

AP Language & Composition

Summer Assignment 2014-2015

Background: AP Language and Composition is a college-level course that demands careful, analytic reading and writing. Specifically, students are required to identify and analyze the rhetorical strategies used by authors across a range of writing; clearly articulate, support, refute or modify the central argument in a text; and synthesize a variety of sources. This summer assignment is designed to assess your skills in rhetorical analysis, argument, and synthesis, while also introducing you to one of the overarching questions of the course: why do writers write?

Reading: You will read two book-length works: *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote and *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. The writing assignments that accompany these books are described below. In addition, read and annotate the following five essays (attached). Your notes should prepare you to write analytically about the essays in class within the first week of school.

T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
Annie Dillard, "Death of a Moth" and "How I Wrote the Moth Essay and Why"
Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition"
Joan Didion, "On Keeping a Notebook"
Frederick Douglass, "Learning to Read and Write"

Rhetorical Analysis: Read and annotate Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Then, write an essay of no more than 500 words in which you analyze the ways in which Capote uses tone, diction and imagery to create suspense. Your response should draw on specific passages from throughout the text.

Tone: refers to the author's attitude toward the reader (e.g. formal, intimate, pompous) or to the subject matter (e.g. ironic, light, solemn, satiric, sentimental).

Diction: refers to the choice of words used in a literary work. A writer's diction may be characterized, for example as formal, colloquial, abstract, concrete, literal or figurative.

Imagery: refers to the use of language in a literary work that evokes sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or "concrete" objects, scenes, actions, or states as distinct from the language or abstract argument or exposition. The imagery of a literary work thus comprises the set of images that it uses to appeal to senses (including, but not limited to sight).

Argument: Since its publication in 1939, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* has been dogged by controversy. On the one hand, the novel has been lauded as a masterwork of American fiction and as a stirring tribute to the power of the human spirit. In fact, *Grapes* won two of the literary world's most prestigious awards—the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize for Literature. On the other hand, critics accuse the novel of being a heavy-handed piece of Marxist propaganda, while some have attempted to ban the book on the basis of its perceived obscenity. To this day, *The Grapes of Wrath* is one of the most frequently banned books in the United States. Given this background information and your own reading of the novel, write a 500 word essay in which you support, refute, or qualify the claim that *The Grapes of Wrath* should be banned. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your ideas.

Synthesis: During the first week of school, you will write an AP essay simulation. This timed writing assessment will require you to draw on your nuanced understanding of each of the five essays in this packet.

Policies and Rubrics: Late work will not be accepted. Completion of the summer assignment is a prerequisite for enrollment in the class. In this packet, you will find the rubric I will use to assess your work. If you have any questions, please contact me via email (khilton@fairfieldschools.org).