
AP Language and Composition 2020/21: Summer Reading and Preparing for next Fall

Greetings, class of 2022! Even though we're still dealing with the most bizarre spring semester in recent years, it's time to start looking forward to next fall and your penultimate year of high school. Now that we have some breathing room and perspective on extended AMI, we're going to make the adjustments necessary to be ready for whatever August brings. Despite this uncertainty, we're still going to offer you a rich curriculum of interesting works and challenging tasks. In addition, we're going to restructure our course to operate smoothly whether online or in person. Naturally, we always prefer to see you folks in class, but as we all now know, that isn't always possible.

Since we're changing so many aspects of the course, it only makes sense that we adjust our summer reading expectations as well. We're still going to ask you to procure some books, and we actually need you to own these rather than borrow library copies because we'll be using them continuously throughout the year. They are:

- *On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser. 30th Anniversary edition; [about \\$13.00 on Amazon](#).
- *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk; [about \\$7.00 on Amazon](#).

*******Please, please, PLEASE! Let us, your counselor, your coach, or someone here at school know if you need help getting the books. We have plenty of resources at Central, and it would be foolish to allow \$20 to keep you from taking every advantage of what this course offers.*******

Once you have these books, read them. *On Writing Well* is actually a good read. Even though it's about the craft of writing, it has the tone and feel of a memoir. *The Elements of Style* is a little dryer. It's a style manual, and you won't be able to read it like prose. We don't expect that you'll read the chapters like a novel, but you need to familiarize yourself with its content and structure. Perhaps view it more as the technical manual for the general advice offered in *On Writing Well*. When you have questions about how to improve your own writing, we'll be pointing you toward these two works for reference, and we'll expect you to bring them to class for most of the first semester.

In addition to the books, we're asking you to read several short works of quality non-fiction prose. We suggest at least one a week, but make sure to do at least 3-4 over the summer, please. We strongly recommend articles from magazines such as [The New Yorker](#), [Harpers](#), or [The Atlantic](#). All three of these are considered fairly centrist in their politics (though the readership of *The New Yorker* leans a little further left).*

We'll be providing you with several works from these and similar caliber journals and magazines as we begin the year, and it is this kind of prose that you need to be comfortable with to do well on the AP Lang Exam next May. Pay attention to the writers' styles and whether or not they seem to comply with Zinsser's and Strunk's advice. **(Note: all of the journals will let you read a few articles per month for free, but if you can get your parents to do it, get a subscription; all of them offer discounts for students.)**

And finally...the answer to the big question on everyone's mind: no, there will NOT be an assessment over these assignments at the beginning of the year, and you will NOT be required to turn in annotated copies for points. Eventually, you will have to know this material, and if you familiarize yourself with it sooner rather than later, you will have a more productive and enjoyable year. In short, if you do these things, you will be ahead. But if you don't, you will not start off with a bad grade. This is a carrot, not a stick.

*If you prefer to read something more politically slanted, just make sure the writing is well-constructed and stay away from sensationalist sources. Perhaps try something like *The Weekly Standard* (right) or *The Nation* (left), but we won't be using texts like those in class.