

## AP English Language and Composition Summer Research Assignment

**Purpose:** You will spend the summer making decisions that will affect your fall semester grade. Please take this seriously. The topic you choose and the sources you find will be used to write a lengthy, synthesized argumentative paper regarding a specific facet of your topic. For example, you may not write about violence in general, but you may write about causes for the escalation of violence in urban areas.

**Organization:** Submit this assignment in a neatly arranged folder with pockets (not a three-ring binder) that will include your journals, annotations, and hard copies of your source materials. Organize Task 2 on the right side of the folder and Tasks 1, 3, and 4 on the left side.

See AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION SUMMER RESEARCH RUBRIC (below) for information regarding how I will evaluate your work.

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

END PRODUCT: Journal entry

**Read** over the abstract topic list (15 items, attached).

**Narrow** the list of 15 abstract topics to the top three that interest you most. Do basic research on these three abstract topics in order to decide which one of the three is most likely to produce a successful research paper for you. Hint: I suggest that you spend no more than one hour on each abstract topic, 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.

**Narrow** your list of three to a single topic.

**Write** a one-page, 12 pt. font, double-spaced journal entry in which you describe the abstract topic that you have chosen, and why you chose it. Be specific and detailed your thought process—why did you choose this topic and not one of the others? Note: Despite all the narrowing, your topic of choice remains very broad, and you will continue to narrow your focus as you collect evidence (see Task 2).

**Store** this journal entry in the left side pocket of your folder.

**Task #2** (suggested time: 3 days)

END PRODUCT: 15 sources w/annotation

**Research more** about your chosen abstract topic to familiarize yourself with the issues involved within the topic. Sources can include books, articles, interviews, and academic Internet sites. (A great resource is KYVL. Please see attached research resources.) Please note that Wikipedia cannot be used as a source. For whatever reason, Wikipedia is not respected in those academic circles that will be grading your work as you progress academically; you may use Wikipedia as a starting point only.

**Select** 15 varied, informative, reputable, and quality sources that relate to your chosen topic.

**Obtain** hard copies of the 15 sources (make photocopies of certain key pages in books, print out Internet sources, take notes during an interview, etc).

**Take notes** of important ideas on your copies as you read; I prefer typed notes but will not require typing.

**Assemble** the 15 sources in alphabetical order by the author's last name or authoring organization's name; if no author is credited, use the title of the article or book to order the source alphabetically.

**Number** your alphabetized sources, 1 to 15.

**Type** a 12 pt font, double-spaced annotation for each of the 15 sources. Each annotation will consist of a brief summary of about five to seven sentences for each source, discussing:

- 1) the qualifications, credentials, and biases of the author;
- 2) the main purpose of the source; and
- 3) a summary of the main ideas, interesting ideas, or interesting quotes from the source.

**Number** your annotations to mimic the order of your sources.

**Store** your 15 printout sets, as well as your 15 annotation sets, in the right side pocket of your folder.

**TASK #3** (suggested time: 1 day)

END PRODUCTS: Three Questions, Three  
MLA book cites, and a one page  
journal entry

**Think** of three specific questions you'd like to pursue within your abstract topic. For instance, if you are working with the broad topic concerning violence (#15), one of your three narrowing questions might be: "If human nature is to be violent, then how is this tendency suppressed in modern society?" Type the three specific questions.

**Narrow** your focus from three to one question

**Circle** your choice.

**Look up** at least three non-fiction books that you can use to answer that one question. Hint: avoid personal memoir or "self-help" books in order to keep your focus more academic. For example, Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called "It"* would not be an acceptable book for this assignment. Hint: avoid books that have fewer than 100 pages as these are probably not going to have enough information.

**Type** an MLA citation for each of the three books that could be used as sources. The format for an MLA-style citation for a book is,

theoretically: Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Book*. City of publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Print.  
specifically: Henley, Patricia. *The Hummingbird House*. Denver: MacMurray, 1999. Print.

**Choose** one book from these options that you will read and annotate.

**Circle** the one you've chosen.

**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.

**Store** the three questions, book cites, and journal entry in the left side pocket of your folder.

**Task #4** (suggested time: 1 week)

END PRODUCTS: Annotated book and a  
one page summary

**Acquire** the non-fiction book chosen in task 3.

**Read and annotate** the book in its entirety according to the annotation rubric. Note that the rubric is extremely specific and that I will strictly follow it when grading your work.

**Type a one-page summary of the information contained in the book.**

**Store** this summary in the left side pocket of your folder.

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**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. Love:** How is love perceived in our country? What factors determine this perception? As an example, this research might examine attitudes and traditions that affect how Americans view love.
- 2. Alienation because of Gender, Race, Class, etc.** Conflicts exist when the will of the majority opposes the will of an individual. In America, who is in the minority, who is in the majority, and how does this shape our current culture? As an example, this research might examine the roles of men and women in the workforce.
- 3. American Values and Beliefs:** Define what you think to be a widely held American value, and then discuss the implications of holding (or not holding) this value. As an example, this research might examine the value of a “traditional” marriage.
- 4. Health and Fitness:** High calorie, sugar laden processed foods coupled with our sedentary lifestyles is growing our waistlines and contributing to serious health issues like diabetes, heart ailments and cancers. One-third of children and adolescents are overweight or obese. Many products are sold to keep people in shape (Wii Fit, gym equipment, etc.) but Americans are known worldwide for their culture of overeating. As an example, this research might examine childhood obesity rates.
- 5. Family Relationships :** What are the benefits of positive family relationships? What are the effects of negative relationships? As an example, this research might examine the effect of divorce on children, or the effect of grandparents raising their grandchildren.
- 6. Freedom:** Based on the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, what interpretations are being made? What freedoms should/should not be limited? What does American culture represent to the world? As an example, this research might examine the freedom of speech.
- 7. Happiness:** Do Americans have an inherent need for happiness? Are there varying degrees, and how does it affect one’s life? Is happiness unachievable as a social construct—in other words, are we told how we must act, look, and feel in order to be happy? As an example, this research might examine the medical benefits of people who are considered “happy.”
- 8. Technology:** You’ve heard people say that technology can be both a blessing and a curse. This is a common idea that knowledge (or progress) can be harmful (many Sci-Fi films explore this). As an example, this research might examine how technology creates more problems than it solves.
- 9. Language as a Key to Identity:** Language 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. As an example, this research might examine the use of coded language, different dialects, or speaking a second language in America.

**10. Money:** “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. Some say that money is the root of all evil. Others say that money makes the world go ‘round. Your goal is to research some aspect of American obsession with money. As an example, this research might examine the inability for the working class to make a living in America while celebrities make millions.

**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. As an example, this research might examine how man has disregarded nature and has therefore created his own end.

**12. Death:** How is death perceived in our country? What factors determine this perception? As an example, this research might examine the attitudes or traditions that affect how Americans view death.

**13. The Culture of Food:** With more environmental concerns in current American culture, people are buying more “greener” organic food. Some people speak out against factory farming, and the process by which animals are prepared for the dinner table. As an example, this research might examine the FDA approval of the sale of meat and milk from cloned livestock in 2008, and what effects this might have on future generations.

**14. Social Activism:** Activism, in a general sense, can be described as intentional action to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change. There are many activist groups, both violent and non-violent, in the United States. As an example, this research might examine the culture of youth activism throughout American history (e.g. Mother Jones marching 100,000 child miners to D.C. in 1908).

**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. As an example, this research might examine the use of violent “shooter” video games to train soldiers for war.

**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 are intended to help you to make **your own** decision.

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 their goals?

How do aggressive capitalism and associated advertising convince Americans to buy things they don’t need?

To what extent do copyright laws restrict the growth and development of media and technology in the world?

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?

Is religion a social construct that has become outdated?

## Suggestions for Where to Search

**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 spend some time in a library. The librarians at the Central Public Library Branch have been particularly helpful to students working on this assignment. Just ask them for assistance.*

## AP English Language and Composition Summer Research Rubric

**Organization and Appearance** \_\_\_\_\_/10

The tasks are organized as outlined; all entries are typed as required (12 pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced).

**Journals/Summary** \_\_\_\_\_/30

The **three** entries (two journals and one summary, worth 10 points each) are insightful, reflective, and include all information assigned. They are easy to understand, and show correct grammar, punctuation, and usage.

**Sources and Annotations** \_\_\_\_\_/30

You have 15 sources; your annotations are complete, relevant, and varied.

**Annotated Book** \_\_\_\_\_/30

**Notes**—list significant ideas of the book; explain the significance.

**0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20**

**Vocabulary**—include a **typed** list of words you don't recognize; define these words and include the page number on which the word appears in your book. "I couldn't find anything to list" is not an acceptable excuse. No fewer than 20 words will be accepted for full points.

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**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? **Type** your questions (labeled by chapter and listed in order).

You do not need to answer these.

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

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