

2026-2027 AP Language & Composition Summer Assignment

Purpose: One of the major objectives of the AP Language & Composition class is to help students become more skilled, analytical, and careful readers. Students must continue to practice critical reading skills independently during the summer months. The summer assignment is designed to allow students to preview major themes of the course, reflect upon and challenge their notions of reading and writing, and instill a strong work ethic that students will be expected to maintain throughout the upcoming school year.

Required Reading

I. The New York Times “Room for Debate” (www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate)

II. *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien (you can find this online [full text .pdf], on Amazon/Kindle, the Mary L. Cook library, etc.)

Assignments & Grading -**SUBMIT TO GOOGLECLASSROOM BEFORE 1st DAY OF SCHOOL!**

CLASS CODE: **pslg2mqx** (the third letter is a lowercase “L”)

#1- “Room for Debate”: 2 responses @ 20 points each = 40 points

#2- Argument*- *The Things They Carried*- 1 assignment @ 30 points = 30 points

#3- Rhetorical Analysis*- *The Things They Carried*- 1 assignment @ 30 points = 30 points

TOTAL = 100 points

* Students will need to research each type of essay required in AP Language & Composition to gain a better understanding of how these essays should be crafted and scored (each essay has a specific rubric).

Role in the AP Language & Composition Class

- The “Room for Debate” assignments serve several purposes. First, these assignments will help familiarize students with nonfiction texts, which much of this course centers upon. Also, students will begin to analyze the techniques used by writers to support differing viewpoints on a subject. In addition, we will be referring to this assignment later in the term as students research, gather various resources on, and create a synthesis essay about a current issue in the news. Students are expected to use MLA formatting for their Works Cited.

- We will compare and contrast Tim O’Brien’s writing style and techniques to those of other authors, examining the role of truth in fiction and the power of storytelling. Believing that “a good reader is a re-reader,” the assignment forces the reader to go beyond comprehension and work with the material on multiple levels- analysis, synthesis, etc. Students will choose 1 of 3 ARGUMENT prompts AND 1 of 3 RHETORICAL ANALYSIS prompts (thus, writing 2 essays [1 of each type]).

Room for Debate

- 👤 Visit the “Room for Debate” database (www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate)
- 👤 Select one topic of your choice (scroll down to the bottom left of the page for a complete list of topics). Read the introduction and each editorial (typically 4-6) on the topic. (*In order to see the introduction, you have to click on the headline- the brief sentence below the headline IS NOT the introduction!) This will give you some background information on the issue, as well as several perspectives from a vast array of authors.
- 👤 Create an MLA citation (works cited entry): use the entry information for an article from an online news source or newspaper (see below). Remember to use a hanging indent (indent every line except the first one).
- 👤 In one typed page, under the MLA citation:
 - _ Identify the different issues presented regarding this topic.
 - _ Discuss how each side presents its argument.
 - _ Discuss which side you feel is more convincing in its argument and why.
 - _ In your one-page analysis, you should utilize at least 2 direct quotes from the articles for support.

Repeat this process once more, each time reading about a different topic, by the first day of school. (You will submit on GoogleClassroom on DAY 1).

MLA Citation Template Example (for this assignment)

“Title of Discussion Topic.” New York Times Date Published Month Year. n. pag. Room for Debate. Web. Date Accessed Month 2011. <insert complete URL>.

Sample Submission

“Room for Debate” -Assignment #1 (you will do two of these)

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Mr. Stubbs

3rd Period

06/07/27

“Is Extreme Parenting Effective?” New York Times 13 January 2011. n. pag. Room for Debate.Web. 23 June 2011.<<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/01/13/is-extreme-parenting-effective>>.




There are so many concerns and questions to deal with in the parenting world. Do you tell your child yes or no? Are you tough or sweet-tempered? Do you let things go, or do you keep a tight leash on your child? These questions are just some of the thoughts and interests that parents face today. With society becoming more complex and sophisticated, does parenting need to become extreme? How hard you are on your child can help predict how successful they will be in the future. Extremely strict control can either lead your child into a life of success or make them counterproductive.

It is believed that how strict you are on your child will either help or hurt them in the future. Amy Chua, a professor at Yale Law, says, “Tough love is the key to raising successful children.” In other words, don’t give into children. You are to hold your ground and set multiple rules for your child. Mothers have set rules such as: not being allowed to have or go to sleepovers, no TV, no complaining, and no grades below an A. Some believe that this is the way to ensure the ability of their children to make something of themselves in the future. Further, by suggesting that “laissez-faire parenting can be too laid-back and detrimental to children,” the article implies that an absence of parental structure may hinder a child’s ability to develop discipline, motivation, and a lasting appreciation for education. In parenting, can you only be strict or lazy? No, these are just two extremes. On the flip side, the majority of parents think that a balance in parenting is best for raising their child. You can’t destroy all creativity and have so many expectations for your child. Some things that they do have to be on their own; otherwise, they won’t be able to make their own decisions in life. They will only do what’s expected of them. Also, by forcing your beliefs on your child, you are pressuring them. The ability to accomplish the goals that children have set for themselves has become harder because goals are becoming harder to achieve. Karen Karbo, novelist and memoirist, states, “It’s true that we, as parents, have erred in downplaying how competitive life is, and how difficult it is to truly excel.” By only setting rules and never allowing our children to simply enjoy life as it comes, we are putting too much stress on them. Is being strict the right way to parent, or is it keeping a balance?

Parenting should be a mix of strictness and freedom, a perfect balance. Parents cannot control their children's every minute in life; otherwise, they aren't living their own lives. It is true to say that kids can't have any rules at all, but a strict rules policy is ridiculous. The stress level that can be caused by being too strict is outrageous. If children don't succeed in what we push and plan for them, they feel like a failure. Children should be praised for what their own personal capabilities allow them to do, not be scorned for what they can't acquire. How strict you are with your children does affect them in their success in life, but being too strict has problems in itself. Too much of anything can be a bad thing; finding a good balance of yes and no, being tough and sweet, keeping a tight leash and knowing when to let go is the way parenting should go about.

New York Times—Room for Debate

Topic Analysis #_____

Criteria	4	3	2	1	0	
MLA Citation	Properly cites website using MLA format; correctly italicizes, punctuates, and uses a hanging indent.	Properly cites website using MLA format; most formatting, punctuation, and indentation are correct.	Attempts MLA citation and includes relevant information, but formatting is incorrect.	Includes only some required MLA citation information.	Does not include an MLA citation.	Copy table
Identification of Issues	Clearly and thoroughly examines complex viewpoints on the topic.	Includes differing viewpoints presented on the topic.	Makes some mention of different viewpoints presented.	Viewpoints are identified superficially or vaguely.	Does not identify varying viewpoints on the issue presented in the articles.	
Discussion of Arguments	Carefully analyzes evidence, approaches, and strategies utilized by authors in supporting viewpoints.	Considers some evidence, approaches, and strategies utilized by authors in supporting viewpoints.	Mentions evidence, approaches, or strategies, but lacks depth.	Makes little mention of specific evidence, approaches, or strategies.	Does not discuss how authors present arguments.	
Opinion of Articles	Clearly identifies the most effective argument and supports opinion with specific evidence. 	Identifies the most effective argument and supports opinion with some general evidence.	Identifies the most effective argument but includes little supporting evidence.	Opinion of the arguments is unclear.	Does not evaluate the persuasiveness of the arguments.	

TOTAL= _____/20

ARGUMENT PROMPTS - Assignment #2 (choose one)

Section: "The Things They Carried" (Title Story, Opening Chapter)

Argument Prompt #1

In the title story, O'Brien catalogs the physical items soldiers carry as a metaphor for emotional burdens. Write an essay that argues whether people today carry more psychological burdens than past generations. Support your position with evidence from reading, observation, experience, current events, science(s), etc.

Section: "Enemies" & "Friends" (short back-to-back chapters)

Argument Prompt #2

In "Enemies" and "Friends," O'Brien presents the complex and shifting nature of trust and loyalty under the extreme pressures of war.

Write an essay that argues whether extreme circumstances (like war, survival situations, or crisis) justify the abandonment or rewriting of moral or social norms.

Support your position with evidence from literature, history, current events, or personal experience, religion, etc.

Section: "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong"

Argument Prompt #3

In "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," Mary Anne's transformation challenges traditional expectations of femininity and innocence. Her descent into the jungle life suggests that war—and perhaps human nature—is not bound by gender.

Write an essay that argues whether traditional gender roles limit individuals from discovering or expressing their true identities.

Support your position with evidence from your reading, experience, or observation, current events, science(s), history, etc.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS PROMPTS- Assignment #3 (choose one)

Section: “The Things They Carried” (Title Story, Opening Chapter)

Rhetorical Analysis Prompt #1

In the opening chapter of *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien catalogs the physical and emotional burdens borne by American soldiers during the Vietnam War. Through detailed descriptions of the items each soldier carries, O'Brien explores the interplay between external weight and internal struggle.

Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how O'Brien uses rhetorical choices to convey the psychological burdens of soldiers in war. In your response, you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Section: “How to Tell a True War Story”

Rhetorical Analysis Prompt #2

In the chapter “How to Tell a True War Story” from *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien reflects on the nature of storytelling and truth in the context of war.

Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how O'Brien uses rhetorical choices to convey his perspective on truth and storytelling. In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Section: “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong”

Rhetorical Analysis Prompt #3

In the chapter “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong” from *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien recounts the story of Mary Anne Bell, a young American girl who arrives in Vietnam and gradually becomes absorbed by the war, ultimately shedding her civilian identity. Through Rat Kiley's narration, O'Brien blurs the lines between fact and fiction to explore the seductive and transformative power of war.

Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how O'Brien uses rhetorical choices to convey the impact of war on identity and gender roles.

In your response, you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.

■ Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.