



AP English Language and Composition
Mr. Dante, sdante@holmdelschools.org
Summer Assignment 2018

Welcome to AP English Language and Composition for the 2018-19 school year. In order to be prepared for this course, continual practice of reading and writing skills is essential. Research has shown that these competencies deteriorate over the summer months when they are not being applied. In September you will want to begin the course with your skill sets at their peak as there will be no time to regain what you might have lost over the summer.¹

The two books listed below are your required readings. Please buy these books so that you can annotate your own copies. Annotate your books because good notes enhance comprehension and retention. Your annotations should be handwritten in your book or written on post-it notes using a highlighter and pen or pencil. Complete both assignments and submit them to Google Classroom before the first day of school. Email me between June and August in order to receive the class code so that you can post the two assignments to Google Classroom. Please bring your books to class in September.

How should you annotate? Consider the following:

- *React*: Write down your observations as you read so that you remember your insights later.
- *Analyze*: Identify significant passages; note key ideas or reoccurring themes. What are the big messages of this work?
- *Synthesize*: Relate the text to other books or articles you have read—or to your own life experience.
- *Evaluate*: Are the claims reasonable and well argued? What kind of language and techniques are used to convince you of the writer's position?

Assignment One

Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business by Neil Postman
ISBN: 014303653X

- Critically and closely read the text. After you have read and annotated, type a 300-400 word two-paragraph summary of Postman's main idea. Keep in mind that Postman is creating an argument. Your job is not to agree or disagree with him necessarily, but as a student of language and composition you should critique his argument. Read closely to determine what his argument is, how he constructs it, and the strategies he uses in order to persuade his reader to agree.
- In addition, select four noteworthy quotations or passages from the book that you find compelling, and bullet them in a list on your paper. Then respond to one of these quotations by focusing on the ways in which the author uses language to create an effect. What is it about the language that stands out and makes the passage distinctive? How does the passage reflect the author's style and reveal larger themes of the work? This response to one of your selected quotations should be approximately 100 words.
- Use MLA formatting throughout, including your heading. Use section headings to separate the parts of the assignment.

Assignment Two

Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle by Chris Hedges
ISBN: 1568586132

- Critically and closely read the text. After you have read and annotated, type a 300-400 word two-paragraph summary of the key argument. Again, keep in mind that your reading is not about

¹ See, for example, Maryann Mraz and Timothy V. Rasinski, "Issues and Trends in Literacy: Summer Reading Loss." *The Reading Teacher*. Vol. 60, No. 8 (May, 2007), pp. 784-789.



whether you agree or disagree with Hedges, just that you can pinpoint and analyze the way in which he constructs his argument and attempts to sway your opinion. Determine whether his strategies are successful and cite the reasons for that success or failure.

- In addition, select four noteworthy quotations or passages from the book that you find compelling, and bullet them in a list on your paper. Then respond to one of these quotations by focusing on the ways in which the author uses language to create an effect. What is it about the language that stands out and makes the passage distinctive? How does the passage reflect the author's style and reveal larger themes of the work? This response to one of your selected quotations should be approximately 100 words.
- As with the first assignment, use MLA formatting throughout, including your heading. Use section headings to separate the parts of the assignment.

For the assignments for both books, familiarize yourself with the following concepts of rhetoric devised by ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. Consider these types of arguments as you evaluate the readings, though you need not feel obligated to use Aristotle's terminology.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as: "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion." He described three main forms of rhetoric: ethos, logos, and pathos.

Logos: The main concern in an argumentation-persuasion presentation should be with the logos, or soundness, of your argument. This includes the facts, statistics, examples, and authoritative statements presented to support a viewpoint. This supporting evidence must be unified, specific, sufficient, accurate, and representative. Imagine, for instance, you want to convince people that a popular charity misappropriates the money it receives from the public. Your readers, inclined to believe in the good works of the charity, will probably dismiss evidence that enhances your position unless your reasoning, or logos, is sound.

Pathos: Sensitivity to the pathos, or the emotional power of language, is another key consideration for creators of persuasive writing. Pathos appeals to a viewpoint or course of action. The pathos of a piece derives partly from the communicator's choice of language. Connotative language, for example, are words with strong emotional overtones and have the ability to move the audience to accept a point of view and may even spur them to act. For example, Adolf Hitler was effective with the use of propaganda filled with elements of pathos in order to rally support for his cause.

Ethos: The establishment of ethos, or credibility, is important when presenting an argument. Ethos is concerned with the portrayal of the speaker, focusing on the conscious and unconscious demonstration of the speaker's character. The reader cannot be expected to accept or act on a viewpoint unless she is convinced that the writer is reputable and informed. The writer comes across as trustworthy if a logical, reasoned argument takes opposing views into account. It is also important to make sure that the appeals to emotion are not excessive as too much emotionalism undercuts credibility.

Remember, your analysis of the authors' methods of persuasion and the execution and success of their arguments are more important than whether you agree with their perspectives.

All assignments are due on Google Classroom on the first day your class meets in September.
See you then.