AP English Language and Composition: Reality’s Arguments

Grade 11-12

Level I

1 credit

AP English Language and Composition focuses on rhetoric, argument, grammar, usage and mechanics as means to help advanced English students consider the texts that surround them with greater awareness and care whether they be spoken, written, broadcast or displayed. Through close reading and frequent writing about myriad texts circulating from the past and in the present, students will become more discerning consumers as well as generators of ideas. As an enhancement to their ongoing study of fiction, students in AP English Language and Composition learn how to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate nonfiction texts: essays, biographies and autobiographies, speeches, sermons, and passages from writings in the arts, history, social science, politics, science, and other areas of study. Social activism inevitably rises as a central aspect of our studies in this course. Researched argument papers are required of AP English Language and Composition, so only students who are already strong analytical writers about literature in primary, authentic ways are encouraged to enroll. When students are asked to synthesize the experiences and opinions of others into their own essays they are essentially engaging conversations with other writers and thinkers. As the College Board promotes, “the results of such conversations are essays that use citations for substance rather than show, for dialogue rather than diatribe.” Studies in “Reality’s Arguments” will follow the pursuit of four essential questions, and most likely generate others:

1. How does the tension between rebellion and conformity direct or constitute what we know as reality?
2. What is the nature of beauty in relation to truth in reality?
3. What is the connection between nonfiction and fiction?
4. Story or Structure—what makes great literature; what makes great reality?
AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION:

REALITY’S ARGUMENTS

Summer Reading Assignments

Primary Sources:

1. **Ted Talk**: “The Dangers of a Single Story”  Chimamanda Adichie
   [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

2. **Memoir** -- Choose one of the following that you haven't already read.

   - *The Glass Castle*  Jeanette Walls
   - *Hillbilly Elegy*  J. D. Vance
   - *Born a Crime*  Trevor Noah
   - *Educated*  Tara Westover

*We do not have copies of this text to offer you – it is just “out,” to rave reviews, and is available in some libraries for loan and in book stores for purchase. If you’d like to use EDUCATED for your memoir reading this summer, you’ll need to get a copy on your own. Because of the number of students signed up to take AP Language, we cannot offer the same text to all, but you can choose from a selection of memoirs we have available on the tables in West Office. Please take only one memoir.*

3. **Essays**:

   - “Small Wonder”  Barbara Kingsolver (photocopy)
   - “Time and Distance Overcome”  Eula Biss (photocopy)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Listen to/Watch Adichie’s Ted Talk: “The Dangers of a Single Story” (probably twice!)—“Sketch Note”* this talk as you listen, with the knowledge that you’ll need to write a persuasive essay (approximately 2 pages typed) on the ways any one of the memoir writers (Wells, Vance, Westover, Noah) supports Adichie’s claim about the danger of a single story in the telling of their own stories. Another way to phrase this essay topic is to look for ways the memoir writer has dispelled some of the problems a “single story”
presents in the telling of their own story (memoir), or alternatively, in this essay, you can assert the claim that the memoirist you chose actually showcases the problem or perpetuates the problem of a single story as Adichie presents that, if that’s what you believe the writer has done.

*Definition of Sketch Note: As you listen to the Ted Talk, fill a large piece of paper (or several regular-sized ones) with key phrases and sketches of powerful images that stand out to you as you hear Adichie’s ideas about “The Dangers of a Single Story”. This is kind of like “transcribing” the lecture. (You’re giving yourself a “text” to write from about this “talk”.

2. **Read** Eula Biss’s essay “Time and Distance Overcome” from her collection *Notes from No Man’s Land*.

   and

**Read** Barbara Kingsolver’s essay “Small Wonder,” from her collection of essays *Small Wonder*.

**Writing:** For Biss’s essay **and** for Kingsolver’s essay write a short response (about a page each) that asserts **what** this writer’s central claim is in her essay and explain one to three **different** strategies she takes to convey that idea over the course of her essay. (What is her meaning, her purpose, her message (or messages) and **how** does she make that meaning clear over the course of her essay?)

**OPTIONAL Creative piece (a OR b):** “Essay” is originally a French word, meaning “to try,” so if you’re feeling creative, and like the approach either Biss or Kingsolver uses in her respective essay, try one of the following optional assignments (you may write this just below the required analytical response described above and submit it in the Biss/Kingsolver Assignment on Turnitin.com)

a) Write about a “modern” invention, one that is a dominant presence in human society, and explore the positive and negative ramifications of that invention, its impact on human nature/human relationships/human society for better and for worse. (akin to the way Biss works telephone poles in her essay)

b) Describe a “small wonder” from your own primary experience, and in the essay that follows, show how that “small wonder” is an exception to a local, national or global problem, and the seed unto itself for changing that local, national or global problem.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Your response to the memoir of your choice **and** your response to Biss’s and Kingsolver’s essays needs to be submitted by Wednesday, August 21, 2019 to Google.docs and shared to me at treid@wcsu.net.
**Please note administrative policies for AP courses:**

If you choose not to submit the three writing assignments due August 21, 2019 the following grade policies apply, and you are still eligible to take the course regardless of whether or not you submit this writing on the summer reading assignments:

If you submit any one or all 3 of the writing assignments due Aug 21 at any time between August 22 and the first day of class, you can still earn up to 60% for each of those assignments.

If you submit one or more of these 3 assignments from the day after the first day of classes, you can’t earn more than zero on the assignment but you may still receive feedback on the essay and be in the course for the year.

If you have any questions, please send me an email and I will respond as soon as possible.

treid@wcsu.net

Thanks!