

AP Language and Composition Summer Reading Assignment (2026-2027)

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Welcome to AP Language and Composition, a college-level skills class requiring extensive reading, writing, research, and discussion. The readings, which are predominantly non-fiction, are analyzed in terms of stylistic and rhetorical choices, and they model the kind of writing you will do throughout your academic careers: nonfiction expository, persuasive, and narrative essays. You will also study the rhetoric of visual media, synthesize primary and secondary source material into your own compositions, imitate techniques of professional authors, and analyze current events, considering various perspectives, including your personal values and morals. Each quarter involves AP test practice, including timed writings and multiple-choice quizzes.

Required for class: a three-ring binder with loose leaf paper. *You will be required to take notes by hand throughout the year and to keep handouts in your binder for easy access. I can provide a binder if the cost is prohibitive.*

Summary of your summer assignments:

1. Read *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
 - a. Create a vocabulary list of at least 30 words you encounter.
 - b. Note five significant passages from the novel worthy of in-class discussion and analysis
2. Read *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell
 - a. Write a paragraph summarizing one claim within chapter 3 to the end and explaining how the author supports it.
 - b. Write a paragraph about your own experience or observation to support or challenge that claim.
3. Follow the news throughout the summer and complete the template for each of six different events or issues.

Explanation of summer assignments: During the school year, we focus almost exclusively on short works of nonfiction—letters, essays, speeches, etc. By reading two longer works over the summer, you lighten the reading load for the school year and enable us to work with passages from those books, instead. One is a classic novel that could also be helpful for your work in AP Literature as a senior. The other is a modern, research-based, nonfiction text that exemplifies the kind of writing and thinking practiced in AP Lang. In addition, pay attention to the news and record pertinent information as indicated on the template. This will help prepare you to engage in class discussions and for writing arguments supported by your own knowledge.

You will need to purchase the books or read them digitally for free. Here are some options:

KDL [Online](#) or GRPL [Online](#)

Free Trials (All Genres): [Audible](#) or [Scribd](#)

Past AP students may still have a copy of *Outliers* you can borrow.

Digital Text: [Pride and Prejudice](#)

I. Read *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

The novel follows the character development of Elizabeth Bennet, who learns the repercussions of hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between superficial goodness and actual goodness. Mr. Bennet, has five daughters, but his property is entailed (defined below) and can only be passed to a male heir. His wife also lacks an inheritance, so his family could become very poor upon his death. Thus, it is imperative that at least one of the girls marry well to support the others, which is a motivation that drives the plot.

Some Background

Landed Gentry For the upper classes in 19th century England, position was defined by birth, breeding and inherited possessions. Wealthy landowners did not work. They lived off the income from their inherited land, while tenants, managers and servants did all of the work. They spent a lot of time at home, with few diversions, so large social gatherings were highly valued. So, too, were social talents such as musical skills and an ability to converse easily with others.

Primogeniture According to custom, the eldest son inherited the land and wealth. Other sons sought respectable positions as clergymen or officers in the military. Daughters needed to marry well—to find husbands of high status, preferably, to support them in their upper class lifestyle.

Entailment Through this system, landowners could control the future ownership of their land by dictating which relative would get it. This is important in *Pride and Prejudice* because a previous Bennet entailed the land to his male heirs, which is how Mr. Bennet came to own it. Because Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have all girls, the land will go to a distant relative, Mr. Collins, when Mr. Bennet dies. Therefore, the girls must find husbands before then.

Austen's Technique

Classic Literature Typical love stories have a predictable pattern: boy meets girl, they fall in love, and obstacles get in the way, but they overcome them to be together in the end. *Pride and Prejudice* follows this pattern, but it is a classic work of literature for its historical relevance, its strong characterizations, and its use of satire.

Satire is a type of social commentary that uses humor, irony, reversals, and exaggeration to criticize something or someone, typically a public figure, social norm, or government policy. Satire can be light-hearted and fun, inviting us to laugh at something ridiculous, or it can be harsh and biting, intended to bring about change.

Comedy of Manners *Pride and Prejudice* satirizes universal personality traits as well as customs and manners of the upper classes in 19th century England.

Characterizations: Austen masterfully develops each character through their dialogue and behaviors, and through narrator comments. Most of the characters are one-dimensional (consistent in personality and tendencies, throughout the novel), but the main characters are dynamic, changing greatly in their understandings, views and behaviors.

***Pride and Prejudice* Assignment**

The multiple choice section of the AP test includes a pre-twentieth century passage. These works are generally challenging due to advanced vocabulary and sentence structures. *Pride and Prejudice*, written in 1813, includes such wording and sentencing, which will give you some practice reading these types of texts.

As you read the novel, complete the following:

1. Identify 30 words you don't know. In your binder, list these words along with the following:
 - a. their definitions
 - b. the sentences in which they appeared
 - c. the page numbers

2. Identify five significant passages from the novel that contribute to character development, deepen a conflict, help resolve a conflict, interject humor or levity, introduce or develop a theme, present an epiphany, etc. Passages can be dialogues, monologues, letters, narrative descriptions, or narrator commentary.
 - a. Place a sticky note on the page to mark the passage. Or, if you are borrowing the book, take a picture of the page(s) that contain the passage.
 - b. In your binder, write down the following for each passage:
 - i. Describe the context of the scene/passage. Where does it take place? What led up to this moment? Which characters are involved?
 - ii. Briefly (2-3 sentences) summarize the passage.
 - iii. Explain (4-5 sentences) the significance of the passage.

II. Read *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell

What factors lead to success? To answer that question, Malcolm Gladwell examines outliers--the best and brightest, the most successful and famous professionals, athletes, musicians, etc--to determine what makes them different from the rest of us. He discusses the impact of culture, family, and unique experiences of upbringing and generational situations to suggest it is much more than natural ability and hard work that leads to high achievement and success.

***Outliers* Writing Assignment**

1. While reading, consider whether particular theories or claims seem true or false based on your own observations and experiences.

2. Choose one of those claims (not within the first two chapters) and complete the following:
 - A. Write a paragraph in which you summarize that claim (include the page number on which you found it) and explain how the author supports it.
 - B. Write a detailed paragraph about your own experience or observation to add further support or to challenge the author's claim. Create your paragraphs in Google Doc.

III. Follow **Current Events**

Assignment: Create a Google Doc called “Last Name: Current Events.” Copy and paste the following outline onto it (six times). Choose six specific events or issues making the news this summer, and fill in a copy of this outline for each.

To ensure a standard of journalistic quality and integrity, your articles must come from one or more of the following sources: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *The Economist*, *BBC News*, or *PBS News Hour*.

Headline: *Copy a headline of an important event or issue published online or in print this summer. Include names of authors and sources.*

Summary: *Write a brief summary of the event or situation, indicating who was involved, what happened, where it took place, when it occurred, why it happened, and impact/consequences.*

Stakeholders: *Create a list of people or groups this event or situation affected. (Consider people or groups not named within the article, too, such as police officers, firefighters, parents, etc.)*

Controversy: *Identify two different opinions concerning the event/situation, if possible. These may be expressed through social media, opinion pieces in mainstream media, political cartoons, etc. Provide a link to each.*

* All assignments are due on your first full day of classes.

Have a great summer. Email me if you have any questions.

-Mr. Sherman