

# THE AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUMMER HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 2019

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The blog address is [apbloggers19-20.blogspot.com](http://apbloggers19-20.blogspot.com)

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Sign up for text message notifications by texting **@fd1d5** to 81010

Our Turnitin.com Class ID is 21373590 and our Enrollment Key is 208508

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## Homework Summary at a Glance

### WRITING

#### **Blog Assignment — informal, academic writing:**

- Pursue themes and questions raised by any text in the summer homework -- also, posts covering relevant news items, podcasts or other media are also welcome, **4 posts, 8 comments**. Ridiculously easy.
- BEFORE YOU START BLOGGING, you have to send an email to Ms. Fletcher or Ms. Colln and ask for a blog invitation. Our blog is a semi-closed blog, which means anyone can read it, but only invited guests can post writing to it.

#### **Notebook Assignment — writing as thinking; writing to learn; ancillary purpose is to build fluency and speed while maintaining/improving legibility:**

- The Guardian -- "The Long Reads" -- **two of these** (see explanation)
- Analysis of **ten different issues** found at "Room for Debate" @ NYTimes

#### **Turnitin.com — formal academic writing: summary and analysis**

- Academic summary - Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*
  - Three analytical essays - *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley
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### READING

- Core Texts, read both:
  - *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman
  - *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley
- Everybody reads Room for Debate, *New York Times*: Ten debates total: We pick five; you pick five
- Everybody reads "The Long Read", *The Guardian*: Two long articles total: We pick one you pick one

# WELCOME TO THE CLASS OF 2021 (AKA CLASS OF 2025), BORN IN 2003

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Your ticket to a seat in AP English Language and Composition is the **successful** and **timely** completion of the summer homework assignment.

**All homework is due by 3:00 p.m. on Friday, August 2.** We **will not** accept any homework after 3:00 p.m. on August 2 unless you have a legitimate reason and you have cleared a new deadline with one of us in advance. Blog posts are accepted until 11:59pm on August 2.

Students who do not complete the summer homework are transferred to College Prep Junior English during the week of August 6. If, during the summer, you realize that you would prefer to be in College Prep English, simply send one of us an email and we will see to it that you are transferred. There is no shame in transferring out! You must set your own priorities.

## **IMPORTANT! PLEASE READ AND UNDERSTAND:**

If your summer homework does not demonstrate the appropriate level of thought, care, or effort for successful completion of an AP class, or if it is incomplete, we reserve the right to transfer you out of the AP class, depending on available seats.

## **Explanation of Assignments**

### **Part I: Create Writer's Notebook**

- The writer's notebook is an important part of our year together; it is created during the summer.
- The requirements for the notebook are specific:
  - **IF you can find it, buy a sturdy, single-subject, college-ruled, spiral bound 100-page notebook**, as it must withstand a year of heavy use. **Don't buy a small notebook with pages that are smaller than 8.5 x 11;** we tape handouts into the notebook, so it must be the same size as a photocopied handout. On the other side of the spectrum, don't buy a gigantic five-subject notebook either, since you'll be carrying it to class every day next year. Make sure the pages don't fall out easily. Make sure the wire spiral won't smash flat or stab anyone.
  - If decorating notebooks to personalize them makes you happy, please feel free to do so. It is *not required*; if you do decorate, you must *avoid feathers, glitter, those cushy plastic 3D stickers -- please. Be wise.*
  - **REQUIRED: name in bold letters using dark Sharpie on the outside back cover.** (In 20 years, Fletcher has never seen 100% compliance here. Be amazing. Be memorable, and everybody remember to write their name on the back.)

- Please write inside in dark ink (blue or black), and write on both sides of the page. Do not use an ink pen that “bleeds through.” Sharpies, bad. Ballpoint ink, good. Pink, orange or red inks: no way. Pencil, impossible. DO NOT WRITE IN PENCIL, or your work will be returned to you, unread.

## Part II: Read two books. Write.

*“The kind of deep reading that a sequence of printed pages promotes is valuable not just for the knowledge we acquire from the author’s words but for the intellectual vibrations those words set off within our own minds. In the quiet spaces opened up by the sustained, undistracted reading of a book, or by any other act of contemplation, for that matter, we make our own associations, draw our own inferences and analogies, foster our own ideas. Deep reading...is indistinguishable from deep thinking.”*

~excerpted from “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” by Nicholas Carr

For AP English this summer, you’ll read one book-length nonfiction text, one novel, and several newspaper pieces, including two long articles. We recommend that you save *Brave New World* for last. It’s the weirdest. (But you can do the work in any order you want.)

**[LECTURE HERE]:** Nonfiction texts require a different style of reading than what you are used to when reading narrative fiction. In nonfiction, you must slow down, annotate, and attend to HOW ideas and arguments develop over time, and build upon one another. You must read actively. That is, you should sit up in a chair, and turn off your phone and your music, and avoid your computer or any device that dings, beeps, buzzes, trills, or sings when an incoming message arrives. And read with a pencil in your hand. Make notes. Track your thinking. Notice where you get lost. Notice where you lose focus.

Losing focus happens to everyone. The difference between successful readers and unsuccessful readers is simple: successful readers monitor their comprehension and their thinking, “listen” to their minds processing the material, notice when they get lost, go back and re-read. **They persist.** They are actively thinking as they read, not merely passing their eyes over words. If you cannot think and engage your own mind as you read, your intellectual growth will be severely hampered. You’ll be faking it; maybe you’ll successfully fool people for a while, but eventually, faking catches up with you.

What do you do when you lose focus? Begin again. If you have to do this 1000 times, that’s what you have to do. Just notice that you’ve lost focus, and return yourself to the text. Don’t give up. Don’t scold yourself. Don’t sigh and moan. Don’t start telling yourself stories about how bored you are. Take up a scholarly, serious, light-hearted attitude, and begin again.

**CORE TEXT #1: (You must purchase, borrow, or steal a copy of this book; e-books OK)**

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin (USA), 1985. Print.

This book has legs. (That means it continues to be of interest.) Published in 1985 (10 years before the internet browser was widely available), it surveys and analyzes the effects of television on various forms of public discourse: news, religion, political discussion and campaigning, and education. Postman notes that television's contribution to educational philosophy is the idea that teaching and entertainment are inseparable — an idea he finds lethal to students' ability to develop critical thinking.

When reading this book, we want you to slow down, and develop the patience it requires to read, absorb, and assimilate a new idea. Postman writes very clearly; however, his ideas are dense and may be unfamiliar. You cannot whip through this book. You are going to have to read slowly, stop, reflect, go back, re-read. **This kind of close, reflective reading is essential for success in AP Language and in college.**

**You will be tested on this book.**

Create a document on your computer (I use Google Docs for almost everything these days), and write **three sentences** for each chapter (there are eleven) **that encapsulate Postman's main point for that chapter**. What is his thesis? What kind of evidence does he use to support his claim? In other words, you need to practice writing ACADEMIC SUMMARY. Writing academic summary is a skill to develop and practice — focus on big ideas, main points, important cause and effect relationships; write in clean, clear, well-constructed sentences. No fluffy stuff. No "Basically, what Postman is trying to say," introductions. Just get to it. **This work will be submitted to Turnitin.com.**

**CORE TEXT #2: (The library will lend you this book, but you might want to buy one you can write in)**

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1998, ©1932.

*Consistently listed as one of the top ten novels of the 20th century, Brave New World is a science fiction classic; like most science fiction, it creates a world that challenges us to reconsider our own world anew.*

Choose any three from the following prompts and craft your best analytical response of between 500-700 words, and submit to Turnitin.com:

**Prompt 1:** An individual's struggle toward understanding and awareness is the traditional subject for the novelist. Apply this statement to *Brave New World*. Organize the essay according to the following plan: 1. Compare the protagonist as we see him in an early scene with how we see him in a scene near the end of the novel. 2. Describe the techniques the author uses to reveal the new understanding and awareness that the protagonist has achieved.

**Prompt 2:** In many novels and plays, minor characters contribute significantly to the total work. They often have particular functions, ie., as instruments in the plot, foils to the main character, or as commentators on the main action and theme. In a well organized essay, consider how two minor characters function in *Brave New World*.

**Prompt 3:** The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is a recurring theme of many novels. Select a character from *Brave New World* who is in opposition with society. Analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the society.

**Prompt 4:** An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it concludes. In the view of some critics, work that does not provide the pleasure of significant closure has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. Discuss the ending of *Brave New World*. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work.

**Prompt 5:** Many novels seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes and traditions. Note the particular attitudes or traditions that Aldous Huxley apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's views.

An effective analytical response generally has a few key features:

- rigorous attention to the text;
- an interpretation of the work;
- a convincing argument for that interpretation.

Writers argue for their interpretation not so much to convince readers to adopt it, but rather to convince them that the idea is reasonable and based on imaginative, thoughtful analysis of the work. They must demonstrate how they "read" the work, pointing out specific details and explaining what they think these details mean.

**These three essays will be submitted to Turnitin.com as one document. Three essays, one document. Get that?**

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### TEXT #3 - The Guardian, The Long Reads

We pick one, and you pick one. If you pick two from this list (Garcia and Walker for example), that's okay -- but why not explore? There are so many good articles in the archive.

- **Walker:** [‘It’s genuine, you know?’: Why the online influencer industry is going ‘authentic’](#)
- **Ozier:** [Can we stop AI from outsmarting humanity?](#)

- **Garcia:** [Smart talking: are our devices threatening our privacy?](#)
- **Young:** [Why Silicon Valley can't fix itself](#)

In your notebook, please go through the following procedure with BOTH articles, (PREREADING, READING, AFTER READING), outlining each part so we can follow your reading process. Put together this section of your notebook carefully; following this process will assist you in navigating and following a lengthy complex text, and will enable us to evaluate your work. Adhere to the following note-taking procedure for both articles.

### **PREREADING: BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING:**

1. Look at the illustration that accompanies the article; study the title, open links – anything you can learn about the piece before reading.
2. Look up the author online.
3. Scroll through. How long is this? How “dense” is it? Do you feel comfortable with this text, or do you feel like a stranger?
4. As you scroll, look for keywords that jump out at you. Examine the surface features of the text, including subheads, graphs, illustrations.
5. Are there hyperlinks in the text? Follow a few, but stay out of trouble. You are old enough to realize when you’ve stumbled off the path.
6. Set up a system for keeping track of unfamiliar vocabulary as you read. Choose a dozen words that honestly stump you for sharing later. If you are not stumped by any words because you happen to be a word genius, choose 5 words that you find bewildering, perplexing, uncanny, unfathomable or otherwise strange. Learn to track words that you do not know, (or if you a word genius and know all the words, pick words you think we might not know) and to *notice* how many peculiar words there are. The English language is astonishing.

### **DURING READING:**

1. As you begin to read (after you’ve read about a page and have a sense of what the article is going to be about) write down 2-3 questions that you’d like an answer to, or questions that you’d like to discuss with someone else later. (Look for a blog post from one of us early in the summer on how to write a good discussion question.)
2. Write down 1-2 sentences from the article that strike you in some way. Copy the sentence, verbatim. Here are some reasons a sentence may be worth copying down:
  - a. It is beautiful, or true, or false, or confusing, or depressing.
  - b. The sentence structure is remarkable (worth talking about).
  - c. The word choices are surprising or fresh.

(Please know why you choose the sentences you choose, because we will ask, and if you don't know, it's awkward.) We want student-writers to copy down great sentences and to start noticing what makes a sentence great. Here's a [paradox](#): Sentence imitation is a great way to develop personal style.

#### **AFTER READING:**

1. Write a brief summary of the article; pretend you are describing the main idea of the chapter to someone who has never read this text before. Imagine an intelligent, interested 8th grader, and write for that audience. Don't write to impress; write to explain. Your summary can be no more than five clean, clear American sentences.
2. Look back at the questions you wrote before reading this article. Answer, or revise and answer, one of your own questions.

**A good question sometimes won't have an answer, but that does not mean it won't generate thought and discussion. Sometimes we just conduct thought experiments, and we don't get an answer, just more questions.**

**"Room for Debate", *New York Times*** (Prep for the AP Synthesis Essay & the AP Argument)

Room for Debate once was a weekly feature of the *New York Times* where several writers weighed in on a contemporary issue of interest. Luckily, these discussions are archived and most remain current. Please carefully read all of the short articles featured around an issue, and then write a summary in your notebook. You will do ten of these: We pick five, and you pick five. Write up the issue as follows:

- In three sentences, describe the heart of the issue as neutrally as possible.
- In three sentences, describe one position that is taken, and CITE the author.
- In three sentences, describe ANOTHER position that is taken, and CITE the author.
- What is your position? Why? How is this issue relevant? For the five that you choose, please explain WHY you selected this issue.

Our five, (linked on the blog):

- Media in the Age of Trump (January 19, 2017)
- Is Artificial Intelligence Taking Over Our Lives? (December 5, 2016)
- Is Digital Connectedness Good or Bad for People? (November 28, 2016)
- How to Stop the Spread of Fake News (November 22, 2016)
- Is Internet Addiction a Health Threat for Teens? (July 16, 2015)
  - Now you pick five. Our theme is media, the power of language, and technology, but you may choose any debate that piques your interest.

## Part IV: Blog

This is our blog: <http://apbloggers19-20.blogspot.com>

You will become a blogger this summer. Writing for an authentic audience with expectations is excellent practice for writers and thinkers. You must be clear; you must discuss things that merit discussion; you must make sense. When you cannot make yourself understood, you *are effectively silenced*, no longer a part of the ongoing conversation and exchange in the world of ideas.

**“If thought corrupts language, then language can also corrupt thought.” – George Orwell**  
(In other words: sloppy writing reveals sloppy thinking)

### The basic ground rules:

1. **You must email us first** so we can clear your participation on this semi-closed blog: [afletcher\[at\]busd.k12.ca.us](mailto:afletcher[at]busd.k12.ca.us) or [kcolln\[at\]busd.k12.ca.us](mailto:kcolln[at]busd.k12.ca.us)
2. Your User Name should be your actual name, and please use your school email. It’s easy, free, and safe. You must sign each post with your real name.
3. NO TROLLING ALLOWED. Absolutely, positively no ad hominem arguments [look this up if necessary]. You may question one another, ask for clarification, admit that you don’t understand what somebody is talking about, add a point that you believe somebody has missed, but you must NOT attack people. Challenge ideas, ask for clarity, but maintain civility. If we have to step in, that will be your first and only warning. The second time, your access to the blog will be blocked and we’ll simply enter a zero for this part of the assignment, followed by a tense and uncomfortable conversation.
4. Please do not waste time with “Me too!” and “I agree with you!” responses in your comments. Such posts are useless at best, and annoying. If you agree or disagree, EXPLAIN. Say something.

### Start Four Conversations

You must write four posts — that is, you have to originate four conversations. You can write about ANYTHING you encounter that connects to our summer homework; you can write about the books, about what you read on The Long Read or Room for Debate, and about things that you read or experience that connect to what we are working on.

When you post, refer directly to what you are reading and the question you want to raise. Use your questions from Postman, or use a passage in Huxley. (Believe me, once you start paying attention, modern media provides you with plenty to critique and think about. After you have



written your post, but before you publish, write a *terse, descriptive* subject line. (A misleading or unclear subject line is annoying, don't you think?)

These conversation starters should be at minimum 150 words long. Anything shorter will not be effective. For example, these two paragraphs explaining that you must start four threads are 199 words long.

### **Respond to Eight Conversations**

You must respond to other writers at least eight times. You may also respond to a response. I expect some conversations will become quite lengthy. Your responses should also be complete thoughts, fully explained. I don't want to get all nit-picky on word counts; just don't go overboard (rambling is never a good idea), and make sure you say enough to make a point.

**These recommendations are on the low side. You can definitely participate more than this. We'd like to see you involved over a course of several weeks.**

A blog is a conversation, and it is rude to run into a conversation as it draws to a close and just blurt out a bunch of stuff without giving anyone an opportunity to respond. In previous years, some people have tried posting everything in one day. That is not blogging; that is procrastinating and cramming.

- BLOGGERS WHO BEGIN THE WORK LATER THAN JULY 15 WILL RECEIVE 75% OF THE CREDIT THEY WOULD HAVE EARNED EARLIER.
- ANY BLOGGER WHO BEGINS THE WORK LATER THAN JULY 29 WILL ONLY RECEIVE 25% CREDIT OF THE CREDIT THEY WOULD HAVE RECEIVED EARLIER.
- Anything posted after 11:59 p.m. on Friday, August 2 will not be counted for summer homework credit.

So, take some well-deserved time off, but try and get into it by late June, and use all the time we have. We have a short summer -- just 9 weeks; don't jam the work into the last week. Good writing comes from a thoughtful place; rushed writing is almost always superficial.

Let's see a lively exchange of ideas! When you get confused, go to your classmates for help. When you see something on television or in the newspaper that relates to what we are working on, share it. And watch for our posts — when we see something that connects or inspires, we go to the blog with it. We are writers and thinkers, too. We are thinking about the issues raised in this assignment right alongside you.

## Fun Facts

- You're going to become a more mature and disciplined reader.
- We only accept notebooks written in longhand, and **in black or blue ink** only.
- If you finish the blog requirements early, be sure to check in from time to time, because we write to the blog all summer long to explain, introduce, and discuss ideas with you.
- We answer email quickly, but from time to time, we leave the digital world for a brief vacation; we'll let you know where we are on the blog
- We expect all of your email to us to feature correctly-written English sentences and excellent etiquette. Email is no joke. People lose jobs when they write email that is tone deaf, rude, or that ignores the conventions of good writing.

Feel free to contact either one of us with questions or problems; we don't mind. We're not at our desk every day, though. It's our summer vacation too. Some questions may be redirected back to the blog so you can help each other. Try to become less dependent on your teachers.

Meanwhile, have a thought provoking summer full of family, friends and extra sleep, and we'll see you in August, ready to go.

A minimum performance checklist:

- Did I read Brave New World (BNW)?
- Did I write three essays about the novel, all three on ONE document, and submit it to Turnitin by August 2?
- Did I read Amusing Ourselves to Death (AoTD)?
- Did I write eleven chapter summaries (three sentences each) covering each chapter of AoTD and submit it to Turnitin by August 2?
- Did I write FOUR blog posts of 150 words or more by August 2?
- Did I write EIGHT comments to the blog posts of others by August 2?
- Did I write up TEN Room for Debate summaries as described in this assignment? Did I print or use cursive (find the balance between legibility and speed), using blue or black ink, in a high-quality college-ruled spiral notebook, no smaller than 8.5" x 11"?
- Did I write up TWO Long Reads, as described in this assignment, in the aforementioned high-quality college ruled spiral notebook, also in blue or black ink?
- Did I hand in that notebook at the front office by August 2 or earlier?

As we mentioned in the summer homework meeting, the work is your ticket into the class. You saw the crowd that came for the meeting. There will be three sections of AP English offered next year -- that's somewhere around 100 available seats. The homework is how we figure out who those seats go to.