

Summer Assignment: AP English Language

There are three parts to the summer reading assignment. All of them are intended to introduce you to the type of work we will be doing in AP English Language, and so will not be graded for accuracy. You will, however, be expected to make a sincere and *thorough* effort.

Part One: Find and read THREE essays and write a rhetorical precis for each (see attached guide/rubric for rhetorical precis). Your essays should be taken from the following sources: *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New York Times*, or *The Washington Post*. For the newspaper, your essays should be taken from the editorials, the opinion pages, or, if you're using the Sunday edition, from the *Post's* Outlook section or the *Times' Week in Review* section. NO NEWS ARTICLES. Annotate the essays and be prepared to turn them in with the precis.

Part Two: Read a longer non-fiction title.

Suggestions are listed below, but you may choose any non-fiction piece. Books with an asterisk (*) are available to check out from the English Office in 257. Answer the following questions *thoroughly* and in complete sentences, using text examples from the book where appropriate. Your responses will help you when you write an in-class essay on your return to school.

1. What is the writer's argument?
2. What does the writer do to convince the reader of this argument?
3. How would you describe the writer's style? Provide three quotations of 1-3 lines that you feel best exemplify the writer's style.
4. How could the writer have made their argument better?

Part Three:

Write a multi-paragraph personal response to the work you read for Part Two. This does not need to be a full-on essay, but you should be *thorough* and *thoughtful*. Pay particular attention to your own voice and style, including creating a specific tone and incorporating sentence variety. Resource for sentence variety:

<https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/scholarlyvoice/sentencestructure>

American Sniper by Chris Kyle; Scott McEwen;

Jim DeFelice

* *Bottlemania*, Elizabeth Royce

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca

Skloot

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand

Undaunted Courage by Stephen E. Ambrose

Maphead by Ken Jennings

No Time to Lose by Peter Piot

Plastic by Susan Freinkel

Salt by Mark Kurlansky

**Stiff* by Mary Roach

The Map That Changed the World by Simon

Winchester

* *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan

The Perfect Storm by Sebastian Junger

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

1421 by Gavin Menzies

Guns, Germs, and Steel by Jared Diamond

The World Is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman

Killing Lincoln by Bill O'Reilly; Martin Dugard

Eight Men Out by Eliot Asinof; Stephen Jay Gould

(Introduction by)

King of the World by David Remnick

Freakonomics, by Stephen J. Dubner and Steven

Levitt

Fast Food Nation, Erik Schlosser

* *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer

The Girl Who Smiled Beads by Clemantine

Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Annie Dillard

* *Nickel and Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich

RHETORICAL PRÉCIS*

A rhetorical précis differs from a summary in that it is a less neutral, more analytical condensation of both the content and method of the original text. If you think of a summary as primarily a brief representation of what a text says, then you might think of the rhetorical précis as a brief representation of what a text both says and does. Although less common than a summary, a rhetorical précis is a particularly useful way to sum up your understanding of how a text works rhetorically (*Reading Rhetorically*, 62).

THE STRUCTURE OF A RHETORICAL PRÉCIS

Sentence One: Name of author, genre, and title of work, date in parentheses; a rhetorically active verb; and a THAT clause containing the major assertion or thesis in the text.

Sentence Two: An explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis.

Sentence Three: A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an “in order to” phrase.

Sentence Four: A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

Sentence One (Who/What?)

_____ in the _____, _____,
 (Author) (A) (Title)
 _____ that _____.
 (B)

Sentence Two (How?)

_____ supports his/her _____ by _____
 (Author’s Last Name) (B) (C)

Sentence Three (Why?)

The author’s purpose is to _____ in order to/so that _____.
 (D)

Sentence Four (To Whom?)

The author writes in _____ tone, for _____.
 (E) (audience)

Word Bank – some possibilities

A	B	C	D	E
article, book review, essay, column, editorial	argues, argument, asserts, assertion, suggests, suggestion, claims, questions, explains, explanation	comparing, contrasting, telling, explaining, illustrating, demonstrating, defining, describing, listing	show point out suggest inform persuade convince	Formal informal sarcastic humorous contemptuous

Précis Examples

A. Sheridan Baker, in his essay "Attitudes" (1966), asserts that writers' attitudes toward their subjects, their audiences, and themselves determine to a large extent the quality of their prose. Baker supports this assertion by showing examples of how inappropriate attitudes can make writing unclear, pompous, or boring, concluding that a good writer "will be respectful toward his audience, considerate toward his readers, and somehow amiable toward human failings" (58). His purpose is to make his readers aware of the dangers of negative attitudes in order to help them become better writers. He establishes an informal relationship with his audience of college students who are interested in learning to write "with conviction" (55).

B. Toni Morrison, in her essay "Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks," implies that racism in the United States has affected the craft and process of American novelists. Morrison supports her implication by describing how Ernest Hemingway writes about black characters in his novels and short stories. Her purpose is to make her readers aware of the cruel reality of racism underlying some of the greatest works of American literature in order to help them examine the far-reaching effects racism has not only on those discriminated against but also on those who discriminate. She establishes a formal and highly analytical tone with her audience of racially mixed (but probably mainly white), theoretically sophisticated readers and critical interpreters of American literature.

C. Sandra M. Gilbert, professor of English at the University of California, Davis, in her essay "Plain Jane's Progress" (1977), suggests that Charlotte Brontë intended *Jane Eyre* to resemble John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in that Jane's pilgrimage through a series of events based on the enclosure and escape motif eventually lead toward the equality that Brontë herself sought. Gilbert supports this conclusion by using the structure of the novel to highlight the places Jane has been confined, the changes she undergoes during the process of escape, and the individuals and experiences that lead to her maturation concluding that "this marriage of true minds at Ferndean – this is the way" (501). Her purpose is to help readers see the role of women in Victorian England in order to help them understand the uniqueness and daring of Brontë's work. She establishes a formal relationship with her audience of literary scholars interested in feminist criticism who are familiar with the work of Brontë, Bunyan, Lord Byron and others and are intrigued by feminist theory as it relates to Victorian literature.

D. In her article "Who Cares if Johnny Can't Read?" (1997), Larissa MacFarquhar asserts that Americans are reading more than ever despite claims to the contrary and that it is time to reconsider why we value reading so much, especially certain kinds of "high culture" reading. MacFarquhar supports her claims about American reading habits with facts and statistics that compare past and present reading practices, and she challenges common assumptions by raising questions about reading's intrinsic value. Her purpose is to dispel certain myths about reading in order to raise new and more important questions about the value of reading and other media in our culture. She seems to have a young, hip, somewhat irreverent audience in mind because her tone is sarcastic, and she suggests that the ideas she opposes are old-fashioned positions.

E. Douglas Park, in his essay "Audiences" (1994), suggests that teaching audience is an essential but elusive aspect of teaching writing. Park develops this idea by exploring different definitions of audience, looking at how a text itself can delineate audience, and then discussing specific strategies writers can use to create contexts for audience. His purpose is to help teachers of writing understand and teach the different aspects of audience in order that they can help students improve the sense of audience in their writing. Park establishes an informal relationship with teachers who are interested in strengthening their students' weak writing.