

*AP LANGUAGE
SUMMER ASSIGNMENT 2009 &
TEXTBOOK INFORMATION*

Course Description

AP Language is designed as a *college level* course which will “engage you in becoming a skilled reader of prose written in a variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts, and in becoming a skilled writer who composes for a variety of purposes.” (AP Course Description, 2007) Your electing this course commits you to a serious course of study in English Language and Composition which will require extended effort on your part. You should expect to do substantial reading and writing – we’re assuming that you are passionately interested in doing both. Completing the summer assignment demonstrates your commitment to the course; consequently, **you must bring the completed assignments to the first class meeting or you will receive an “F” for your first major graded assignments. In addition to the assignment outlined below, there will be a test on the material on the second day of class.**

Essential Questions

What comprises a person’s identity? How does physical dislocation or psychological alienation reshape personal identity? To what extent is a person defined by his/her response to taking risks and/or confronting the unknown? How does a writer shape the identity of a narrator or a character using the context of a story?

Reading

You will read two novels and watch one film:

The Things They Carried, by Tim O’Brien

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, by Junot Diaz

Tsotsi, directed by Gavin Hood

Because you will be reading these books and watching the film not only for pleasure, but to prepare to discuss and think deeply about the material, please read actively by taking notes on post-its, in the book (if it’s your own copy) or on paper as to questions and comments that arise as you read. Take notes on the film as well keeping the unit’s Essential Questions in mind as you watch. Bring these notes with you to class on the first day. You will be assessed on your understanding of the reading. We encourage you to discuss your reading with someone else in the class, as well.

Writing

The writing exercises are designed to help you investigate the essential questions about the nature of identity, and to prompt experimentation with rhetorical and stylistic modes and devices.

Preparation:

Think about the following themes and what role each plays in your own identity: fate/destiny, risk, trauma, dislocation or alienation. Choose one that matches an event or series of events in your own life and recreate that story within your head, jotting down details and outlining your story to help you remember the significance of the event or series of events. Now you are ready to write.

Writing Exercises:

The writing exercises ask you to write five *paragraphs* about your event. These paragraphs need not be sequential. Instead, you will be playing with different rhetorical strategies to tease out the many details and complexities of your story. Each of the exercises represents different rhetorical strategies that many professional writers employ in their own writing. Choose *five* of the following *ten* strategies. For three of the five, *fictionalize* (to turn from truth to fiction) the story of the event (s). Use the internet as a tool to understanding the following rhetorical modes. Here are some websites to get you started:

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jewel001/CollegeWriting/START/Modes.htm>

<http://users.cdc.net/~stifler/en110/modes.html>

Write a paragraph that would work in your fictional story:

1. Use DESCRIPTION in a paragraph that characterizes...
 - a setting
 - a person
2. Use EXAMPLES to develop a paragraph that shows:
 - the ways a character responds to a challenge
 - the kinds of things a character likes/dislikes
3. Use STRUCTURE or FUNCTION analysis to write a paragraph about:
 - a family
 - a group of friends
 - a team/organization/band
 - a machine/instrument
4. Use PROCESS ANALYSIS to write a paragraph about...
 - how the character procrastinates
 - how the character makes a decision
 - how the character makes friends
 - how the character makes up/breaks up with someone
 - how the character gets what he/she wants
5. Use CAUSE AND EFFECT to show:
 - why an event happens
 - why a character reacts the way he/she does
 - why a character succeeds or fails at a particular point in the story
6. Use CLASSIFICATION in a paragraph to explain...
 - kinds of friends
 - kinds of siblings
 - kinds of parents
 - kinds of drivers
 - kinds of teachers

7. Use COMPARISON/CONTRAST to explain the similarities and/or differences in...
 - generations
 - genders
 - cultures
8. Use an ANALOGY to show how...
 - one character is like another person or thing
 - one situation is like another
9. Use DEFINITION to develop a paragraph on...
 - fate/destiny
 - danger
 - risk
 - dislocation
 - identity
 - alienation
10. CHOOSE ANY SENTENCE from either novel, and use it as the first sentence of a paragraph for your own story.

Textbook Information

Summer texts can be obtained from libraries, bookstores, online booksellers, and video stores.

For next year, we have a textbook for this course that is wonderful, and we'd like to ask you to buy your own copy if at all possible. AP Language is a college level course, and having your own book allows you to mark it up, highlight and annotate as you would in a college textbook. The book is *The Writer's Presence* edited by Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New, it is expensive (around \$50.00), but it can be found at online sources such as Amazon.com or other used textbooks sites (a list of sites can be found at <http://online.sfsu.edu/~mgriffin/books.html>). We are currently working with the Fifth Edition but if you can't find an affordable Fifth, we can work with the Fourth.

If it is not possible for you to buy your own copy even at these low prices, we can check out a school copy to you in the fall. If you intend to buy it used, it's a good idea to order it right away; these sometimes take a while to get to the buyer.

Thanks in advance for trying to make this happen, and let me know if you have any questions about this or the summer assignment. You can reach me by email at kcavan@tamdistrict.org. Have a wonderful summer.