

2017 Advanced Placement Language and Composition Summer Reading

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Welcome to AP Language and Composition. Your rigorous study of the American experience begins with this summer assignment. Over the course of the summer, you will read two major texts (*The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead and *Confederates in the Attic* by Tony Horwitz), two stories (your choice) from the *Hartford Courant* series titled "[Complicity: How Connecticut Chained Itself to Slavery](#)," and the Brookings Institute's [symposium](#) on the persistence of racial inequality post-Jim Crow. Also, watch both Mayor Mitch Landrieu's [speech](#) about the removal of New Orleans monuments to the Confederacy and the [short documentary](#) on artist Kara Walker.

You will also craft a few relatively short writing pieces in response to the texts. This writing should move beyond summary to demonstrate the critical thinking capabilities of **questioning, evaluating, and synthesizing**. All thoughts presented in your writing **must** be original, and if additional sources are referenced in your written analysis, use **MLA format**. This work is a requirement of the course and must be turned in on the first day of class. Be prepared for a graded **Socratic seminar** of the summer reading on the first day of class.

PART 1: FWHS (school wide) Summer Symposium

You will participate in the FWHS Summer Symposium. Your English teacher has provided you with the list of summer reading books and Warde talks.

PART 2: AP English Language and Composition

A. Supplementary Sources

- a. **Task:** For the bulleted sources below, consider and reflect upon the ways these sources speak to and inform each other. ***Synthesize these sources into your own argument about the extent to which racism persists in our own society today.*** This task will require that you identify and evaluate the many claims presented in these various texts. It will also require the use of specific cited evidence from each source.
 - i. The *Hartford Courant* series titled "[Complicity: How Connecticut Chained Itself to Slavery](#)" (at least two stories)
 - ii. The Brookings Institute's [symposium](#) on the persistence of racial inequality post-Jim Crow
 - iii. Mayor Mitch Landrieu's [speech](#) about the removal of New Orleans monuments to the Confederacy
 - iv. The [short documentary](#) on artist Kara Walker.

Format: (one-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, single-spaced)

Formative: 40pts

B. Confederates in the Attic

a. **Task:** Read and annotate Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic*

- i. Annotations should consist of critical commentary and questions. When possible, annotations should also show an awareness of the style and structure of the argument (see item 2 below for more detail).
- ii. After reading and annotating, you will write a response addressing all of the following tasks:
 1. Identify at least one main claim of the book.
 2. Evaluate how Horwitz develops his argument to support one of his claims both structurally (i.e., how the author stages or develops his argument) and linguistically (e.g., tone, the author's attitude toward his or her subject; metaphors and/or imagery that evokes vivid sensory experience; noteworthy diction, including unusual or even boring or limited word choice; repetition; short or long and complex sentence structures; dialogue, etc.).
 3. Determine whether or not you would agree or disagree with his claim using appropriate supporting evidence from your reading and observations to strengthen your stance.

Format: (one-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, single-spaced)

Formative: 40pts

C. The Underground Railroad

a. Critically read, evaluate, and annotate Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*. In a dialectical response (see description below), you will select three salient passages from the novel.

- i. In your dialectical response, please consider the following questions:
 1. Why did you select this passage?
 2. How is the passage structured? Consider its tone and the impact of imagery, connotations of words, narrative techniques, etc.
 3. Based on the enslaved persons' experiences, what claim can be made about the history of race in America? This is **not** a chance for you to state the obvious - what **nuanced** understandings of the issues bubble to the surface when reading of Cora and company's plights?

Format: (three-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, single-spaced)

Formative: 40pts

Important Note: This entire assignment will be scored on a summative 100-point scale for completion.

What is a seminar?

A seminar, as the term is used here, refers to a group of people who share a common interest, have done some advanced reading and preparation, and come together to share insights, explore ideas, and learn from one another through a process of discussion. A specific text provides the focus for the discussion, and the goal is to collectively "mine" the text (book, poem, film) by unpacking it as a group, questioning it, exploring it, probing it, and thinking out loud about it.

Objectives:

- To create a community of learners by drawing upon diverse insights, experiences, and perspectives.

How does one prepare for a seminar?

Although a seminar is a group activity, it requires solitary advanced preparation. Preparation includes actively reading and often re-reading a text. As you read, you should underline, highlight, make margin notes, or other notes (if making notes outside the book, always specify the page and paragraph you are responding to so you can reference it during the seminar discussion).

How will our seminar proceed?

In order to keep focused on the text at hand, we will strive to use the following questions as tools for our discussion:

1. **What exactly does the text say?** (i.e., Point everyone else to the exact page and paragraph you are interested in discussing so they can read along as you introduce it for discussion.)
2. **How do you understand the text?** (i.e., Explain or interpret the passage using your own words, as you understand it; or ask others for clarification if you do not.)
3. **Why is the text interesting or relevant or important to you?** (i.e., What insights do you get out of this point? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? How does this idea relate to other ideas in this text, or to other texts in this course, or to insights from other courses, or to other life experiences? Why should we care about this point?)

For example, a student might say to the seminar group:

On page 42, in paragraph 3, in the 3rd and 4th sentences, the author writes "-----". As I understand it, the author seems to be saying ----- . I find that very interesting because ----- -- yet I can also think of exceptions to what the author is saying here. For instance, ----- . In any case, the point still seems to be generally valid, and it raises some important concerns about ----- . What do other people think about this point? Does it seem valid? Do you all share the concerns I just raised?

Sometimes the seminar will be focused on the exploration of a single point like this for some time -- searching, questioning, probing deeply, and possibly making connections to other points. Other times the discussion will be more free-flowing and will feel more shifting or even disjointed. Sometimes the discussion will lead to open-ended and divergent opinions; other times the group will come to shared conclusions. The important thing is that the seminar is a space for the discovery of new ideas, the re-examination of old ideas, the development of connections between ideas, and the evaluation of ideas and assertions.

The role of the teacher is not to lead the seminar but simply to model seminar participation as one participant among many. Everyone is responsible for co-leading the process. To accomplish this, participants must learn to speak openly to the entire group, to actively listen to one another, and to be sensitive to the needs of all other participants. The natural talkers must exercise self-discipline in order not to dominate the discussion. The naturally quiet people must stretch themselves to contribute regularly, even if this means moving outside their normal comfort zone. If you notice that someone is not contributing, feel free to invite their contribution. If the discussion stalls, it is everyone's individual responsibility to keep it going. Everyone will need to speak in turn, let others finish their thoughts, and refrain from interrupting. **Also, try to introduce ideas or assertions by connecting them to what others have said. In addition, it will sometimes help to summarize the point you are responding to before offering your own thoughts.** Finally, if you leave the seminar with more questions than you started, if you leave feeling unsettled or confused, if you are overwhelmed with new insights or ideas, or if you experience cognitive dissonance by considering perspectives that do not conform to your previous ones, these are all signs of success.

A seminar discussion is not a competitive or adversarial debate. The goal is not to change one another's views or persuade one another of the "rightness" of your own views. Rather, the goal is to draw everyone into the discussion by creating an inviting atmosphere in which everyone feels comfortable contributing -- even when they hold different views. This requires courtesy, mutual respect, and frank, yet considerate, modes of expression.

Socratic Seminar Rubric

Name:

SELF RECEIVED

/10	/10	Contributed to the depth and insight of the seminar discussion. Consistently raised questions that challenged and expanded the thinking of others.
/10	/10	Ideas, interpretations, and arguments were substantiated with direct textual evidence (complete with page number) and specific and detailed connections (historical, literary, cinematic, current events, etc.). All textual evidence and connections spur a deeper analysis and understanding of the primary text and focus question.
/10	/10	Came prepared for the seminar having closely read the text (not online plot summaries). Questions, connections, and textual evidence to enhance the discussion have been prepared.
/10	/10	Contributed regularly to the seminar discussion.
/10	/10	Helped create an inclusive, respectful, academic atmosphere in which everyone felt comfortable sharing their honest opinions.
/50	/50	TOTAL

Dialectical Journal for *The Underground Railroad*

The term “dialectic” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” Think of your dialectical journal as a series of conversations with the text as you read. Use your journal to initiate critical and insightful commentary on the social issues raised within the novel. As you are reading, examine how the text crafts a broader claim about life in America. The purpose of a dialectical journal is to identify notable pieces of text and explain their significance in relation to essential questions. It is another form of highlighting/annotating text and should be used to think about, digest, summarize, question, clarify, critique, and remember what is read.

Choosing Passages from the Text:

Look for quotes that are significant, powerful, thought-provoking, or puzzling. You might want to consider some of the following examples for completing your dialectal journal:

- Author's effective and/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices
- Passages that makes a larger point about class in America
- A passage that made you question a personal assumption
- Examples of patterns: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols, or motifs that contribute to an overall theme

You can respond to the text in a variety of ways: focusing solely on craft or content. The most important thing to remember is that your observations should be specific and detailed. Use the tone word glossary to assist in your written examination of the three selected passages.

Expectations:

CRITICAL READERS will create detailed, elaborate responses. The writing should show that you can “read between the lines” of the text. You think about the meaning of the text in terms of a larger or universal significance and as an aspect of self or life in general. You create your own meaning through personal connections and references to other texts. You consider different interpretations as you compose. You carry on an ongoing dialogue with the writer; you question, agree, disagree, appreciate, or object to her claims. You are aware of connotations and recognize the impact of language the audience.

Books and Supplementary Sources

Student copies of both *Confederates in the Attic* and *The Underground Railroad* have been ordered. These should be available from the school bookroom by the end of the year. If not, you will need to pick up one or both from our main office early in the summer vacation.

<http://www.courant.com/courant-250/moments-in-history/hc-250-complicity-story-gallery-20140603-storygallery.html>

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2014/10/09/why-does-racial-inequality-persist-long-after-jim-crow/>

http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/05/23/read_mitch_landrieu_s_confederate_monuments_speech.htm
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<https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s2/kara-walker-in-stories-segment/>