

AP Language and Composition Summer Assignment

Hello! Welcome to AP Language and Composition. Registering for this class means you are ready and willing to challenge yourself to step outside of your comfort zone, work hard, and improve your skills.

Required Work

This course focuses largely on reading, discussing, and analyzing nonfiction work, so your summer assignment is to **read and annotate *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson***. Though the only work required is annotation, you should be prepared to discuss the novel during the first few days of school and write an essay within the first few weeks of being in school.

Annotation, as you should be aware from English 10 Honors, is a way of responding to or interacting with a text. A large part of your annotations for this class should be focused on identifying the strategies authors use to create convincing arguments, including language choices, appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos, personal anecdotes, statistics, etc. You may also ask questions of the text and mark passages that point to the overall purpose of the text.

A thoroughly annotated book will have at least two annotations per page. I recommend writing directly in the book, but if you choose to use sticky notes, they must be placed directly under or over the selected passage and be clear to me.

Recommended Work

The most important thing you can do as an AP Language student is to read good writing, **FREQUENTLY**. Throughout the course of the summer you should be reading both current-event-style news stories and opinion articles from reputable sources **every week**.

Remaining up to date on current events will help you both to be successful on the AP Exam and to be an upstanding, informed citizen. These types of topics will permeate our class discussions and debates throughout the year, so having a strong base of current events will benefit you in the long run.

Reputable sources include but are not limited to: *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *NPR*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *Time*, *The Week*, etc.

*Please make sure you do NOT purchase the version adapted for young adults.

Shows how much of a close-knit community they are - all these people helped by the person's presence

would take me at least two hours to get to Montgomery. I said farewells and exchanged hugs with practically everyone in the house before stepping out into the dark night.

December is rarely bitter cold in South Alabama during the winter, even in the South. Without an overcoat, I cranked up the heat on the long drive home after dropping Minnie and Jackie back at their house. The meeting with the family had been inspiring. There were clearly a lot of people who cared deeply about Walter and I frequently cared about what I did and how I could help. But it was clear that people had been traumatized by what had happened. General of the people I met weren't actually related but had been at the fish fry on the day of the crime. They were so deeply disturbed by Walter's conviction that they, too, had come over when they thought I was coming. They needed a place to share their hurt and confusion.

Shows how much of a close-knit community they are - all these people helped by the person's presence

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois included in his seminal work, *The Black Folk*, a brilliant but haunting short story. I thought about "The Coming of John" on the drive home. In Du Bois's story, a young man in coastal Georgia is sent off hundreds of miles to a school to train black teachers. The entire black community where he was had raised the money for his tuition. The community invests so that he can one day return and teach African American children who are barred from attending the public school. Casual and loving, John almost flunks out of his new school until he considers the trust he's been given and the shame he would face if he returned without graduating. Newly focused, sober, and intensely committed to succeed, he graduates with honors and returns to his community intent on changing things.

John convinces the white judge who controls the town to allow to open a school for black children. His education has empowered him, and he has strong opinions about racial freedom and equality that land him and the black community in trouble. The judge shuts down the school when he hears what John's been teaching John

home after the school's closing frustrated and distraught. On the trip home he sees his sister being groped by the judge's adult son and he reacts violently, striking the man in the head with a piece of wood. John continues home to say goodbye to his mother. Du Bois ends the tragic story when the furious judge catches up to John with the lynch mob he has assembled.

I read the story several times in college because I identified with John as the hope of an entire community. None of my aunts or uncles had graduated from college; many hadn't graduated from high school. The people in my church always encouraged me and never asked me for anything back, but I felt a debt accumulating. Du Bois understood this dynamic deeply and brought it to life in a way that absolutely fascinated me. (I just hoped that my parallel with John wouldn't extend to the getting lynched part.)

Driving home that night from meeting Walter's family, I thought of the story in a whole new way. I had never before considered how devastated John's community must have felt after his lynching. Things would become so much harder for the people who had given everything to help make John a teacher. For the surviving black community, there would be more obstacles to opportunity and progress and much heartache. John's education had led not to liberation and progress but to violence and tragedy. There would be more distrust, more animosity, and more injustice.

Shows how one person has such a big impact

Walter's family and most poor black people in his community were similarly burdened by Walter's conviction. Even if they hadn't been at his house the day of the crime, most black people in Monroeville knew someone who had been with Walter that day. The pain in that trailer was tangible—I could feel it. The community seemed desperate for some hope of justice. The realization left me anxious but determined. He's working for something bigger than himself or even Walter.

I'd gotten used to taking calls from lots of people concerning Walter's case. Most were poor and black, and they offered encouragement and