

Dear AP English Language and Composition students,

Let us start with a verse from Marge Piercy's poem "To Be of Use."

I love people who harness themselves,
An ox to a heavy cart,
Who pull like buffalo, with massive patience,
Who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
Who do what has to be done, again and again.

AP English Language and Composition is for oxen and buffaloes, for students who have the stamina and patience to work and work and work. AP English Language and Composition is a class for students who love to read and write and think deeply and work with a community of learners to discover and uncover truths in literature, the world and themselves. It is for students who understand that daily attendance is obligatory, deadlines are deadlines, excuses are unacceptable, hard work is rewarded.

With that--welcome to AP Language and Composition.

Here are the summer assignments:

Peter J. Rabinowtz, *Before Reading/ Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation*
George Orwell, *1984*
Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*

You will need to read and refer to the essay by Rabinowitz before you begin the books and during the reading of them. It will help you to understand them and their significance. Spend time with the books, think deeply about them, reread the beginning and the end to deepen your understanding, discuss them with others.

After you have kept the journal you will have to answer some questions. Others will be completed in class the first week of school. How long should your answers be? I am looking for quantities and quality of work. Most important, I am not looking for the "right" answers, but for thoughtful analysis that reflects a thorough and serious reading of the texts.

For the questions: The papers should be final draft quality, typed. Use 1.5 or double spacing, 12 point font size and a font such as Times New Roman or Courier New. One point of style: when you write about a work of fiction, film or nonfiction, maintain the present tense. You need to say, for example, "In *1984*, Winston Smith detests Julia until one day she slips him a note asking him to meet her after work."

Good luck and I look forward to working with you next year!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Shagoury

Questions for 1984

1. In list form, retell the story in chronological order.
2. Discuss the beginning and the end of the book. Why does Orwell begin and end it as he does?
3. According to Rabinowitz's rules of notice, readers should notice threats, warnings and promises. Think deeply. How does each of these things relate to what happens in *1984*? That is how does an individual threat, warning, and promise play out in the story?
4. According to Rabinowitz's, rules of configuration, readers should expect that strong attractions and dissonances between characters will have consequences. How is this played out in *1984*?
5. Besides telling Winston Smith's story, what else is Orwell telling us about the Winston Smiths of the world and humanity in general?

Questions for Mountains Beyond Mountains

1. What events in Paul Farmer's life made him into the person he is today? That is, what were the pivotal moments in his life, and how did he use them? Dig deep here, don't be afraid to play psychologist.
2. Discuss the evolution and mission of Zanmi Lasante (Partners in Health).
3. From reading the book, what did you learn about a) the history of Haiti, b) its political and economic situation, c) U.S. involvement in Haiti. Think about the earthquake that rattled Haiti and how it impacted the country and the people.
4. Discuss the idea of "voodoo"—the connotation and denotation of the word that you brought to the book, the explanation of it that Kidder gives, the way it plays out in the lives of Haitians, the way Farmer sees it.
5. Discuss the importance Farmer places on being a doctor anthropologist.
6. What do you know about the people who choose to work with Paul Farmer? Do you see any distinguishing qualities among them?

Keeping a Double-Sided Journal

You need to buy a full size notebook. In this you will need to keep a list of vocabulary words that are new to you, make a reference to the page number for each, and check the meaning in a dictionary. You could dedicate a few pages at the back of the notebook for this personal glossary. Keep one glossary for each book. You may find 20-30 words for each book, words that you would like to incorporate into your vocabulary.

When you are reading the two books this summer, you are to keep a double-sided journal. If you have never kept such a journal, this is what you need to do. Divide each page in half the long way, these may be folded or drawn with a ruler.

Notes and quotes that impress you:

On the **left side** you are to take notes of the book and events. On the **right** you are to think about and write your questions and understanding regarding the reading(s).

“1984 is a secular prophecy about the grim consequences of what Orwell felt were the three most horrific circumstances of contemporary life: the rise of totalitarianism, the use of science and technology to regulate society, and the use of rhetoric to distort truth and crush individual freedom.” (Monarch Notes, p. 14)

*Totalitarianism ?
Secular?*

Comments, Insights, Connections

This sounds important, but what is “secular” and how does that fit with “totalitarianism” and contemporary society? OK, I checked the definitions and now at least I understand the sentence.

I just started the book and it said the clock struck 13 o'clock. Weird.

But it must mean something—Rabinowitz defines the “Rule of Notice” and points out that what is written in beginnings are significant—what do I know and what questions will the first part of the book mean? What are the threats, warnings and promises that are starting to come out even in the beginning of the novel?