Welcome to AP Language and Composition

Advanced Placement Language and Composition is an intense course that focuses on the study of rhetoric and argument development. The readings emphasize a mix of politics, social issues, history, current events and non-fiction prose. Students will learn to examine the power and effect of language, analyze and explicate texts and learn to craft effective written and spoken arguments.

**Students will be reading complex, challenging material on a routine basis, with 5-50 pages of reading required each night (up to two hours of homework). There is no complaining in AP Language Class!**

**What We’ll Learn**

**The World of Rhetoric**

This class requires students to delve deeply into the readings, to question the writer’s intent (purpose/bias), grapple with issues the writer presents (content/subject) and recognize the role of the reader/listener in responding (audience).

**Rhetoric** – the study and art of using language effectively to persuade an audience to adopt a point of view. It encompasses the art of analyzing the language choices authors/speakers use to create meaningful and persuasive texts. The full definition provided by the AP course description is: “Rhetoric refers to the art of finding and analyzing all the choices involving language that a writer, speaker, reader or listener might make in a situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful and effective for readers or listeners.” This is a paraphrase of Aristotle’s definition from *The Art of Rhetoric* written in the fourth century, B.C.

**The Rhetorical Transaction or Triangle** – consists of three basic components, logos (Word), ethos (Author) and pathos (Audience):

* **Logos** (Logical appeal) or appeal to Reason: refers to the internal consistency of the message, the clarity of the claims, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of supporting evidence. Logos comprises the heart of most arguments, the facts that substantiate the author’s thesis and subsequent claims.
* **Ethos** (Ethical appeal) or appeal from Credibility: refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the writer/speaker. Ethos is conveyed through tone and style of the message, as well as the reputation of the writer/speaker (level of expertise or authority in a field, record or degree of integrity).
* **Pathos** (Emotional appeal) or appeal to sympathies or imagination: refers to causing an audience not just to respond emotionally, but to identify with the writer’s point of view. In this sense, Pathos evokes a meaning implicit in its Greek root for “suffer” or “experience.” Often conveyed in narratives, appeals to pathos convey the values, beliefs and understandings of the writer to the audience in immediate and/or imaginative terms. The intent of the message is to move the audience to decision or action.

**Rhetorical Choices**

In English classes so far, you have studied literary choices writers make. Your teachers may have called them stylistic choices, or literary devices, but when an author uses these linguistic tools to persuade an audience of something, they are called rhetorical choices. Writers use these to heighten the effectiveness of their messages. This summer, you will study the rhetorical choices you are most familiar with: descriptive diction, syntax, detail, figurative language and tone.

* **Diction:** refers to word choices, especially with regard to connotation, correctness, clearness, and effectiveness. The English language has the world’s most extensive vocabulary, offering shades of nuance and connotation that help authors create definite mood and tone in their writing. Consider, for example, the word *ask*:
  + Other words can be substituted for *ask* to emotionally color or create tone in the writing: *blubber, beg, implore, request, demand, order, insist*
* **Syntax:** refers to sentence length and structure. Look for sentence fragments or short sentences, extra-long sentences, lists, sentences that reserve the main clause until the end, or sentences that are structured to reveal comparisons, like the following from *A Tale of Two Cities*:
  + “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.”

Notice how Dickens uses the structure of the sentence to show the scope of this moment of history and overwhelm the reader. Also, he reserves the main idea until the very end, showing us that this period is no different than any other time.

* **Detail:** refers to the level of specificity a writer offers about a situation – includes facts, observations and incidents used to develop a subject or make an abstraction concrete. Consider this passage from Outliers:
  + “Of the 75 names, an astonishing 14 are Americans born within nine years of each other in the mid-19th century. Think about that for a moment. Historians start with Cleopatra and the Pharaohs and comb through every year in human history ever since, looking in every corner of the world for evidence of extraordinary wealth, and almost 20 percent of the names they come up with come from a single generation in a single country. Here’s the list: 1. John Rockefeller, 1839. 2. Andrew Carnegie, 1835. 28. Frederick Weyerhaeuser, 1834. 33. Jay Gould, 1836. 34. Marshall Field, 1834. 35. George Baker, 1840. 36. Hetty Green, 1834. 44. James G. Fair, 1831. Henry H. Rogers, etc…”

In this passage, Gladwell includes overwhelming detail to support his idea. Though this detail does not appeal directly to the senses (as in figurative language), it is integral to his argument.

* **Figurative language:** refers to figures of speech. The most familiar include simile, metaphor, personification, analogy, paradox, and hyperbole. Look for passages that repeatedly use figures of speech to achieve a purpose. Consider the relevance of the comparisons they make. For instance, the similes *soft as downy mouse fu*r and *soft as dead, rotting mouse fur* suggest two entirely different sensations.
* **Tone:** describes the author’s attitude toward the material, the audience or both. Considering how a work would sound if it were read aloud can help in identifying an author’s tone.
  + Some words describing tone are: accusatory, apathetic, authoritative, benevolent, businesslike, candid, condescending, contemptuous, cryptic, cynical, dejected, denunciatory, didactic, facetious, humorous, incredulous, inflammatory, inquisitive, insolent, ironic, melancholic, nostalgic, objective, pedantic, pensive, poignant, pompous, reverent, satirical, sarcastic, sardonic, scornful, serious, self-deprecating, sentimental, somber, urgent, whimsical, zealous

\*\*\*\*For an extensive list of terms, refer to my webpage\*\*\*\*

**Summer Reading Assignments**

Your summer reading and writing involves three parts:

1. **Read *Outliers*** *by* Malcolm Gladwell -- In this book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"--the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different?  
   His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band
   * Take notes on a **Reading Log** as you read the book. Include quotations to explain the most important points. Also include SPECIFIC examples of any rhetorical devices that you find (ethos, pathos, logos, tone, diction, allusion, detail, syntax, sarcasm, anecdotes, etc.)
2. **Read ONE non-fiction book of your choice from the following list and complete an Independent Reading Log form**:

* ***Fast Food Nation,*** by Eric Schlosser – Fast food has hastened the malling of our landscape, widened the chasm between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled American cultural imperialism abroad. That's a lengthy list of charges, but Eric Schlosser makes them stick with an artful mix of first-rate reportage, wry wit, and careful reasoning.
* ***Into Thin Air,*** by Jon Krakauer- A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more--including Krakauer's--in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for Into Thin Air, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster.
* ***The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales,*** by Oliver Sacks--- In his most extraordinary book, "one of the great clinical writers of the twentieth century" (The New York Times) recounts the case histories of patients lost in the bizarre, apparently inescapable world of neurological disorders. Oliver Sacks's The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat tells the stories of individuals afflicted with fantastic perceptual and intellectual aberrations: patients who have lost their memories and with them the greater part of their pasts; who are no longer able to recognize people and common objects; who are stricken with violent tics and grimaces or who shout involuntary obscenities; whose limbs have become alien; who have been dismissed as retarded yet are gifted with uncanny artistic or mathematical talents.
* ***The Glass Castle: A Memoir,*** by Jeanette Walden***---*** The Glass Castle is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette's brilliant and charismatic father captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn't want the responsibility of raising a family. The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed, and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children prospered.
* ***Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*** by Steve D. Levitt – Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, Levitt and Dubner show that economics is the study of incentives, how people get what they want, or need, especially when other people need the same things. They explore the hidden side of everything, from crack gangs to real-estate agents, from campaign finance to the Klu Klux Klan. *Freakonomics* establishes this unconventional premise: If morality represents how we would like the world to work, then economics represents how it actually does work.
* ***Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer** -- After graduating from Emory University in Atlanta in 1992, top student and athlete Christopher McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave his entire $24,000 savings account to charity and hitchhiked to Alaska, where he went to live in the wilderness. Four months later, he turned up dead. His diary, letters and two notes found at a remote campsite tell of his desperate effort to survive, apparently stranded by an injury and slowly starving. They also reflect the posturing of a confused young man, raised in affluent Annandale, Va., who self-consciously adopted a Tolstoyan renunciation of wealth and return to nature. Krakauer, a contributing editor to Outside and Men's Journal, retraces McCandless's ill-fated antagonism toward his father, Walt, an eminent aerospace engineer. In a moving narrative, Krakauer probes the mystery of McCandless's death, which he attributes to logistical blunders and to accidental poisoning from eating toxic seed pods.
  + Take notes on a **Reading Log** as you read the book. Include quotations to explain the most important points. Also include SPECIFIC examples of any rhetorical devices that you find (ethos, pathos, logos, tone, diction, allusion, detail, syntax, sarcasm, anecdotes, etc.)

**Reading Logs**

As a vehicle for performing analyses of major works read in the class, you will be compiling the information into **Reading Logs**. The templates will be provided for you. Over the summer you will either handwrite your own copy of the form, or you will type into the form provided on my webpage for each book. **BE SURE TO FOLLOW THE FORMATTING AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE.**  You will notice that the form tells you to prove to me that you read with an **active, engaged mind.** This means that you took notes AS YOU READ, noted rhetorical devices AS YOU READ, and wrote down questions or comments AS YOU READ. In the first couple of weeks of class we will learn more about Rhetorical Devices and stylistic choices, which will help you to complete the form. The goal is to begin typing the information into a computer file at school or at home, and printing the finished logs out for your notebooks.