syntax and mechanics.

1/F Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation and/or weak in their control of language.