

## AP English Language and Composition Summer Research Assignment

You will spend the summer making very important decisions that will affect your first semester grade. Please take this seriously. The following are tasks to aid you in this process. You are required to keep a neatly arranged **folder** that will include your entries, annotation, and hard copies of your source materials. Please do not submit your materials in a three-ring binder—these are too bulky and difficult for the teacher to collect.

\*\*\*\*\*All entries should be typed where indicated: 12 pt., Times New Roman, double-spaced.

**Task #1** (suggested time: 2 hours)

END PRODUCT: 1 journal

Look at the abstract topic list that is included in this packet. Your first task is to try to find which abstract topic interests you the most. **Narrow to the top three abstract topics that interest you the most** (out of the 15). Do some basic research on these three abstracts in order to decide which one of the three is most likely to produce a successful research paper for you. It is suggested that you spend no more than one hour on each abstract, looking for sources and potential questions. **Hint:** go to a web site such as Amazon.com and type in a search term to see what books are available on a given topic. You might find some intriguing titles.

Make the decision—which abstract topic are you going to use, and why? **Write a one-page, 12 pt. font, double-spaced journal entry in which you describe the one abstract topic that you have chosen, and why you chose it.** Please be specific and include your thought process—**why did you choose this one, and not one of the other 14?** Because this is a very broad topic, you will continue to narrow your focus within this topic as you collect evidence. The journal entry provides the documentation for this task.

**Task #2** (suggested time: 2 weeks)

END PRODUCT: Flawless MLA Works Cited Page

Do some more reading about your chosen abstract topic to familiarize yourself with the issues involved within the topic. **You are trying to narrow your focus** so do some general reading, perhaps in a news magazine like *Time* or *U.S. News*. You should also ask parents or other adults what they know about the subject. Sources can include books, articles, movies, songs, personal anecdotes, etc. A great resource is KYVL. Please see attached research resources. Please note that Wikipedia cannot be cited as a source on your MLA works cited sheet. Although Wikipedia can be used as a starting point, it is always better to go to the original references.

Please familiarize yourself with MLA over the summer, and **KEEP HARD COPIES** of every source (make photocopies of pages in books, print out Internet sources, etc). **Document ALL of your sources using MLA.** **Hint: Make MLA citations for every source you obtain as you go...don't wait until the end to make citations for your sources.** NOTE: a good web source for MLA style is <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>. The notes, sources, and typed works cited page provide the documentation for this task.

Create a typed works cited page with at least **20 relevant and varied sources** that you have accessed.

**TASK #3** (suggested time: 3 days )

END PRODUCTS: Three Questions, Five MLA citations, and a one page journal entry

To narrow your focus, you should think about **three potential** questions you'd like to pursue within your abstract topic. In other words, within the broad topic, what will be your focus? For instance, if a student is working with the broad topic concerning violence (#15), one of his or her three narrowing questions might be: "If human nature is to be violent, then how is this tendency suppressed in modern society?" The student would explore this idea, see the availability of sources, and determine his or her interest level. **Type the three questions.** From those three, narrow it down to one (circle the one you've chosen). Look up non-fiction books on a search engine that could be used as possible sources to answer that one question. \*Avoid "self-help" books in order to keep your focus more academic. \*Also avoid books that have fewer than 100 pages as these are probably not going to have enough information. **Type an MLA citation for at least five BOOKS that could be used.** From these five options, choose one book that you will read and annotate. After careful consideration, **write a one-page, 12 pt. font, double-spaced journal entry in which you explain your reason for choosing both the question and the book.**

**Task #4** (suggested time: 3 weeks )

END PRODUCTS: Annotated book, and a one page summary

Acquire the non-fiction book. Use the attached **annotation rubric** to read and annotate the book in its entirety. If you buy the book, write all over it. If you borrow the book from the library, please use post-its or some other means of annotation. Note that the rubric is extremely specific, and please understand that it will be strictly followed when graded. After you complete the annotation, **type a one-page summary of the information you discovered in the source.** The annotated book and the one page summary provide the documentation for this task.

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### AP English Language and Composition Summer Research Rubric

**Organization** \_\_\_\_\_/10

The tasks are organized and in order in a folder—NOT a three ring binder.

**Appearance** \_\_\_\_\_/10

All entries are typed as stated in each task—12 pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced.

**Journals/Summary** \_\_\_\_\_/60 (two journals and one summary--20 pts each)

The **three** entries are insightful, reflective, and include all information assigned. They are easy to understand, and show correct grammar, punctuation, and usage.

**MLA** \_\_\_\_\_/20

The MLA Works Cited page is **FLAWLESS** and complete with 20 relevant and varied sources.

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_/100

## Getting Started: A List of Abstract Topics

The primary objective of this research paper is that you will practice forming an individual stance using evidence from a list of varied resources. It requires that students have a mature knowledge of the issues that affect the world today. The following list of abstract topics have been implied or expressed in questions on various AP English Lang/Comp exams since the mid-1980s. Take a look at each abstract and think about questions you have about the world, about life, about people, that you would be interested in researching.

### 1. **Accepting Death**

How is death perceived in our country? What factors determine this perception? Examine the attitudes or traditions that affect how Americans view death.

### 2. **Alienation because of Gender, Race, Class, etc.**

Conflicts exist when the will of the majority opposes the will of an individual. In American, who is in the minority? Who is in the majority?

### 3. **American Values**

Define what you think to be a widely held American value, and then discuss the implications of holding this value. Perhaps take a critical stance of the value.

### 4. **Change**

What needs to change in America? Is change good or bad? Focus on changes in American social or political attitudes, or in traditions, etc.

### 5. **Family Relationships**

What are the benefits of positive family relationships? What are the effects of negative relationships? Focus on grandparents, siblings, parents, etc. Choose a work that explores the issue of family relationships in some capacity.

### 6. **Freedom and Independence**

Based on the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

### 7. **Hopefulness**

Do Americans have an inherent need for hopefulness? Are there varying degrees of hope, and how does having it affect one's life?

### 8. **Knowledge and Wisdom**

In the Book of Ecclesiastes of the Christian Bible it says, "For in much wisdom is much grief, and increase of knowledge is increase of sorrow." Choose a work that discusses the idea that knowledge (or progress) can be harmful.

**9. Language as a Key to Identity**

Language is a political instrument, a means, and a proof of power. It is the most vivid and crucial key to identity. It reveals the private identity, and connects one with, or divorces one from, the larger public, or communal identity. There are times and places when to speak a certain language could be dangerous.

**10. Money and Class in America**

“I think it is fair to say that the current ardor of the American faith in money so easily surpasses the degrees of intensity achieved by other societies in other times and places. Money means so many things to us—spiritual as well as temporal—that we are at a loss to know how to hold its majesty at bay . . . .” Henry Adams in his autobiography remarks that although the Americans weren’t much good as materialists they had been so “deflected by the pursuit of money” that they could turn “in no other direction.”

**11. Nature**

Many science and nature writers describe important encounters they have had with unfamiliar aspects of nature. Their changing response to these observations develops a philosophy of respect for nature. For instance, Ralph Waldo Emerson developed this philosophy: “A life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and virtue, will purge the eyes to understanding her text.”

**12. Passion and Responsibility**

One might argue that humans face a war between passion and responsibility. For example, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion, may conflict with moral duty. In other words, the demands of a private passion might conflict with a person’s moral and ethical responsibilities.

**13. Pride and Self-Respect**

How does pride get in the way of happiness? Is it a lack of self-respect? What are the effects? Choose a work that discusses getting to know yourself, and balancing pride with humility.

**14. Self-Deception**

Self-deception is a factor that plays a remarkably large role in many American lives. Is it easier to believe what you want to believe, or what you wish were true, than to face facts? How does self-deception play a role in politics, relationships, etc?

**15. Violence**

Violence is more and more predominant in America. Choose a work that confronts the issue of violence. Explore the nature of violence as well as its effect on Americans.

### Sample Student Questions from Previous Years

The following is a partial list of questions that former students of AP English Language and Composition chose to pursue in their research projects. These are listed here only to serve as examples, and should help you to make **your own** decision.

- What obligations does American industry have to nature and the environment?
- How do a person's personal beliefs affect the way he or she views death?
- How has the "American Dream" come to mean instant wealth? Why don't people want to work for what they get?
- How do aggressive capitalism and associated advertising convince Americans to buy things they wouldn't otherwise buy?
- To what extent are copyright laws restricting the growth and development of media and technology in the world today?
- Has the use of technology made it more difficult for teenagers to be emotionally healthy?
- If human nature is to be violent, then how is this tendency suppressed in modern society?
- How responsible is a mentally disabled person who commits a crime, but cannot correctly identify his or her feelings or understand his or her actions?
- Does the reason someone does something affect the outcome?

### A Friendly "Common Sense" Reminder:

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Please do not wait until the last minute to begin researching. This is assigned over the summer for a reason. See the suggested times for the completion of each task, and then pace yourself accordingly.

## Non-fiction Annotation Rubric

(1=little or no effort; 5=bare minimum; 10=exceptional effort, “above and beyond”)

**Inside Front Cover**—page references to key ideas, and a legend indicating your system of organization (e.g. blue highlighter=significant dates; pink highlighter=significant quotes).

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Inside Back Cover**—the thesis, motifs, images, epiphanies, and any other notes that you choose to include for your own reference.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Underline**—significant ideas within the text of the book. You can use brackets [ ] for passages that are simply too long to underline. In the margins of the book, **explain the significance**. Don’t just underline things randomly.

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

**Organizational technique**—Ease of understanding your use of multi-colored ink, highlighters, abbreviations, and symbols throughout the text of the book. Your key indicating your system must appear on the front inside cover of the book.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Vocabulary**—circle words within the text of the book that you don’t recognize, and include a **typed** page in which you define these words and include the page number on which the word appears in your book. “I couldn’t find anything to circle” is not an acceptable excuse. No fewer than 20 words will be accepted for a grade.

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

**Questions**—write **one** open-ended question—a question that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”—at the **end** of each chapter. What are you left thinking about? Please **type** your questions (labeled by chapter, and listed in order).

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

**Completion of project**—annotation of the entire book, including the typed assignments, is neat and complete and reflects effort indicative of an AP level student.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Research Resources

### Paul Laurence Dunbar School Library

*The following databases are available to all Dunbar Students. You can access these from your home computer using the URLs listed below.*

#### Kentucky Virtual Library

[www.kyvl.org](http://www.kyvl.org)

Described as “Kentucky’s learning source”, the virtual library is a website that gives Kentuckians access to multiple databases. There are links from the Main Page to a reference desk, school community sites, Kentucky library catalogs, and many other tools for information.

**Username:** kids

**Password:** *see librarian*

### Lexington Public Libraries

*The following databases are available to all Lexington Public Library cardholders. You can access these from your home computer via the Lexington Public Library web site at <http://www.lexpublib.org/databases/>. Your User ID is your library card number.*

#### EBSCO Host

Search for full text and abstracts of periodical articles covering the fields of sociology, religion, psychology, education, agriculture, health and more.

#### InfoTrac

Periodical indexes with many full text articles from thousands of magazines. Covers general interest, business and health.

#### Facts.com

News and current events information including photographs, maps, articles and documents from 1980 to the present.

#### Newsbank

Searchable full-text archive of selected national and regional newspapers, including the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. An index of Obituaries and Death Notices is also available.

**NOTE:** *This is just a short list of suggestions. There are many, many, many other sources out there, so please contact a librarian. The librarians at the Central Public Library Branch have been particularly helpful to students working on this assignment. Just ask them for assistance—they don’t mind helping you.*