

AP English Language Reading Summer 2008

“A well-known writer got collared by a university student who asked, ‘Do you think I could be a writer?’ ‘Well,’ the writer said, ‘I don’t know ... Do you like sentences?’”

-- Annie Dillard from *The Writing Life*

AP English Language and Composition is a year long college-level course that invites students to read texts carefully and with appreciation for the act of writing itself. At the same time students will work to develop richness, clarity, and complexity in their own writing.

To that end, this summer you will read material unlike that in previous English classes as we prepare for an exciting and challenging year together.

Here’s the routine:

All work listed below is due on the first day the course meets and is to be typed, double spaced.

During the first two weeks of class, you will be given an AP type question based on the summer reading.

The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2007

Editors: Richard Preston and Tim Folger

ISBN: 0618722319

Since most of our work is with nonfiction and our goal is to help you become a more polished essayist, this collection of essays will provide meat for our discussions as well as models for your writing.

For each essay (**on ONE typed page per essay only**):

- Record essay title and author; (we put quotation marks around an essay title)
- State the thesis of the essay in your own words -- just a sentence
- **List** the author’s important arguments (not the evidence)

This collection contains 28 essays. To cut down a bit on your reading, skip the three longest essays; these are “How to Get a Nuclear Bomb,” “Ruffled Feathers,” and “The Rape of Appalachia.” I hope we’re not missing the best ones. Thus, you’ll be reading only slightly more than 200 pages.

Previous students all seem to agree that these essays are not only valuable but interesting as well -- especially if you don’t try to read them all in one night.

Because many of you are overachievers, **an optional assignment:**

Make a list of 20 interesting words you encounter as you read. These should be words you want to add to your own personal writing and speaking vocabulary. For each word:

- Copy the sentence where you find the word; cite the source and underline the word
- Indicate part of speech as used in your example sentence.
- Write a clear definition of the word
- Write a new sentence containing the word and making clear its meaning.

Be sure your sentence illustrates the meaning of the word .

Note: Always underline your vocabulary word.

Example:

Source: “He’s not even equivocating.” Emily Koehler in a class discussion

Word info: equivocate: vi* -- to be purposely unclear; to speak vaguely, especially in order to mislead

Original sentence: She purposely equivocated about details of the upcoming test, never being specific or clear, just to make us study all aspects of the art of diagramming sentences.

* note the difference between vi [an intransitive verb which does not take a direct object] and a vt [a transitive verb which needs a direct object]

FYI: The essay collection is available at area bookstores as well as Amazon.com and overstock.com Don’t forget your local libraries although it’s really, really good to own your book so you can mark it up.

Don’t wait until August 18; start early and read a couple of essays each week. You’ll enjoy them more and the task won’t seem so daunting.

Email me at my AP email (nmenchhofer@yahoo.com) and request an invitation to AP Mench, our yahoo group. Here you can pose questions and chat about the essays over the summer. I will not be on line much, but you can talk to each other and encourage non-slacker behavior.

Expect an in-class writing opportunity or two the first week of class.