Austin High School
Incoming 11ᵗʰ grade AP Language and Composition for 2025-2026
Summer Reading Assignment

Welcome to Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. This is a nonfiction course where reading, writing, and analysis will support you in your college endeavors. Additionally, you will be prepared to take the AP exam in the spring where you may receive college credit.

To ensure your brains remain fresh and engaged as readers during the summer break, we ask you to take a deep dive on ONE (1) issue listed below and locate FOUR (4) credible sources related to the issue. In August, we will immediately examine these social/political/economic/gender/technological issues in various contexts and begin in earnest to study the elements of argumentation.

The Issues
- Social Media Addiction
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Online Sports Betting
- Social Media
- Animal Conservation
- Inclusion of ACT/SAT Scores for College Admission
- Women in Sports: NCAA/WNBA Pay Discrepancies
- Autonomous Cars
- Housing Crisis / Cost of Living
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
- Immigration
- Local Issues: environment and social
- Euthanasia
- Digital Divide
- Online Privacy
- Drug Rehabilitation
- Gentrification
- Climate Change
- Gun Violence

The Assignment
1. Select ONE (1) issue.
2. Locate four (4) articles related to that issue.
   a. Read and enjoy the articles! A list of credible sources is provided below, but you may choose from outside this list if necessary. In which case, you must choose an article that is **objective** (e.g., provides facts only and allows audience to make up their own minds about the issue), **current** (post-Covid)[1], and **authoritative** (author is credentialed or is an expert in the field).
   b. Begin by annotating (see below) the first interesting article you find. Then use key words from that article to continue researching: e.g., Google "[key term]" + "[issue]"
3. Read and annotate (add notes to, explain, or comment on) the articles. **Printed and annotated articles must be accessible during the first week of school.**
   a. Who is the author?
   b. What is the author's connection to the issue?
   c. Who is the author's audience: What are the demographics of people who are most likely to read the articles based on where they were published?
   d. What is the author's purpose in writing? *Why* does the author want to convey this particular message?
   e. What key terms are used?
   f. What other issues are related to the one described in the editorial?

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[1] In very rare cases, you may choose an article that was written before Covid. In these cases, the article chosen must contain information that remains relevant and that provides a context for understanding the issue that *has not changed* since the date of publication.

4. **You _MUST_ finish reading FOUR articles and have hard copies of all materials during the first week of school.**
   As a class, we will have a thorough investigation of rhetorical techniques as we lay the foundation for our year-long study of rhetoric and argumentation. Your annotations and notes regarding the author's purpose, tone, audience, or style will help support you with class discussions and writing.
5. Complete a SPACECAT analysis of ONE article. The SPACECAT analysis should be completed on a separate sheet of paper and should have an MLA heading. See the Purdue OWL MLA Formatting page if you need help.
   https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/13/

What should the SPACECAT analysis contain?
For ONE (1) of the four (4) articles you will write a response focused on Speaker, Purpose, Audience, Context, Exigence, Choices, Appeals, and Tone (SPACECAT). Responses should address rhetorical techniques, **not simply plot summary.** Response should be written in thorough, thoughtful, and

Grading Criteria

Speaker	▪ Who created this artifact? Was it an individual, a business, a government, or something else? ▪ What do you know about the creator, their background, and their experience? What do you not know about them? ▪ How is the artifact's meaning or effect changed or influenced because of the person who created it?
Purpose	▪ Why did the creator of the artifact make this? What are they hoping to accomplish with it? ▪ Are they trying to persuade, educate, entertain, inform, incite, motivate, inspire, or something else? ▪ How well does the medium or channel in which they're communicating help accomplish the purpose?
Audience	▪ Who is the intended audience of the artifact? Who did the message reach beyond the intended artifact? ▪ What assumptions did the creator make or what expectations did they have about the audience? ▪ What impact did the audience's culture, background, mood, or experience have on the message?
Context	▪ When and where was this artifact created and delivered? How was it intended to be displayed or distributed? ▪ What was happening in the community, country, culture, or world when the artifact was created? ▪ Would the message have been interpreted differently if it were delivered in a different time, place, or event?
Exigence	▪ Why does this message matter, especially in the moment of creation, for the speaker or audience? ▪ What moved the creator of the artifact to create it? Were they inspired, angered, frustrated, or something else? ▪ Does the message have a lasting impact, even after it was created? Why or why not does it matter now?
Choices	▪ What specific communication choices did the creator use to convey the message? Why did they make those choices? ▪ What impact does diction, sentence structure, organization, layout, color, figures of speech, etc. have on the message? ▪ Are there choices the creator could have made but didn't that may have changed the message?
Appeals	▪ How did the creator intend to appeal to their audience? Through emotion, logic, or credibility? ▪ Are elements of the artifact—such as danger, adventure, sex, health, age, youth, popularity, etc.—that were likely intended to appeal to the audience? Are there elements that did not appeal or may have offended?
Tone	▪ What is the general tone of the message? Happy, serious, energized, something else? How do you know? ▪ What do you learn about the message or speaker's attitude from the tone? ▪ Does the tone shift in certain parts of the communication? What is the purpose for the shift?

This assignment will count as a Level II grade for the 1st 6-week grading period. You will be assessed on the following criteria:

- The assignment is complete (total of 4 annotated articles and one SPACECAT analysis) and typed.
- A Works Cited for all four (4) articles. See the Purdue OWL website for help with formatting a Works Cited page.
  https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_periodicals.html
- The SPACECAT Analysis should thoroughly analyze one (1) article: all components of the SPACECAT method have been analyzed in depth.
- Each article is directly and explicitly connected to your chosen issue.
- The responses demonstrate thorough and insightful comments with regard to SPACECAT.
- The writing demonstrates stylistic maturity with effective command of the elements of writing and organization.

Sample Response for "Subject" portion of SPACECAT Response:

(Alberto Urrea, "The Rules of the Game," *The New Yorker*, May 2017)

Issue: Immigration
Urrea focuses on illegal immigrants as people, not statistics. The opening sentences with their series of descriptions of these lost souls is gripping in its simplicity. Men who are unable to "blink up a tear" who are "burned nearly black" with "lips huge and cracking" pull his audience immediately into their mystery (43). This opener, coupled with the foreboding title, causes the reader immediate curiosity concerning the subject. The realization that this could be any human, including the reader, contributes immediately to the effectiveness of Urrea's argument.

What if I need help on the assignment?

If you have any questions over the summer, please feel free to contact Dr. Miles-Finch (Katherine.miles-finch@austinisd.org) or Ms. Amanda Castro ([amanda.castro@austinisd.org)](mailto:amanda.castro@austinisd.org) for assistance.

Academic Integrity:

Summer reading assignments help your English teacher gauge your critical reading, writing, and thinking skills. Therefore, all work should be completed independently; do not partner with a friend or receive too much help from a tutor or parent.

Work submitted will be screened through a plagiarism/AI clearinghouse. Do not conduct any research online or seek out sources like gradesaver, sparknotes, cliffsnotes, schmoop, etc. which are websites designed to take advanced texts and simplify them for the reader. Using online sources like these websites and/or an AI site (including Grammarly) is prohibited in the Austin High ELA Plagiarism Policy Our expectation is that you read the text and work independently with the text assigned, even if you have to grapple with some analysis. If you have any questions, please reach out to an English teacher listed on the assignment. We're here to help!

Where do I find the articles?

You will be responsible for locating and reading four (4) articles that relate to a contemporary issue. You will generate a SPACECAT analysis of ONE (1) of these articles based on the model found above. You need to annotate each article, so PRINT EACH ONE.

Each article must come from a different source in this list of newspapers and magazines: [2]

Smithsonian	Washington Post	Rolling Stone	Dallas Morning News	National Geographic
New York Times	Vanity Fair	Boston Globe	Audubon	Los Angeles Times
Scientific American	Atlantic Journal Constitution	Fortune	Wall Street Journal	Texas Monthly
Arizona Republic	Wired	Chicago Tribune	Psychology Today	New Yorker
Houston Chronicle	Cleveland Plain Dealer	Philadelphia Inquirer	The Economist	Harper's
Denver Post.				

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[2] You may choose from outside this list if necessary. In which case, you must choose an article that is **objective** (e.g., provides facts only and allows audience to make up their own minds about the issue), **current** (post-Covid)[2], and **authoritative** (author is credentialed or is an expert in the field).