

AP Language and Composition Summer Reading Essay Assignments

Please choose *two* of the four essay options and write well-constructed, cohesive responses that rely upon *both* assigned readings as evidence to support your position. There is no page minimum or maximum for either assignment; however, you should not take more than an hour to complete each one as they are designed to prepare you for the rigor of the timed AP exam next May.

Choice A:

The following passage is from *Rights of Man*, a book written by the pamphleteer Thomas Paine in 1791. Born in England, Paine was an intellectual, a revolutionary, and a supporter of American independence from England. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay that examines the extent to which Paine's characterization of America holds true today. Use appropriate evidence to support your argument.

If there is a country in the world, where concord, according to common calculation, would be least expected, it is America. Made up, as it is, of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of government, speaking different languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable; but by the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man, every difficulty retires, and all the parts are brought into cordial unison. There, the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. . . . Their taxes are few, because their government is just; and as there is nothing to render them wretched, there is nothing to engender riots and tumults.

Choice B:

American essayist and social critic H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) wrote, “The average man does not want to be free. He simply wants to be safe.”

In a well-written essay, examine the extent to which Mencken's observation applies to contemporary society, supporting your position with appropriate evidence.

Choice C:

“Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.”
—Horace

Consider this quotation about adversity from the Roman poet Horace. Then write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Horace's assertion about the role that adversity (financial or political hardship, danger, misfortune, etc.) plays in developing a person's character. Support your argument with appropriate evidence from your reading, observation, or experience.

Choice D:

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

*And the strong lance of justice hurtles breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.*

Shakespeare, King Lear

The lines above are from a speech by King Lear. Write a carefully reasoned essay in which you briefly paraphrase Lear's statement and then defend, challenge, or qualify his view of the relationship between wealth and justice. Support your argument with specific references to your reading, observation, or experience.

Q3 Argument

Reporting Category: Thesis (4.B)

0 Points		1 Point	
Below Grade Level	Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Exceeds Grade Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is no defensible thesis statement. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a thesis statement, but it does not respond to the prompt. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The intended thesis simply states an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The intended thesis simply restates the prompt. <input type="checkbox"/> The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The intended thesis is vague, must be inferred, does not take a position, equivocates or summarizes other's arguments but not the student's (<i>e.g., some people say it's good, some people say it's bad</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that may establish a line of reasoning. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The thesis responds to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Responds to the prompt with a unique and defensible thesis that establishes a clear line of reasoning. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The thesis clearly takes a position rather than just stating there are pros/cons.

Additional Considerations:

- The thesis may appear anywhere within the essay.
- A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.

Reporting Category: Evidence & Commentary (2.A, 4.A, 6.A, 6.B, 6.C)

0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points
Below Grade Level		Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Exceeds Grade Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Commentary simply restates thesis (if present). OR <input type="checkbox"/> Repeats provided information. OR <input type="checkbox"/> Provides examples that are generally irrelevant and/or incoherent. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are incoherent and do not address the prompt. <input type="checkbox"/> May offer just opinion with little or no evidence provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence or example(s) relevant to the subject of the prompt. AND <input type="checkbox"/> Provides little or no commentary. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide evidence but little or no explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence or example(s) relevant to the subject of the prompt. AND <input type="checkbox"/> Provides commentary; however, it repeats, oversimplifies, or misinterprets the cited information or evidence. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide commentary that frequently misunderstands, misrepresents, or overgeneralizes complex ideas (is reductive). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence relevant to the thesis. AND <input type="checkbox"/> Provides commentary that explains the relationship between evidence and the thesis; however, commentary is uneven, limited, or incomplete. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide commentary that is clear but there are times when the link between the evidence and the thesis may be unclear or strained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence relevant to the thesis. AND <input type="checkbox"/> Provides well-developed commentary that consistently and explicitly explains the relationship between the evidence and the thesis. <p>Typical Responses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide commentary that engages specific evidence to draw conclusions. <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate evidence throughout to

				support the student's reasoning.
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Additional Considerations:
 • Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.

Reporting Category: Sophistication (2.A, 4.C, 6.B, 8.A, 8.B, 8.C)

0 Points		1 Point	
Below Grade Level	Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Exceeds Grade Level
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not meet the criteria for 1 point. Typical Responses... <input type="checkbox"/> Only hint at or suggest other arguments.	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not meet the criteria for 1 point. Typical Responses... <input type="checkbox"/> Use complicated or complex sentences or language that are ineffective in that they do not enhance the argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist of predominantly sweeping generalizations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates sophistication of thought or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation. Typical Responses... <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize a prose style that is convincing or appropriate to the student's argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Make appropriate rhetorical choices that strengthen the student's argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage concession, rebuttal, and/or refutation of other arguments relating to the thesis.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates sophistication of thought and a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation. Typical Responses... <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize a prose style that is especially vivid, persuasive, convincing, or appropriate to the student's argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Make effective rhetorical choices that strengthen the force and impact of the student's argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage concession, rebuttal, and/or refutation of other arguments relating to the thesis. <input type="checkbox"/> Situate the argument within a broader context, recognizing the implications of the argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Craft a thesis that demands nuanced consideration of textual evidence to prove – and then successfully proves it.

Additional Considerations:
 • This point should be awarded only if the demonstration of sophistication or complex understanding is part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.