

English 12-5 AP Language and Composition
Mr. York, Ms. Reiner, & Mr. Nailor
Summer Reading 2025-2026

AP English Language and Composition

This course emphasizes the development of advanced close reading and composition skills including the analysis of rhetoric as well as the composition of rhetorical analysis, argument, and synthesis essays. We will be reading primarily nonfiction literature including essays, memoirs, biographies, persuasive speeches, debates, and informal oral presentations. If you enjoy English because you love poetry, creative writing, or the drama inherent in fiction, that is awesome, but you should be aware that this course has a profoundly different focus.

Words of Warning

Regarding Work Habits:

AP Language and Composition is a class in which you will do extensive reading and perhaps even more writing—often composing an essay or two per week. A love of reading deeply and analytically is essential to success in this course, as is a strong work ethic. It will be hard to succeed in the class if you do not enjoy reading (especially non-fiction) and writing, or if you do not possess strong work habits. For each assignment, it is critical that you do your work on time. This summer work is due on your first day of class.

Regarding AI & Academic Honesty:

Be aware that your teachers will be using anti-plagiarism software and other methods to detect cheating. To instill integrity, maintain fairness, and ensure skill development, it is critical that all of the work you do for this class is the product of your own efforts. You will save yourself a lot of trouble by only submitting work that is 100% your own. Work that is plagiarized, copied from other students, or copied from online sources will receive a zero without the option to redo the assignment. Likewise, work done using AI including, but not limited to, ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini will receive a zero. If your work does not appear to be your own, you should expect a referral to your administrator as well. See the Academic Dishonesty section of your student handbook for more information about this.

Overview

Over the summer, you will work with a range of nonfiction texts that will start you on your pathway to developing an appreciation for [rhetoric](#) and the elements of argumentation.

● **Nonfiction Book**


Read at least one full-length nonfiction text of your choice. Choose something that is compelling to you — perhaps a subject you are interested in or an engaging memoir — and read for enjoyment! Be prepared for an in-class writing assessment related to this book within the first few days of school. **You will need a copy of the book for the assessment.**

A list of suggested book titles is included below.

Three Essays

- You are also required to read and annotate the three essays that are listed below. You can find copies of these texts by clicking the link in each title. Please note that you will likely encounter unfamiliar words while reading. It is your responsibility as an AP student to use all available resources to determine the meaning of unknown terms. **You must have these essays annotated and ready to submit the first day of class.**

ESSAYS

 **Read and annotate each of the following three essays focusing on central themes related to humanity's relationship with the natural world.**

1. **[“The Bird and the Machine”](#) by Loren Eiseley**
Eiseley is best known for the poetic essay style, called the "concealed essay". He used this to explain complex scientific ideas, such as human evolution, to the general public. He is also known for his writings about humanity's relationship with the natural world; these writings helped inspire the modern environmental movement.
2. **[“Living Like Weasels”](#) by Annie Dillard**
Annie Dillard is both a writer and a theologian, and is the author of the popular memoir, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. In this essay Dillard creates a nuanced and perhaps surprising argument concerning the nature of freedom. Oddly enough it is a lesson she learns from a weasel.
3. **[“Once More to the Lake”](#) by E.B. White**
In this essay, E.B. White writes in a narrative mode, making particularly effective use of visual and sensory imagery.

NONFICTION BOOKS

 **For your full-length book choice, here is a list of nonfiction texts that may interest you.** You do not *have* to select your book from this list.

Books Related to Society/Culture

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story by Nikole Hannah-Jones

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration by Isabel Wilkerson

The Black Box by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Everyone Who Is Gone Is Here: The U.S., Central America, and the Making of a Crisis by Jonathan Blitzer

Cue the Sun! The Invention of Reality TV by Emily Nussbaum

Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century by Alice Wong

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America by Barbara Ehrenreich
Who Gets In and Why: A Year Inside College Admissions by Jeffrey Selingo
The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College by Jacques Steinberg
Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond
Under the Banner of Heaven by Jon Krakauer
Anything by Steven Levitt/Stephen Dubner (such as *Freakonomics*)
Anything by Michael Lewis (such as *The Big Short*)
Anything by Jonathan Kozol, who writes about poverty and education (such as *Amazing Grace*)
Anything by Thomas Friedman (such as *The World Is Flat*)

Books Related to Psychology

Anything by Malcolm Gladwell (*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*)
The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt
Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones by James Clear
Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family by Robert Kolker
Nerve: Adventures in the Science of Fear by Eva Holland
Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman
Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain
This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession by Daniel J. Levitin
The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined, Steven Pinker

Books Related to Science/the Environment

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer
The Disordered Cosmos: A Journey into Dark Matter, Spacetime, and Dreams Deferred by Chanda Prescod-Weinstein
Beloved Beasts: Fighting for Life in an Age of Extinction by Michelle Nijhuis
Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest by Suzanne Simard
An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us by Ed Yong
This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate by Naomi Klein
The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History by Elizabeth Kolbert
Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway

Books Related to Science/Health

The Premonition: A Pandemic Story by Michael Lewis
Breathless: The Scientific Race to Defeat a Deadly Virus by David Quammen
Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company that Addicted America by Beth Macy
Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams by Matthew Walker
Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser
Salt: A World History by Mark Kurlansky
The Case Against Sugar by Gary Taubes
Bananas! How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World by Peter Chapman
Anything by Michael Pollan, who writes about food, such as *Omnivore's Dilemma*
Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers by Mary Roach

Books Related to Science/Technology

Going Infinite: The Rise and Fall of a New Tycoon by Michael Lewis
Plastic: A Toxic Love Story by Susan Freinkel
Stuff Matters: Exploring the Marvelous Materials That Shape Our Man-Made World by Mark Miodownik
A Short History of Nearly Everything by Bill Bryson
Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari
Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body by Neil Shubin
World Without Mind: The Existential Threat of Big Tech by Franklin Foer
Freedom to Think: The Long Struggle to Liberate Our Minds by Susie Alegre
Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race by Margot Shetterly

Memoir

Arana, Marie. *American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood*
Beals, Melba Pattillo. *Warriors don't cry: A searing memoir of the battle to integrate Little Rock's Central High*
Broom, Sarah. *The Yellow House*
Fey, Tina. *Bossypants*
Gawande, Atul. *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*
Hsu, Hua. *Stay True*
Iftin, Abdi Nor. *Call Me American*
McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother*
McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*
Murray, Liz. *Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard*
Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir*
Noah, Trevor. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*
Strayed, Cheryl. *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*
Tretheway, Natasha. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*
Walls, Jeanette. *The Glass Castle*
Ward, Jesmyn. *Men We Reaped*
Westover, Tara. *Educated*
Wolff, Tobias. *This Boy's Life*
Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*
Zamora, Javier. *Solito*
Zauner, Michelle. *Crying in H Mart*