

AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION
Summer Reading Assignment

Mandatory Reading Selections

- Drama: *Death of a Salesman*
- Non-Fiction:
 - “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr.
(http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/liberation_curriculum/pdfs/letterfrombirmingham_wwcw.pdf)

ASSIGNMENT

Designed to introduce you to the amount, intensity, and level of reading assignments intrinsic to an AP English course, this summer reading assignment will help you develop the critical reading and writing skills requisite to success in a college-level course. You should approach the reading and writing assignments with a sincere desire both to prepare yourself for the course and to deepen your understanding of the historical, political, religious, and cultural contexts that influence human experience—past, present, or future.

With these points in mind, you will prepare a critical response journal, a type of writing that requires you to engage in a particular text with an open, sincere attitude, to explore possible meanings and implications, to question ambiguity or discrepancies, and to grapple with disquietude or other emotional responses to the text. In short, journal writing allows you as a reader and writer to explore ideas, *your* ideas, and to interact with a text on your terms, at your level of understanding; therefore, journal writing has no clear-cut “right” or “wrong” answer to the questions posed. Instead, you should strive to answer questions honestly without the use of materials other than your own thoughts and ideas.

Journal responses are due on **Friday, August 17**, and will be used during the first quarter to inspire conversations and essays about the themes, issues, conflicts, ideas, and situations presented in the readings.

Requirements:

- All journal entries should be typed, collated, and stapled together with a cover sheet, indicating the student’s name, class, and teacher
- Length of journal responses for each question: 300-500 words
- Each journal response should be labeled with the specific question being answered
- Students may NOT cut and paste information or answers from an internet source or copy information or answers from any source other than the novel or short stories

Questions: Respond to each question for the text specified

1. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Historical and Cultural Context/Setting: Describe the specific time, place, and era of the literary work. What important historical, social, political or religious events, movements, or ideas influence the setting and content of the text? Provide examples from the text to support your response. Describe the intended audience. What exactly is the speaker trying to persuade his audience to do? Summarize his argument. What is his tone? Describe one rhetorical device or one example of figurative language that he uses and identify its effect on the audience.

2. *Death of a Salesman*

Characterization: Provide a profile of a significant character from the play. What dominant qualities does he or she display? What conflicts is the character involved in? What impact does the character have on the thoughts and behaviors of the other characters? What changes—positive or negative—does he or she undergo during the course of the play? What motivates these changes? Provide specific examples for the text to support your response.