To All Students Taking Junior AP English Language and Composition:

I’m sure this letter finds you busily engaged, trying to pull together all the loose ends of sophomore year. I wanted to distribute this letter as an introduction to Junior AP English Language and Composition. Perhaps the most important thing you can do to be successful in APELC is to be “a reader”. In making the switch to APELC, you will take the Language and Composition test. This means that you will need to read works that cover a wide variety of genres, time periods, and topics, but which focus on rhetoric and the authors’ use of strategically chosen language and grammar. All of the works we will study in class next year, from novels to nonfiction essays, are demanding and require deeper analysis than just simply “Sparknoting”. Because I expect students to use their own minds and act independently, I want students to approach texts with a critical eye, a skill I will reinforce throughout the year, and introduce with your summer reading and attached exercise.

Therefore, I’d like to suggest some recommended reading students can do over the summer vacation to stay in practice and ease the transition into AP. Firstly, I hope students will read daily from a variety of nonfiction sources. This includes magazines, newspapers, trade journals, etc., such as The New Yorker, The Onion (funny stuff is good), or even Sports Illustrated. The more “culturally aware” you are, the better you will perform. I highly recommend essay compilations such as The Best Essays of the Century edited by Joyce Carol Oates, so that you can familiarize yourself with the breadth of nonfiction work that we will cover, and which appears on standardized tests. Secondly, I recommend buying/borrowing AP and SAT test preparation books and reviewing them (I do not recommend a “brand”. Any will help familiarize you with what you will see in class and on the test). You can also check out https://www.collegeboard.org/ for free SAT/AP resources. Thirdly, for the writing section of the SAT, I recommend reviewing The Elements of Style by William Strunk (and, in earlier versions, E.B. White). It is the “how to” guide for writing effectively and well.

I have two other books that are recommended reading for AP Language. The first is the book How To Read Literature Like A Professor by Thomas C. Foster. This book, written by a college professor, provides some very good background into how to read critically. Foster writes in a very understandable, conversational tone, and I think the book offers insight into how authors incorporate deeper meaning into their works. The second is They Say, I Say by Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff. This book, also by college professors, provides templates and basic instruction in the use of rhetoric and the structures of argumentative writing. The book also shows how to apply these techniques in a variety of disciplines. A pdf version of the second edition (which is fine) appears here: https://www.iss.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/NC01000579/Centricity/Domain/2741/They%20Say%20I%20Say%20Full%20Text.pdf.

I would also like to offer the following books to choose from for required reading. I will require you would read one over the summer and complete an annotation (see attached) due the first day of school. It includes:

1. Teacher Man by Frank McCourt (We will read Angela’s Ashes, and this book will help familiarize you with his nonfiction/autobiographical tone and style as well as memoir.)
2. The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates by Wes Moore (This book is about two different young men named Wes Moore and the separate paths taken in life. Read ISBN 978-0-385-52820-7, as there is a similar young adult novel by the same author.)
3. Autobiography of a Face by Lucy Grealy (This book, about the author’s experiences with cancer, is an excellent introduction to “voice”, rhetorical genre, and memoir.)
4. Funny in Farsi by Firoozeh Dumas (This book, by an Iranian woman whose family moves to California, is both very funny and in the style of nonfiction and autobiography that is typical of AP Language. We will read a section of this novel in class in the fall.)

I hope that this list and annotation exercise will provide future Junior AP English students with an introduction to some key ideas we will use throughout the year! In the meantime, enjoy summer, and I look forward to seeing you all in the fall!

 Regards,

 Mr. Holster