

## AP English Language and Composition Summer Reading Assignment 2019-2020

Welcome to AP English and Composition! I look forward to a productive, challenging, and intellectually stimulating year together. The assignments included in this packet are designed to serve as the basis for our discussions and activities at the beginning of the school year, as well as an introduction to the type of coursework you will be expected to complete in preparation for the AP examination.

### Assignment #1

Read *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

*The Scarlet Letter*, composed by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1850, tells the tale of a young woman shunned by her Puritan community after committing the sin of adultery. Sentenced to wear the Scarlet "A" for life, Hester and her child Pearl attempt to survive the scorn of the Puritan community as the townspeople seek out her unknown lover. This novel, set in Boston, Massachusetts in the mid-1600s, offers a critical look into our nation's past, as Hawthorne adeptly exposes the hypocrisy of this supposedly "Utopian" society. As a psychological and historical novel, it remains one of the foremost pieces of American literature to arise from the 1800s. **Be prepared to take a comprehension test the first week of school.**

### Assignment #2

Read *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell

Answer the following questions in complete (typed) sentences:

1. Malcolm Gladwell is interested in what makes some people more successful than others. Overall, how would you describe his thesis, or central premise? Do you agree or disagree with his ideas?
2. What does Gladwell mean by the term "outlier"?
3. Why does Gladwell insist that IQ is not the determining factor in one's ability to achieve success? What does he mean when he suggests that IQ reaches a point of diminishing returns after reaching 130?
4. Gladwell draws upon Robert Sternberg's idea of "practical intelligence." What is practical intelligence, and how does it differ from IQ?
5. According to Gladwell, what is the reason that Asians excel at mathematics? Discuss the cultural and educational differences that he points to as explanation.
6. Why does Gladwell feel there is no such thing as a self-made person. Do you agree? Can you name people who overcame great odds—circumstances not in their favor—to attain success? What about those people that Gladwell offers in support of his argument (Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, or the Beatles, among others)? Do you agree with his assessment that much depends on timing?
7. Do Gladwell's many anecdotes prove his hypothesis? Or do his stories exemplify his ideas? Is there a difference...if so, what? Some critics suggest that Gladwell cherry-picks his facts in order to support his premise. Is that a valid observation or not?
8. Is Gladwell suggesting that success is a matter of luck, the roll of the die? If so—if success depends on timing, birth, and opportunities—then do innate qualities (ambition or raw talent) have any role to play?
9. What personal experiences—people and incidents in your own life—can you think of that support or challenge Gladwell's ideas?
10. What did you find most surprising, humorous or thought-provoking in Gladwell's book? Any "ah-ha!" moments? Have you come away thinking differently than before? What, if anything, do you feel you've learned?
11. Gladwell gives differing definitions of intelligence. Yet his definition of success is singular—"worldly" success in terms of wealth, power, and fame. Are there also differing definitions of success that Gladwell doesn't consider? If so, what are they, and what does it take to achieve those versions of success?

### Assignment #3

Current Events/editorials/opinion columns

To begin to create a foundation of examples and ideas to support the arguments you will be asked to make in class this year, you need to read reputable newspaper or news magazine articles, editorials, opinions---*The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Times Magazine*, *The Economist*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, etc. You can also access local and national newspapers. You will need to read a total of 8 pieces over the summer--about 1 every week. The dates should be spread out. Choose topics that relate to current, global, national and local events equally. Sports articles do not count. Mount each piece on a piece of blank white paper and note the publication title, title and author of article, date published, SOAPStone, your response. See example below:

-Begley, Sharon. "How Quickly We Forget." *Newsweek*. 7 May 2010:NP. Web  
-Main point: The author cited previous oil spills like the Exxon Valdez near Alaska in 1989, but notes that after a period of public outrage, the public goes back to normal life.  
-SUBJECT: Oil spills and their effects  
-OCCASION: The recent spill in the Gulf of Mexico  
-AUDIENCE: American public  
-SPEAKER: Environmentalist author  
-TONE: indignantly pessimistic.  
-My RESPONSE: I agree that oil spills and other natural disasters draw public attention and sympathy for a time, but that the public attention is quickly drawn to the next sensation story without much action.