

AP Language and Composition Summer Reading

AP Language and Composition is a course unlike other English courses students have taken before. It focuses on nonfiction for its material and the craft of the argument for its writing. As such, we will be reading, viewing, and listening to texts that offer perspectives on all aspects of American life. Our first unit focuses on topics relating to the body.

Over the summer students will read *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines and *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls. *A Lesson Before Dying* follows the story of Jefferson, a young black man on death row, and his interactions with schoolteacher Grant Wiggins. In *The Glass Castle*, Jeanette Walls recounts her unusual upbringing and educational path, sharing the lessons she learns along the way.

Reading:

Read *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines and *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls and **complete the annotations assignment** as outlined in this document.

Writing:

Using *The Glass Castle*, answer **one** of the following questions in 750-1,000 words, typed.

Questions (choose one):

- How do things like family, money, addiction, responsibility, faith, peers or dreams influence the behaviors of different members of the Walls family? Who currently influences you the most?
- In college, Jeannette is singled out by a professor for not understanding the plight of homeless people. Instead of defending herself, Jeannette keeps quiet. Why do you think she does this? How do you anticipate negotiating, meeting, and interacting and living with others who have backgrounds different than yours once you get to college?
- Is there value in nonconformity? Do we live in a society that encourages being different? What are some ways Rex and Rose Mary do the unexpected? Think about a time when you wanted to do something different but decided to conform instead. Why did you make that choice?
- Jeannette describes the squalor she and her family lived in: hunger, poverty, garbage, lack of basic necessities. Conversely, she describes the rich intellectual world her parents imparted: discussions of geology, math, literature, art. What do you think is more important to a child's development: comfortable living conditions or an enriching intellectual environment?

This is meant to be a personal, opinion-based response. It does NOT need an intro, thesis, body paragraphs, conclusion, etc., though it should be organized, proofread, and offer the maturity and depth of critical thinking required of an AP student.

Annotation Assignment:

In addition to reading, you must annotate *A Lesson Before Dying* and *The Glass Castle* (write directly in your books) and present your books for a grade.

Annotating is a very useful exercise. It can help you navigate the books during discussions, study for tests and quizzes, find passages for essays, and, most importantly, better understand the texts as you read.

Requirements:

- Every CHAPTER should have a summary (see below).
- Every PAGE should have one additional annotation (see below).
- You must WRITE WORDS IN THE BOOK for an annotation/summary to count. Underlining or highlighting by itself does not count, nor do punctuation marks or symbols.

Summaries:

- Write a brief summary at the beginning or end of each chapter after you've read it explaining what happens in that chapter.
- Include key characters and events.

Additional Annotations:

Here are some options for what to annotate:

- Circle words that are unfamiliar then write their definitions in the margin (after you have looked up their meanings).
- Underline or bracket [] passages that are interesting to you or seem important. Then, in the margin write a brief note on why you think that passage is important.
- Ask questions. If something confuses you or you feel like there is information about an event, character, scene, etc. that you should know more about, write your question in the margin.
- Make predictions. Do you think you know what might happen? Does something seem like it may be important later? Do you think this scene might foreshadow something later? Write your prediction in the margin.

- Clarify. If you figure something out or have an epiphany while reading but fear you may forget it later, write down a brief summary of the passage or your ideas in the margin.

How to Turn in:

Share with Ms. Pruett through Google docs. No need to print the product out. This is due the first day of class in the fall.

What to Expect in Class:

Within the first week or so of school,

- We will have a Socratic Seminar on both books.
- We will have an in class timed writing on both books.
- We will take a test on both books.
- You will help lead a school-wide discussion on *A Lesson Before Dying*.