

Summer Reading Assignment

AP English Language and Composition: 2019-2020

Mr. Jackson

In order to help prepare you for the non-fiction element of AP Language, it is important that you spend some time over the summer carefully reading various types of essays and thinking about what they mean. As you will learn, the study of rhetoric and the study of non-fiction distinguish AP Language from AP Literature, the LA course which many of you will take senior year. I know the thought of reading non-fiction essays doesn't excite many people. We tend to think of essays as overly academic, overly structured, and overly boring, and reading them as akin to watching paint dry. Well, I hope to dissuade you of these opinions by having you read a selection of 10 essays of a wide variety of styles and topics this summer. We will discuss and work with each of these essays at some point in the opening weeks of the semester. These essays will help you to understand much of my philosophy of education and of this class, they will reveal to you some of the secrets and techniques of writing powerful pieces, and they will hopefully pique your interest in a wide variety of topics from science to politics to education to death to culture to the ethics of eating animals. To this end, follow the instructions below.

1. Go to my Weebly website: www.jacksonmountsi.weebly.com
2. At the website, click on the "Summer Reading Assignment" tab.
3. In this tab you will find PDFs or links to the following 10 essays (the file titles may not be exactly the same as the names of the essays—don't get confused)
 - a. Life of the Closed Mind
 - b. The Oddness of Everything (note that these first two essays are combined into one PDF file, but should be treated as two separate essays)
 - c. The Coddling of the American Mind
 - d. The Neoliberal Arts
 - e. Consider the Lobster
 - f. Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain
 - g. The Accidental Universe
 - h. Shooting an Elephant
 - i. Chimera
 - j. Three Spheres
4. Obviously, you are to read each essay, **carefully and in detail**. You may print off the essays if you like in order to more easily annotate, take notes, etc, but printing the essays is not required.
5. You will create a separate document, either a Word file or a Google doc, that does the following:

- a. Create a separate section for each of the 10 essays. Organize your paper in MLA format with a heading. Be as neat and organized as you possibly can be.
- b. Define what you feel to be the essay's thesis, that is, the main idea. Each thesis is to be defined in **ONE SENTENCE** of no longer than 20 words.
 - i. Thesis and theme are essentially the same concept. Remember that a theme or a thesis has three parts: 1. Thematic topic 2. Author's opinion on that topic 3. A "so what," or why it is important.
- c. Write a 100-150 word response for each essay. This is to be your thoughts, opinions, reactions, to the essay. It is not an essay or a chunk or several chunks. Simply write, like in a journal, what you thought about the essay. **DO NOT GO OVER 150 WORDS PER ESSAY.**

A few end notes here. I want to point out that this is a significantly smaller summer assignment than in years past where I asked students to read a book of **24** essays. I have tried to whittle down the assignment to something meaningful and yet not overly onerous. You should also note that from what I can tell from looking into what other teachers of AP Language do at other schools, it is the norm to assign summer reading—and most teachers assign **MUCH** more than what I have assigned above. Hence, I feel this assignment is very reasonable and well within what is accepted practice for AP Language classes. Finally, this assignment should not be overly burdensome for you. You could easily read and respond to the 10 essays in a few days towards the end of the summer, or you could read one per week throughout the summer. Either way, you should not be overly stressed out or concerned. Anyone who completes the written elements of the assignment as directed will receive 100% on the assignment! Good luck, and enjoy! I think you will find most if not all of the essays thought-provoking and interesting.

DUE DATE: Bring a printed version of the written elements of the assignment to class on the first day of school.