



AP English Language and Composition Summer Assignment 2026

Due Date: Tuesday, September 15, 2026

In order to prepare for AP English Language and Composition, it is necessary for you to practice your critical reading and writing skills. It is also necessary to become a “student of the world,” meaning you need to cultivate knowledge about many areas of study: current events, history, pop culture, science and technology, politics, and more. The following **two assignments** are designed to give you a glimpse into the types of skills you will need to be successful in the course. **Both Assignment One and Assignment Two need to be completed.** Most importantly, each assignment requires you to read, write, and think at a college-level.

Assignment One: Please choose **ONE** of the narrative nonfiction books from the list below. Then, critically read and annotate the text following the guidelines listed below. Titles are listed by topic to help you choose something based on your interests. **(Books may be found in the Smithtown High School West Library or the Public Library. If you would like to borrow a book, titles can be obtained from the Smithtown Public Library or titles with an asterisk are available at Smithtown High School West English Department Office 631-382-3036) July 1st-July 14th 7:30am-12:00pm.) You will be asked to complete an assignment based on your independent reading book when you return in September.**

***You must get parental permission for the book you choose to read.**

As you read, annotate the work by either writing in your own copy or in a composition notebook - include page numbers in your annotations. Please do not use sticky notes. The AP Language teachers expect you to have thorough annotations/notes for each chapter of the book. When annotating EACH CHAPTER, please consider the following:

- Reflect on the content; determine the writer’s overall purpose and central ideas, synthesize what is important and why.
- Ask questions—which often helps to clarify meaning.
- State opinions and be able to defend those opinions.
- Analyze the author’s craft. Identify text structure and text features (i.e. literary elements, author’s style, etc.) and distinguish important information from unimportant information. (track location of evidence with chapters and page numbers).
- Synthesize the material. Make connections to other aspects of the text itself, to other works of literature, and to you and the world around you.

- Monitor your comprehension: be able to retell important parts of the text; be able to distinguish important elements from surface elements; be able to comprehend the key ideas presented in the text.

***TITLES AVAILABLE IN DISTRICT**

CRIMINAL/FORENSIC

- Bass, William M., *Death's Acre: Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab The Body Farm Where the Dead Do Tell Tales* *
- Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood* *
- Larson, Erik, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* *
- Cullen, Dave, *Columbine* *

MEMOIR

- Fey, Tina, *Bossypants* *
- Gay, Roxane, *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* *
- Heiligman, Deborah, *Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers* *
- Kidder, Tracy, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World*
- King, Stephen, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* *
- Knight, Phil, *Shoedog* *
- Krakauer, Jon, *Into Thin Air* *
- McCourt, Frank, *Angela's Ashes: a memoir* *
- Meacham, Jon, *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush* *
- Mone, Gregory, *The Boys in the Boat* *
- Obama, Michelle, *Becoming* *
- O'Connor, Ian, *The Captain: the Journey of Derek Jeter* *
- Salisbury, Gay, *The Cruellest Miles: The Heroic Story of Dogs and Men in a Race Against an Epidemic* *
- Slichter, Jacob, *So You Wanna Be a Rock and Roll Star* *
- Stevenson, Bryan, *Just Mercy* *
- Westover, Tara, *Educated* *
- Vance, JD, *The Hillbilly Elegy*

HISTORY/WAR

- Bond, Jenny, *Who the Hell is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books* *
- Clottes, Jean, *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*
- Eldridge, Jim, *Warriors!: True Stories of Combat, Skill, and Courage*
- Grann, David, *The Lost City of Z: a tale of deadly obsession in the Amazon* *
- Hillenbrand, Laura, *Unbroken* *
- Sheinkin, Steve, *Most Dangerous: Daniel Ellsberg and the Secret History of the Vietnam War*

SCIENCE/MEDICINE/TECHNOLOGY

- Friedman, Thomas L, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* *
- Hawking, Stephen, *A Brief History of Time*
- Katz, Jon, *Dog Days: Dispatches from Bedlam Farm* *
- Kolata, Gina Bari, *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It* *
- Roach, Mary, *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers* *
- Skloot, Rebecca, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* *
- Sobel, Dava, *Galileo's Daughter: a Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love* *
- Standage, Tom, *Writing on the Wall: Social Media—the first 2,000 years*

PHILOSOPHY/PSYCHOLOGY

- Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Bomber Mafia*
- Gladwell, Malcolm, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (or any book by Malcolm Gladwell) *
- Junger, Sebastian, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* *
- Klosterman, Chuck, *But What If We're Wrong*
- Krakauer, Jon, *Into the Wild* *
- Nichols, Tom, *The Death of Expertise*

Assignment Two: Your second assignment is designed to continue expanding your world. Part of being in AP English Language and Composition is being a student of the world. For **EACH** category below, choose what you would like to listen to or watch. **Answer the questions for reflection in a separate Google Doc (Times New Roman, font size 12, double spaced). Be mindful of organization, spelling, and punctuation in your responses.** Your response for each assignment should be at least 1-2 full pages. Responses should also include an intro, body, and conclusion. **This assignment should be submitted by Tuesday, September 15, 2025.**

****You must get parental/guardian permission for all of your choices.****

<p>Listen to a Podcast</p>	<p>You can access podcasts from any streaming service. There are thousands to choose from, but choose one that is “school appropriate” and that you can talk about in a classroom setting.</p> <p>Choose ONE podcast and listen to three episodes of it. There is a list of suggested podcasts linked if you need help finding one.</p>	<p><i>In your reflection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the title of the podcast and a brief summary of each episode. ● Podcasts can’t be boring or they won’t be successful. Producers hire good speakers, provide music, humor, sound effects, and other devices to engage their listeners. What specific choices do the podcast producers make to create an engaging podcast? Describe in detail what made your podcast engaging to listen to. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take note of patterns over the course of the episodes: are there similarities? differences? ○ What organizational choices are made in each episode? Opening? Middle? Closing? ○ What stylistic choices are made? ● Did you enjoy your episodes? Why or why not? Explain.
<p>Watch a Documentary Film</p>	<p>Google “best documentaries,” and you will get lists of the newest ones and also classic documentaries that have stood the test of time.</p> <p>Choose ONE full-length (not episodic) documentary you have not seen on a topic you are not especially familiar with and watch it. Documentaries can be found on streaming services or at the local library.</p>	<p><i>In your reflection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the title, network, and brief summary of the film. ● What is the purpose of this film? How do you know? Use evidence from the film to support your observations. ● What specific choices do filmmakers make in order to convince or inform you of their purpose? Describe evidence from your film to support your observations. ● Did you like the documentary? Why or why not? Explain.

