

AP Language and Composition Summer 2022 Pre-Course Assignments

1. Reading Assignment:

Due Date: First day of class.

Assignment: [*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by himself.*](#) You can access this text online [here](#) or at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23>.

The expectation for this course is that you will have read this book before the first day of class. Because AP Lang focuses on analyzing style, rhetoric and purpose, you should be prepared to discuss your understanding of Douglass's purpose for writing this narrative. In addition, you should pay attention to how he uses tone, diction (word choice), and style to achieve that purpose.

2. Writing Assignment:

Due Date: First day of class.

Assignment: You will be writing a one-page reflective response to a text to submit the first day of class. ***Your response should be no more than 300 words.**

You may write in response to any non-fiction text (article, essay, [Op-Ed](#), podcast, or cartoon) on any subject you like. It must be selected from a credible, reliable publication, be relevant (within the last five years), and school-appropriate.

You should review the four steps below and the leading questions for each step to help guide your analysis, **but you do not need to address each of these questions in your writing.** The questions and tips were excerpted from those provided in the [NYTimes.com Summer Reading Contest](#). See [Student Samples](#) for examples of the length and depth of analysis we would like for this reflection.

Step ONE: Read Critically and Show Us Your Thinking

- How did this piece impact you? Did it teach you something? Challenge you? Reassure you? Move you? Make you angry? What emotions did it stir, and why?
- What happened as you read? What was going through your mind? What specific lines, quotes, words or details stood out? Why?
- What questions did it raise for you? What does it make you want to know more about?

- What connections can you make between this piece or topic and something else you know about? Why? For instance, does it remind you of something else you've read, seen or heard? Something you've studied in school?
- What did you think of the piece overall? What were its strengths and weaknesses?

Tip:

- Show how a piece changed your mind or broadened your understanding of an issue. Notice how, in just 273 words, [Louise Dorisca of Florida](#) managed to write a stirring, beautifully expressed reaction to the 1619 Project, which was not just one article but an entire special edition of The Times Magazine. Then take a look at how [John Fernandez Philippides](#) embedded family history in his explanation for how a piece on cars changed his mind about data privacy.
- Explain the lens through which you're reading something, in much the same way [Jordan Ferdman](#) explored a moral principle to explain how she interpreted an article about the vaping industry.

Step TWO: Reference specific quotes from the piece

- What lines, words, details, images, quotes or paragraphs stood out in this piece?
- Which quotes best support what you want to say about the piece?

Tip:

- Long quotes are too cumbersome. Incorporate the quotation into a sentence with your own words and your own thoughts.
- Scatter small, salient details from the piece throughout so that it is obvious how closely you read it. Read [Claire Tempelman's](#) exploration of the 2016 electoral map to see all of the ways she referenced the information she gleaned from it.

Step THREE: Write in your natural voice and experiment with style

- How would you tell a friend about this piece? What elements of your real voice can come through in your writing? For example, if you're funny, be funny.
- How can you loosen up, be playful and experiment? Are there aspects of the piece that can inspire your own writing and style? How?

Tip:

- Have a little fun in the spirit of the piece you choose. For example, look at all of the ways [Cody Busch-Weiss](#) played with punctuation, below, as a fitting reaction to an article *about* punctuation.”

Student Samples (prior winners of the NYTimes.com summer reading challenge):

“Example 1: In 2017, Hannah Li, of Syracuse, N.Y., chose “To Beyoncé or Not to Beyoncé: The Challenges of Confirming the Birth of Her Twins,” and wrote:

As long as you’re not living under a rock, you know Beyoncé recently had twins. That’s not news. But what was news to me was that The New York Times took great precaution when publishing the story. I mean, it’s Beyoncé! We want all the news we can get regarding her pregnancy. We don’t care if it’s just rumors! Right? Wrong.

In “To Beyoncé or Not to Beyoncé: The Challenges of Confirming the Birth of Her Twins,” Maya Salam explains her process of confirming details. When the rumors first leaked, all the gossip mags and many news sources jumped to publish something about the twins. Facts couldn’t be confirmed since neither Beyoncé or Jay-Z were talking, but that didn’t stop publications. Salam contacted many sources she had deemed reliable but she came back empty-handed from most. Nevertheless, she persisted and eventually found solid information.

This made me realize that The New York Times actually cares about all its facts, even in the most trivial aspects of life. Beyoncé is famous, so gossip mags and fans don’t really pay attention to the fact that even though Queen B is sometimes seen as a goddess, she is, in fact, human. So it’s important to keep the facts about her twins straight. In this era of fake news, it’s important to stay vigilant about what we hear and read, especially on the news. And if news sources have to work hard to get the facts straight on something as lighthearted as Beyoncé, then they must work even harder to maintain the veracity of harder topics.”

“Example 2: In 2019, Louise Dorisca of Florida chose The 1619 Project and wrote:

It’s been 400 years since the first slave ship landed in America. Four-hundred years later, the country it was built upon remains. For me, the word ‘slavery’ brings up images of people, humans, being dragged away from the only home, family, and freedom that they have ever known, and being loaded into floating wooden prisons as cargo. From that moment on, they were no longer humans, they were slaves, and they would forever be.

I thought I could fully wrap my head around the severity of it. However, truthfully, I was never one to lament slavery. I never personally felt victimized by it, though I knew that if I was born only 300 years ago, I would be a slave. When I was younger, I recall my father telling me about

his country, Haiti, and how it was the only place on Earth where if a black man stepped foot there, he was free. I now understand that freedom from slavery does not come without a price, and Haiti is still paying for theirs.

America is paying off their freedom, and it is very costly. Traces of slavery are found throughout America's health care and prison system, in the wealth gap, and in the education we receive, like scattered pieces of broken glass. And as long as those pieces remain, I will be a victim of slavery. Even though I didn't receive the whip to my back like my ancestors did, the scars will still remain. I am now aware of them. If I continue to be, maybe my children, and their children after, won't have to be born with those scars, too."

“Example 3: In 2017, John Fernandez Philippides of Boston chose “Cars Suck Up Data About You. Where Does It All Go?” and wrote:

Born in 2000, I have rarely worried about the risks of the digital age. But this article about the information that cars collect about us spurred a dramatic shift in my opinion about privacy and data-tracking. For a long time, I didn't care what information companies and the government knew about me. I couldn't believe that my mom required us to keep our new Amazon Echo turned off and far from where we talked. When I complained about her unfounded paranoia, she revealed that her reasons for moving Alexa were more complex than I thought.

My mother's family lived in Argentina during part of the “Dirty War,” a period starting in 1976 when the government abducted and killed thousands of Argentine citizens. Her father suspected that the government was spying on his family. When a group of soldiers entered their apartment and tore through his family's belongings without their consent, they fled to the United States. I learned that the fear of surveillance is more deeply instilled in my mother than it ever could be in me, and my apathy began to erode.

Last week, as I read about how auto companies sell information about our driving habits and daily routines, sometimes without our consent, I wondered whether my family would have survived if the Argentine government had access to that kind of data and technology.

Now, unless I need her, Alexa remains turned off in my study.”

“Example 4: In 2019, Jordan Ferdman of New York City chose an article headlined “Dozens of Young People Hospitalized for Breathing and Lung Problems After Vaping” and wrote:

I couldn't have been older than 8 years old when my parents introduced to me the concept of intent versus impact. The idea that when you hurt someone, or your actions have a negative consequence, your intent is not what matters.

I cannot help but wonder if executive James Monsees understands my parents' guiding principle. Though he acknowledged the rampant use among underage Americans, Juul products continue to sell. The effects of this are not, by any means, difficult to find: Shelia Kaplan's "Dozens of Young People Hospitalized for Breathing and Lung Problems After Vaping" makes this abundantly clear. The bathrooms at my school are affectionately referred to as the "Juul rooms." A well-known — and admittedly overdone — joke passed around in the hallways is about "toilets in the Juul room." It would be easier for me to count my friends that don't own a Juul than to count the friends that do. The vaping device has become so ingrained in teenage life that it's difficult to go a day without seeing one peeking out of a pencil case or smuggled up a sleeve. Several of my classmates cannot go more than an hour or two without taking a hit in the school bathroom or, in some cases, the back of a classroom.

Executives claim hooking teenagers on nicotine was not the intention of the company, which is valued at \$38 billion. But it is the impact, and failure to not only own up to that but to take larger steps to mitigate its damages is a disservice to the country's youth."

“Example 5: In 2018, Claire Tempelman of New York City chose an interactive feature headlined “An Extremely Detailed Map of the 2016 Election” and wrote:

I live on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, an infamous “liberal bubble.” I don't know anyone from the UWS who has publicly declared themselves a Trump voter. The map reflects this, with much of Manhattan a deep blue.

After Donald Trump won the election, lots of students in my school were shocked. “How could he have won?” one kid asked. “The whole world isn't the Upper West Side,” our teacher answered.

I chose this map because of how clearly it demonstrates that some places are such separated bubbles. It's easy to see how views can feel so monotonous. Ideology bubbles aren't good — they can lead to ignorance and polarization.

However, we might not always be as separate as we think. Another reason why I found the map so interesting is that it clashes with the classic voter maps we all see around election season, with each state colored either red or blue. Even though this may be helpful in showing electoral votes,

it doesn't show the real US. The US isn't chunky blocks of red or blue — it's more complex, with varied splatters of blue on shades of red.

Although many kids in my neighborhood view Trump voters as distant, almost foreign people from Texas (or Staten Island), only a half-hour drive away is the nearest majority Trump district, and only a few hours upstate, still in New York, a “liberal state,” are some deep red areas. Maybe some bubbles should be burst.”

“Example 6: In 2019, Cody Busch-Weiss, of Santa Barbara, Calif., chose a Style piece headlined “The Em Dash Divides” and wrote:

The glorious em dash — the king of all punctuation marks! The em dash is bold, daring, and versatile. What other punctuation mark can be a semicolon, colon, comma, and parentheses?

Semicolons are by the book foot soldiers; they do a good job linking two would-be sentences. The em dash, on the other hand, is a colorful punctuation mark — it can be used to make a strong point! The comma is great for describing, listing, and linking clauses, but it is easy for commas to flood a sentence. The em dash comes to the rescue when the commas take over a sentence — saving it from sinking in a sea of commas. Parentheses describe details about a sentence (usually making the details seem less important). An em dash makes the details seem like part of the sentence — an important part of the sentence. Em dashes can still be overused — they can distract the reader from the point of the sentence — in many cases ruining the point — and in others just making the sentence hard to read — also ruining the point. A good sentence should have lots of kinds of punctuation marks — not just one — and keep the punctuation as subtle as possible; the punctuation should allow the sentence to be helped by the punctuation, not dominated by it, as the article suggests.

For all the good an em dash can do, it's not on your keyboard. Just like other good things, you have to know where to find it. The em dash — the Swiss Army knife of punctuation — can greatly improve your writing — just don't overdo it!”

Student samples from the [NYTimes.com Summer Reading Contest](#).

