

Currency, Coping, and Carrying On: Tailoring AP English Language for 2023-24

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- Are students given the opportunity to immerse themselves in substantive texts—ones that require several days or weeks to read—as well as texts that can be read and reread within a single class period?
- Are students spending at least eight hours per week (both inside and outside of class) engaged in their reading and writing? Is there a clear connection between their reading and writing?
- Are students reading texts that require teacher involvement or scaffolding, or can the texts be read independently?

CONTROVERSIAL TEXTUAL CONTENT

Issues that might, from particular social, historical, or cultural viewpoints, be considered controversial, including references to ethnicities, nationalities, religions, races, dialects, gender, or class, may be addressed in texts that are appropriate for the AP English Language and Composition course. Fair representation of issues and peoples may occasionally include controversial material. Since AP students have chosen a program that directly involves them in college-level work, participation in this course depends on a level of maturity consistent with the age of high school students who have engaged in thoughtful analyses of a variety of texts. The best response to controversial language or ideas in a text might well be a question about the larger meaning, purpose, or overall effect of the language or idea in context. AP students should have the maturity, skill, and will to seek the larger meaning of a text or issue through thoughtful research.

GENERAL AND TOPICAL READERS

Some AP English Language and Composition teachers may want students to explore ways that people inquire, argue, and deliberate on a variety of topics and questions. For this kind of course, many textbook publishers design “readers” that are divided into units, each featuring a collection of responses to a question that generates public controversy.

TRADE BOOKS

Contemporary trade books (investigative journalism, designed for the reading public instead of for the classroom) give students practice in reading complex, extended arguments that are historically and culturally situated. Unlike readers, which contain a collection of short texts offering various perspectives on a single topic, trade books generally provide a single, in-depth argument on a single topic. Authors of texts appropriate for study in this course include the following: Nicholas Carr, Dave Eggers, Jonathan Safran Foer, Jane Goodall, Malcolm Gladwell, Peter Singer, Rebecca Skloot, and E.O. Wilson. A good way to search for possible texts is to look at the *New York Times* Nonfiction Best Seller list.

EXTENDED TEXTS

Books by important writers of past eras also provide students with practice in deciphering and responding to complex and extended arguments from historical and cultural settings different from their own. Authors of texts that might be used in the AP English Language and Composition course include Mary Wollstonecraft, Henry David Thoreau, Charles Darwin, and Rachel Carson.

SPEECHES

Because speeches emerge from particular rhetorical occasions, they are especially good for illustrating how arguments are successfully or unsuccessfully crafted to target particular audiences in particular situations in an effort to accomplish particular purposes. Authors of speeches suitable for the AP English Language and Composition course include Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Chief Joseph, King George IV of England, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., Robert Kennedy, Indira Gandhi, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama.

ESSAYS

From 18th-century journalists and pamphleteers to present-day essayists whose writing appears in newspapers, journals, and essay collections, the essay is a historically favored genre for the conduct of public conversation about consequential questions. Students should learn to distinguish between essays that serve primarily as personal expression or autobiographical narration and those that serve primarily as instruction, inquiry, or political or social advocacy. Students should also consider how essayists of all kinds participate in public discussion of consequential topics and questions. Well-known political and literary essayists appropriate for AP English Language and Composition reading lists include Samuel Johnson, Thomas Paine, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, Virginia Woolf, Martin Luther King Jr., Annie Dillard, John McPhee, Susan Sontag, Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey, Richard Rodriguez, Oscar Wilde, Scott Russell Sanders, Joyce Carol Oates, Alice Walker, David Sedaris, and Wendell Barry. However, contributions of less canonical “literary” essayists also have a place in the course and may come from opinion pages in newspapers and magazines, personal blogs, and organizational websites.

POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS

Because the AP English Language and Composition course seeks to cultivate rhetorical reading skills, texts with persuasive purposes drawn from popular culture are suitable for inclusion in the course reading list. Advertisements, propaganda, advice columns, television and radio talk shows and interviews, newspaper columns, cartoons, political commentaries, documentary films, TED Talks, and YouTube videos

Understanding and Analyzing Texts Scaffold Template

General Summary	Clarifying Details	Text	Tone	Other Analytical Observations

General Summary	Clarifying Details	Text	Tone	Other Analytical Observations
		<p>Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?</p>		
		<p>Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold, that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man . . .</p>		

		<p>Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, "may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!" To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then fellow-citizens, is American slavery. I shall see, this day, and its popular characteristics, from the slave's point of view. Standing, there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! . . .</p>		
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What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. . . . I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism a sham, your humanity a base pretense, and your Christianity a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a bye-word to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your Union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement, the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet, you cling to it, as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! Be warned! Be warned! A horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; for the love of God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever! . . .

		<p>Fellow-citizens! There is no matter in respect to which, the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon, as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution. In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT. Read its preamble, consider its purposes. Is slavery among them . . . While I do not intend to argue this question on the present occasion, let me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slave-holding instrument, why neither slavery, slaveholding, nor slave can anywhere be found in it. . . . I hold that every American has a right to form an opinion of the constitution, and to propagate that opinion, and to use all honorable means to make his opinion the prevailing one. . . .</p>	

Excerpt selected by the National Constitution Center
<https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/frederick-douglass-what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july-1852#:~:text=What%2C%20to%20the%20American%20slave,the%20constant%20victim.%20%20.%20>

Paragraph Gist		Observations, Notes & Conclusions
	<p>If you have ever watched a reality TV show and said, “He’s going home tonight,” you know what the “loser edit” is. I imagine it started as a matter of practicality. If you have 20 contestants, they can’t all receive equal airtime. When an obscure character gets the heave-ho, the producers have to cobble together a coherent story line. Intersperse the snippets across the hour, and we can identify sins and recognizable human frailty that need to be punished. Anyone tuning in for the first time catches up quickly. The loser edit is not just the narrative arc of a contestant about to be chopped, or voted off the island, whatever the catchphrase. It is the plausible argument of failure.</p> <p>The concept first bubbled up out of the pop-cultural ether when competitive reality shows hit upon their formula, in the form of “Survivor” and “The Amazing Race.” TV enthusiasts — part fan, part Roland Barthes with a TiVo — congregated on online message boards like Television Without Pity, creating a new slang with which to dis and deconstruct their favorites.</p> <p>Fifteen years later, the critical language used to carve up the phonies, saints and sad-sack wannabes of reality shows has migrated, and the loser edit has become a limber metaphor for exploring our own real-world failures. Fate doles out ideas for subplots — fire her, dump him, all species of mortification — and we eagerly run with them, cutting loser narratives for friends and enemies, the people we have demoted to the status of mere character. Everybody’s setbacks or degradations have been foreshadowed if we look hard enough at the old tape. We arrange the sequences, borrowing from cultural narratives of disgrace, sifting through the available footage with a bit of hindsight — and in turn, we endure our own loser edits when we stumble.</p> <p>With so many media bloggers staggering under daily content quotas, rooting through the digital-content vaults, we can now assemble the montage of public shame more quickly than ever. A few weeks ago, NBC told Brian Williams to pack his knives and go. Cue the supercut of Williams spinning different accounts of dangerous helicopter rides in Iraq, the gradual embellishments creeping in over the years. Cue Williams in a Hurricane Katrina documentary telling</p>	

us how he heard that a man committed suicide in the Superdome, juxtaposed with an interview years later in which he says he “watched” that suicide actually happen. How could we have missed it?

It was inevitable that Bill Cosby would receive a thorough loser edit after his army of accusers began stepping forward. There were too many sleuths nosing around for clues, downloading ancient standup routines, tapping search words into digital scans of out-of-print books: “cocktail hour,” “consent,” “things America’s favorite dad said that are creepy in retrospect.” Is he really joking about dosing women with Spanish fly on a 1969 comedy album? On a talk show in 1991? It was right in front of us all along. Embed the clip, tweet it out. This Cosby edit is on VHS, recorded over the videotape of your childhood illusions, and it cannot be undone. If that can be erased, what else?

How stupid of them to leave all that incriminating evidence out there.

The footage of your loser edit is out there as well, waiting. Taken from the surveillance camera of the gas station where you bought a lottery ticket like a chump. From the A.T.M. that recorded you taking out money for the romantic evening that went bust. From inside the black domes on the ceiling of the train station, the lenses that captured your slow walk up the platform stairs after the doomed excursion. From all the cameras on all the street corners, entryways and strangers’ cellphones, building the digital dossier of your days. Maybe we can’t clearly make out your face in every shot, but everyone knows it’s you. We know you like to slump. Our entire lives as B-roll, shot and stored away to be recut and reviewed at a moment’s notice when the plot changes: the divorce, the layoff, the lawsuit. Any time the producers decide to raise the stakes.

Occasionally, on a “Top Chef” or a “Project Runway,” a contestant suffers a monstrous loser edit, one that lasts a whole season. The unlucky contestant isn’t sent home at the end of the night, but is instead doomed to perform personality deficits episode after episode. The supporting player trapped first by an aspect of himself or herself, and then by editors who won’t let him or her escape the casting. We need a goat.

Perhaps you have a personal acquaintance with this phenomenon, slogging through months and months of your own terrible editing.

The audience takes in the spectacle, pressing pause for a quick trip to the kitchen so they won't miss a second of your humiliation: This is destination television. Your co-workers rewind your loser's reel, speculating over why you didn't get that promotion, where it all started to go wrong. If you ask me, it goes back to the Peterson account. Your ex's buddies pass the potato chips and barely pay attention, texting pals, making jokes on Twitter — they knew before the first commercial break that you were being voted off the island. Your friends and family, who of course love you very much, are tuning in, even though they know all of your story lines by heart. They've seen this episode before. There he goes again.

When life gets the drop on us, we have to submit to the framing. We leave too many traces of our failures, too much material for a ruthless editor to work with. As if we didn't already have one in our heads — cutting and splicing a lifetime of bad decisions and bonehead moves into an existential montage of boobery:

“Why did I say that?”

“What's wrong with me?”

“Why do I keep falling for that?”

Memory is the most malicious cutter of all, preserving, recasting, panning in slow motion across the awful bits so that we retain every detail.

Can we escape our editing? In their wisdom, the philosopher-consumers of Television Without Pity also identified the loser edit's opposite number and antiparticle: the winner edit. If there's a loser edit, there has to be a winner edit. Makes sense. Over the course of a season, the inevitable winner thrives. He or she will suffer some setbacks for drama and suspense, sure, but the groundwork for victory is established challenge by challenge, week by week. It has been written, by fate or the producers, pick your deity. It cannot be reversed.

You know the golden boys and girls who sail through life without care, recipients of an enviable winner edit that lasts season after season. Untouchable. Everyone else has to do it by himself or herself, assembling our edits through a thousand compulsive Facebook tweaks, endless calibrations of Twitter personas, Instagram posts filtered of all disturbance. Should I wear glasses in my profile pic? How do I express solidarity with the freedom fighters? The exaggerations and elisions on your dating profile, and the ridiculous yet oddly calming amount of time you spent choosing

the proper font for your résumé. I hear employers associate Calibri with diligence and follow-through. Marshal the flattering anecdotes, string them together into a leitmotif of confidence and sophistication. Cut when this scene establishes the perfect pitch of self-deprecation, cut before everyone can see your humility for the false modesty it is.

Do you think it's working? Did you get away with it today?

We give ourselves loser edits and winner edits all the time, to clasp meaning onto experience. Sometimes you render both kinds of edits in the same day, maybe even the same afternoon, deleting certain scenes from your memory, fooling with the contrast, as reality presses on you and directs your perceptions. Pull it off, and maybe you'll make it to bedtime. Why do you think they call it "Survivor"?

Splice and snip. The contradictory evidence falls to the cutting-room floor, and we assert order, shape a narrative, any narrative, out of the chaos. Whether you tend to give yourself a loser edit to feed that goblin part of your psyche or you fancy the winner's edit for the camouflage and safety it provides, it's better than having no arc at all. If we're going down, let us at least be a protagonist, have a story line, not be just one of those miserable players in the background. A cameo's stand-in. The loser edit, with all its savage cuts, is confirmation that you exist. The winner edit, even in its artifice, is a gesture toward optimism, the expectation of rewards waiting for that better self. Whenever he or she shows up.

Take the footage you need. Burn the rest.

2011 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Florence Kelley (1859–1932) was a United States social worker and reformer who fought successfully for child labor laws and improved conditions for working women. She delivered the following speech before the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Philadelphia on July 22, 1905. Read the speech carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Kelley uses to convey her message about child labor to her audience. Support your analysis with specific references to the text.

We have, in this country, two million children under the age of sixteen years who are earning their bread. They vary in age from six and seven years (in the cotton mills of Georgia) and eight, nine and ten years (in the coal-breakers of Pennsylvania), to fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years in more enlightened states.

No other portion of the wage earning class increased so rapidly from decade to decade as the young girls from fourteen to twenty years. Men increase, women increase, youth increase, boys increase in the ranks of the breadwinners; but no contingent so doubles from census period to census period (both by percent and by count of heads), as does the contingent of girls between twelve and twenty years of age. They are in commerce, in offices, in manufacturing.

Tonight while we sleep, several thousand little girls will be working in textile mills, all the night through, in the deafening noise of the spindles and the looms spinning and weaving cotton and wool, silks and ribbons for us to buy.

In Alabama the law provides that a child under sixteen years of age shall not work in a cotton mill at night longer than eight hours, and Alabama does better in this respect than any other southern state. North and South Carolina and Georgia place no restriction upon the work of children at night, and while we sleep little white girls will be working tonight in the mills in those states, working eleven hours at night.

In Georgia there is no restriction whatever! A girl of six or seven years, just tall enough to reach the bobbins, may work eleven hours by day or by night. And they will do so tonight, while we sleep.

Nor is it only in the South that these things occur. Alabama does better than New Jersey. For Alabama limits the children's work at night to eight hours, while New Jersey permits it all night long. Last year

New Jersey took a long backward step. A good law was repealed which had required women and

shall use this power in every possible way until the right to the ballot is granted, and then I shall continue to use both.

What can we do to free our consciences? There is one line of action by which we can do much. We can enlist the workmen on behalf of our

enfranchisement just in proportion as we strive with them to free the children. No labor organization in this country ever fails to respond to an appeal for help in the freeing of the children.

For the sake of the children, for the Republic in which these children will vote after we are dead, and for the sake of our cause, we should enlist the

workmen voters, with us, in this task of freeing the children from toil!

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