AP English Language and Composition
Summer Work 2015

- **due date:** Monday, August 31 (first day of school)
- **estimated time:** 8-10 hours for writing assignments; reading times will vary (for planning purposes only; work until you finish)

Dear AP Student,

Welcome to Advanced Placement Language and Composition. This packet explains both the reading assignments and the writing work for this summer. Please be sure to read through it carefully.

Over the summer, you will be reading four works: Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*, Malcolm Gladwell’s *Outliers*, your approved novel from the AP Literature List for the American Literature Research Project, and a work of American Literature of your own choosing, also from the AP Literature List.

I will periodically share documents with you on our class website ([https://sites.google.com/a/stewardschool.org/iheartenglish/](https://sites.google.com/a/stewardschool.org/iheartenglish/)). I also plan to build a Google Classroom site in the coming months. As fall approaches, I may send you a few messages through your school email account. You will need to be sure to check your email periodically throughout the summer.

Success on the AP Language and Composition exam is directly related to the breadth of your reading as well as your continual practice of rhetorical analysis through composition. The AP Language and Composition course requires a significant amount of reading (both independent and assigned), writing, and research. The AP Language and Composition Exam will likely be scheduled for **May 10, 2016**. It is never too early to start preparing!

If you have any questions about the summer reading assignment or about the course in general, please feel free to contact me. I will be checking my email over the summer should you have any questions (stephanie.arnold@stewardschool.org). I hope you find the summer reading both challenging and intriguing. I look forward to a transformative year!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hope Arnold
Upper School Teacher
English Department
A. Official Course Goals
1. To carefully read and critically analyze imaginative literature.
2. To understand the way writers use language to provide meaning and pleasure.
3. To consider a work’s structure, style, and themes as well as such smaller scale elements as the
   use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone.
4. To study representative works from various genres and periods, but to know a few works
   extremely well.
5. To understand a work’s complexity, to absorb richness of meaning, and to analyze how meaning
   is embodied in literary form.
6. To consider the social and historical values a work reflects and embodies.
7. To write focusing on critical analysis of literature including expository, analytical, and
   argumentative essays, as well as creative writing, to sharpen understanding of writers’
   accomplishments and deepen appreciation of literary artistry.

B. Assessment of Summer Work
Your grades for summer work will be based on the following:
1. Completion of the reading and writing assignments below
2. Reading tests for Into the Wild and Outliers composed of objective questions. Question types
   may include multiple choice; true/false; fill-in the blank; who said it, etc.
3. Preparation for and performance during a Socratic seminar on Outliers and Into the Wild

C. Reading Assignments
Please read and carefully annotate each of the following works.
1. Nonfiction: Outliers, by Malcolm Gladwell
2. Nonfiction: Into the Wild, by Jon Krakauer
3. Fiction: Your teacher-approved novel for the American Literature Research Project
4. Fiction: A book of your own choosing from the the “American” section of the AP Literature List

D. Writing and Reflecting Assignments
In addition to the annotations you will make while reading your four books, you have four written
assignments: one reading log, two essays, and a set of Socratic Seminar questions. The assignments
pertain to books 1-3 in the list above.

There is no written summer work for the book of your own choosing from the AP Literature List. When
the school year begins, you will pledge that you read this book and will be asked to create a piece of
writing inspired by it.

The written assignments are described in detail below.
1. *Outliers: Analytic Reading Log*

AP Language and Composition focuses on the study of rhetoric and how it is used to construct an argument. This summer you will read *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell, which is available at any library or bookstore. In the book, Gladwell challenges our belief of the "self-made man." He argues that superstars "are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot."

As you read, take notice of how Gladwell supports his argument. Keep a typed reading log (including quotes & notes) where you copy significant passages from the book on the left side of the log and comment on the passages on the right. You will comment on ten passages. **Type your work, which is due on the first day of the class.**

Use the following questions to help you select and comment on the passages.
- What is the reason for the author making the particular argument?
- What arguments does the author use to support the overall argument?
- How does the author organize his ideas?
- Who is the author’s audience?
- What rhetorical appeals is the author using?
- Does the author use mostly appeals to logos, ethos, or pathos – that is, logic & facts, credibility, or emotion – to prove his point to his audience?
- Look for patterns of repetition, contrast, and anomalies (things that do not seem to fit).
- What is the effect of these devices?

For the purpose of this particular assignment, suspend your own judgment; you need not agree or disagree with the author. Instead, analyze the points the author is trying to make and how they are constructed. Simply focus on an analysis of the structure of the argument.
- What is the argument?
- How is it put together?

Please actively read this text. This means you are reading with a writing implement in hand, underlining crucial passages, writing questions in the margins, and defining words you don’t know.

*Some of the above is modified from material posted by Robert Warren of Campbell Union High School District in San Jose.*
2. **Into the Wild: Persuasive Essay.**

Be sure to actively read this text by Jon Krakauer. Again, this means you are reading with pen in hand, underlining essential ideas, noting questions in the margins, and learning definitions of words you don’t know. This process will make going back to the text – and you will be going back to the text quite a bit as part of your Socratic Seminar – much easier.

After analyzing Krakauer’s prose, please respond to ONE of the following two prompts in a five-paragraph essay. Type your essay, which is due on the first day of class.

1. In the last paragraph of the author’s note, Jon Krakauer writes: “Some readers admired the boy immensely for his courage and noble ideas; others fulminated that he was a reckless idiot, a wacko, a narcissist who perished out of arrogance and stupidity.”
   - What are your convictions about Chris McCandless?
   - Is he a hero or a narcissist?

   In your argument, include six quotations from throughout the text (with page numbers) to support your claims.

OR

2. Read the article from the Alaskan park ranger’s perspective (pages 6-7 of this document*).
   - Is it fair to deduce that McCandless had a death wish?
   - Why or why not?

   Incorporate six quotations (with page numbers) from throughout the text to support your argument.

You will comment on ALL of the following aspects of your novel to conduct a detailed yet cohesive analysis of its major literary elements using quotations from the text itself. The emphasis should be to explore how the author’s use of style enhances the overall unifying theme of his/her novel. Though there is no official length requirement, your essay should be approximately three to five pages double-spaced. **Type your essay, which is due on the first day of the class.** Essential aspects of analysis include the following:

1. Form, structure, and plot, including organization, techniques such as flashbacks or dream sequences, stream of consciousness, sequence, and compare and contrast beginning and ending
2. Point of view (narrative perspective)
3. Character (flat/round, static/dynamic, protagonist/antagonist, role of minor characters)
4. Setting
5. Diction (informal, formal, neutral, metaphoric and/or ironic devices, plain, ornate, concise, strong)
6. Syntax (sentence structure): analysis of sentence patterns
7. Imagery
8. Symbolism
9. Figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, and allusion)
10. Ironic devices (verbal, situational, or dramatic irony; paradox; oxymoron; euphemism; hyperbole and understatement)
11. Tone (playful, serious, angry, ironic, formal, somber, satiric, and combinations of many more)
12. Theme
13. Significance of the title

4. **Into the Wild and Outliers: Socratic Seminar Preparation**

The week we return to school, you will be asked to conduct a seminar on *Into the Wild* and *Outliers*, based on authentic questions you have generated. **Over the summer, please create a minimum of 3 provocative, thoughtful and genuine questions for each book.** These questions should be typed after you read *Into the Wild* and *Outliers*. You should come to the seminar with prepared questions, notes, and textual support with page references for both of the works.
Chris McCandless from an Alaska Park Ranger’s Perspective
by Peter Christian


We both came to Alaska from the area around Washington, D.C. We were both about the same age and had a similar idea in mind; to live a free life in the Alaska wild. Fourteen years later Chris McCandless is dead and I am living the dream I set out to win for myself. What made the difference in these two outcomes?

There was nothing heroic or even mysterious about what Chris McCandless did in April 1992. Like many Alaskans, I read Jon Krakauer’s book “Into the Wild” when it first came out and finished it thinking, “why does this guy rate an entire book?” The fact that Krakauer is a great outdoor writer and philosopher is the bright spot and it makes a great read, but McCandless was not something special.

As a park ranger both at Denali National Park, very near where McCandless died, and now at Gates of the Arctic National Park, even more remote and wild than Denali, I am exposed continually to what I will call the “McCandless Phenomenon.” People, nearly always young men, come to Alaska to challenge themselves against an unforgiving wilderness landscape where convenience of access and possibility of rescue are practically nonexistent. I know the personality type because I was one of those young men.

In fact, Alaska is populated with people who are either running away from something or seeking themselves in America’s last frontier. It is a place very much like the frontier of the Old West where you can come to and reinvent yourself. In reality, most people who make it as far as Alaska never get past the cities of Fairbanks and Anchorage because access is so difficult and expensive (usually by airplane), travel is so hard, the terrain is challenging, the bears are real, and so on.

A very few competent and skillful people make a successful go at living a free life in the wild, build a home in the mountains, raise their children there and eventually come back with good stories and happy endings. A greater number give it a try, realize it is neither easy nor romantic, just damn hard work, and quickly give up and return to town with their tails between their legs, but alive and the wiser for it.

Some like McCandless, show up in Alaska, unprepared, unskilled and unwilling to take the time to learn the skills they need to be successful. These quickly get in trouble and either die by bears, by drowning, by freezing or they are rescued by park rangers or other rescue personnel—but often, not before risking their lives and/or spending a lot of government money on helicopters and overtime.

When you consider McCandless from my perspective, you quickly see that what he did wasn’t even particularly daring, just stupid, tragic and inconsiderate. First off, he spent very little time learning how to actually live in the wild. He arrived at the Stampede Trail without even a map of the area. If he had a good map he could have walked out of his predicament using one of several routes that could have been successful. Consider where he died. An abandoned bus. How did it get there? On a trail. If the bus could get into the place where it died, why couldn’t McCandless get out of the place where he died? The fact
that he had to live in an old bus in the first place tells you a lot. Why didn’t he have an adequate shelter from the beginning? What would he have done if he hadn’t found the bus? A bag of rice and a sleeping bag do not constitute adequate gear and provisions for a long stay in the wilderness.

No experienced backcountry person would travel during the month of April. It is a time of transition from winter’s frozen rivers and hard packed snow with good traveling conditions into spring’s quagmire of mud and raging waters where even small creeks become impassible. Hungry bears come out of their dens with just one thing in mind— eating.

Furthermore, Chris McCandless poached a moose and then wasted it. He killed a magnificent animal superbly conditioned to survive the rigors of the Alaskan wild then, inexperienced in how to preserve meat without refrigeration (the Eskimos and Indians do it to this day), he watched 1500 pounds of meat rot away in front of him. He’s lucky the stench didn’t bring a grizzly bear to end his suffering earlier. And in the end, the moose died for nothing.

So what made the difference between McCandless and I fourteen years ago? Why am I alive and he is dead? Essentially, Chris McCandless committed suicide while I apprenticed myself to a career and a life that I wanted more badly than I can possibly describe in so short an essay. In the end I believe that the difference between us was that I wanted to live and Chris McCandless wanted to die (whether he realized it or not). The fact that he died in a compelling way doesn’t change that outcome. He might have made it work if he had respected the wilderness he was purported to have loved. But it is my belief that surviving in the wilderness is not what he had in mind.

I did not start this essay to trash poor Chris McCandless. Not intentionally. It is sad that the boy had to die. The tragedy is that McCandless more than likely was suffering from mental illness and didn’t have to end his life the way he did. The fact that he chose Alaska’s wild lands to do it in speaks more to the fact that it makes a good story than to the fact that McCandless was heroic or somehow extraordinary. In the end, he was sadly ordinary in his disrespect for the land, the animals, the history, and the self-sufficiency ethos of Alaska, the Last Frontier.

This essay was originally published in 2006 on "Text and Community," a project of the English Department of George Mason University.