

Martha's Vineyard Regional High School English Department  
Advanced Placement English Language and Composition Grade 11  
**Summer Reading and Writing Requirements**  
For Students and Parents

**“I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke in me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.”**

—Malcolm X

Welcome to eleventh grade Advanced Placement English. This course is an exciting opportunity to study English at the college level while still in high school. If you are curious and passionate about the power of language to inspire and ignite the imagination, if you want to learn more about the mysteries and magic of words, you are in the right place. [The entire course syllabus is available on Mr. Sharkovitz's teacher website at [mvrhs.org/english/shark/](http://mvrhs.org/english/shark/).]

**[Important Note: The students for whom this course is recommended are those that have spent a good deal of time reading widely and deeply in both fiction and non-fiction genres. You should be reading books about history, music, math, science, art, philosophy, and so on. Without a strong background in reading significant books it is likely that when the time comes to write essays, especially persuasive ones, students will find that they have nothing to write about to support their ideas. Thus, if you are wondering whether this course is appropriate for you, ask yourself this question: Do I know much about the world beyond that which I might encounter locally or on television? If you attempt to create a quick inventory list of your knowledge and find, save for a few scattered references to the vestiges of pop culture, that it's blank, then this course might not be for you.]**

**SECTION ONE.** Summer Reading and Writing Assignments

All of the assignments described below are due the **first** day of class in September. They will become your first graded work.

**What is due the first day of class?**

- The first day of class in September you will pass in your *Norton Reader* journal responses. They must be typed, double-spaced. Handwritten responses will not be accepted for credit.

- There will be written, in-class examinations on *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*, by Ronald C. White Jr. and *In Dubious Battle*, by John Steinbeck. The format of these two exams will be multiple choice questions.

If you cannot be in school for the first class, make arrangements to take the test and submit your work *before* the first class. No work will be accepted late. **Please note that the successful completion of your summer reading and writing assignments is a prerequisite for continued work in this course.** All existing course level recommendations are tentative pending the evaluation of your summer assignments. A 70 average is considered a passing grade on your summer reading and writing. If you do not earn that grade, or if you decide to take a different course, please notify your guidance counselor immediately.

### **Required Summer Texts**

*In Dubious Battle*

*Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*

*The Norton Reader* (Please note that we have two different editions of *The Norton Reader*. The page numbers on the left are for the ninth edition; page numbers on the right are for the tenth edition.)

### **Reading / Writing Assignments for *The Norton Reader*:**

“On Dumpster Diving,” by Lars Eighner, p 13 / 15

“How Teachers Make Children Hate Reading,” by John Holt, p. 254 / 228

“Of Youth and Age,” Francis Bacon, p. 365 / 314

“The Clan of One-Breasted Women,” by Terry Tempest Williams, p 412 / 356

“From Realism to Virtual Reality,” by H. Bruce Franklin, p 487 / 434

“The Morals of the Prince,” by Niccolo Machiavelli, p 536 / 484

“Letter From Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King, Jr., p. 562 / 503

“The Allegory of the Cave,” by Plato, p. 747 / 652

“The Mystery of Zen,” by Gilbert Highet, p. 753 / 658

“Existentialism,” by Jean-Paul Sartre, p. 762 / 666

“We Do Not Quarrel about Religion,” Address to White Missionaries and Iroquis Six Nations, by Seneca Chief Red Jacket (online at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/nativeamericans/chiefredjacket.htm>); alternate link: ([http://www.churchstatelaw.com/historicalmaterials/8\\_2\\_4.asp](http://www.churchstatelaw.com/historicalmaterials/8_2_4.asp))

**Directions for Writing About *Norton Reader* essays:**

You should write about each selection in a response journal or notebook suitable for this purpose. In it you should reflect upon your readings in honest and intellectually substantive ways. **Do not merely summarize the passages.**

While the following list of suggestions is not inclusive of everything you might write about, it should give you some ideas about the kinds of approaches available to you. The type of essay, too, will affect your approach.

In essays that are primarily argumentative, it’s appropriate to define the writer’s major assertions. Do you agree or disagree with the writer’s views? Why do you hold the position you maintain? What fundamental assumptions does the writer make? Are the assumptions warranted or unwarranted? Why? What are the implications of the writer’s assertions if they are given assent? Are these implications important or unimportant? Why?

How are any of the essays interconnected? Make connections with your own experience. What does the reading make you think about? Do you see any similarities between this material and other books you have read?

Ask yourself questions about the text: What perplexes you about some passage or some point that the writer is making? Try beginning, “I wonder why. . .” or “I’m having trouble understanding how. . .” or “It perplexes me that. . .” or “I was surprised when. . .”

Try agreeing with the writer. Think of all the things you can say to support his or her ideas. Or try arguing with the writer. Think of your journal as a place to carry on a dialogue with the writer or with the text. Speak to him or her. Ask questions, and have the writer answer back.

Write down words, images, phrases, details that strike you. Speculate about them. Why are they there? What do they add? Why did you notice them? You might try dividing your notebook page in half, and copying words from the text onto the left side, writing your own responses on the right. On a first reading you might simply put checks in the margin where the passage intrigues you; on the second reading you can choose the most interesting to speculate about.

How do matters of style such as sentence length, diction, syntax, metaphor, imagery, symbol and tone affect meaning?

Remember, the journal is a place where you respond to your readings. In this way you will begin to connect them to your own experience. As you reflect, ruminate and question, listen carefully to yourself and attempt to describe the effect(s) the writings have on you. Write honestly, respond deeply, expand on the author's ideas, and—most importantly—attempt to discover your own. Each journal entry should be *about* 250 words.

Evaluation of your journal responses will be based upon a variety of factors such as depth and originality of thought, clarity of expression, organization, and how thoroughly and cogently you develop and support your ideas.

As previously stated, the journal responses are due the first official day of class in September. No work will be accepted late for any reason. I strongly recommend that you begin these assignments early in July. You must respond to all the *Norton* essays. **If you choose not to respond to one or more essays, you will not be allowed to continue in the AP English class.**

**SECTION TWO.** Suggested Reference Work.

*A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, ed. by J. A. Cuddon (Penguin)

There is also a great site called The Forest of Rhetoric at Brigham Young University: <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm> that you should explore.

**SECTION THREE.** A Brief Overview of the Course and Other Helpful Information

**FAQ:** Is AP English a good class for me if I need a lot of help with my spelling, punctuation, and grammar?

**ANSWER:** No. AP English 11 would not be an appropriate class for students struggling to master spelling, grammar, and punctuation basics. This is a college level course in advanced rhetoric, writing, and reading. Students should possess a mastery of grammar, spelling, and punctuation basics before signing up for this class.

This course has two major goals: (1) to help you write more powerfully and effectively, and (2) to help you read with deeper understanding.

Our writing assignments include rhetorical analyses, personal essays, argumentative essays, evaluation essays, journal entries, and more.

Occasional weekend, evening, and after school meetings are required and will be announced in advanced by the teacher. Units on SAT and AP test-taking skills are included in this course.

Homework assignments will generally require 1-3 hours of your time to complete for each class meeting. This means that you might have to make some choices. *Select extracurricular activities judiciously.* Having access to a computer where you might save essay drafts for later revision is absolutely essential.

If you plan to miss a lot of our classes because of other commitments such as field trips during school time or vacations beyond regular school dates, you should select a class more in keeping with your busy schedule. ***Each missed class dramatically reduces your chances of mastering the complex material and of scoring well on the AP test in May.***

Thank you.