

## Summer Reading Assignments for 11<sup>th</sup> Grade AP: Language and Composition

1. For eight weeks of the summer, you will find one article from the editorial page of a newspaper such as the *Richmond-Times Dispatch*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. So you will analyze a total of eight articles. This should be an article by a columnist, not a letter to the editor. For each article you will provide the following:

\*A paragraph summary of the article. Include the various arguments they use.

\*A paragraph that discusses the techniques the writer uses to create the argument. Consider their word choice, their use of emotional appeals, their use of examples, their sentence structure, their use of their own credibility.

\*A paragraph in which you provide a counter-argument. Try to refute (disprove) specific points that the writer raises.

Cut out or print (if you are using online version of the newspaper) the articles and attach to the written part.

2. Read the short essay “Puff the Magic Dragon” by Nick Hornby. This essay is from his collection of essays called *Songbook*. While all the essays in the book are based on a certain song, it is interesting that many of the essays are not at all about the song. Instead the song is used as a springboard into other, often much bigger, ideas. You’ll note that in the essay you’ve been given the song is mentioned only briefly; he incorporates it into his ruminations on his son’s disability. Your assignment is as follows: Using Hornby’s essay as a model, write an essay of at least two pages double-spaced in which you use a song as a way to write about something else. You can talk about the song as much as you like, but in the end song will serve to help you write about your topic.

### Extra Credit Assignment

We will learn in this class that the term “rhetoric”, in its most positive sense, refers to the means of communication. To study rhetoric, as one textbook states, is to practice “the art of analyzing all the language choices that writer, speaker, reader or listener might make in a given situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective.” Obtain and read a copy of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. The edition published by Barnes and Noble Classics is priced at \$4.95 at the store. The book is an amazing accomplishment given the circumstances of Douglass’ life. Answer the questions on the study guide you’ve been given. Next you will choose five paragraphs from the book to analyze for the use of rhetoric. For each paragraph, explain how Douglass uses language to persuade and to convey his ideas. Consider his use of the following: word choice, sentence structure, imagery, emotion, logic. For each section, write a paragraph explaining your observations. Try not to simply list your observations, but rather

explain the purpose of the choices the writer makes. In other words, how do the choices Douglass makes as a writer add to the meaning and purpose of the writing? Please note that you can only get the extra credit if you also turn in the mandatory summer assignments.

**Grading**

Each of the mandatory assignments is 50 points for a 100 point quiz grade. The essay you write based on the song is worth 50 points . Each newspaper assignment is worth 6 points (and no this doesn't add up to exactly 100—I'm no math teacher). Late summer reading assignments will be penalized 10 points per school day.

The two extra credit assignments for the Frederick Douglass book are worth five points each toward test grades for the first quarter. Once again, I will not accept the extra credit assignments unless you have done the mandatory ones.

The assignments are due on September 14th. The use of online sources that summarize books is in no way encouraged. We want you to have the experience of reading. Any subsequent assignments will require a genuine understanding and reading of the works. If you have any questions over the summer, you may email me at [jmgolos@henrico.k12.va.us](mailto:jmgolos@henrico.k12.va.us) . I look forward to meeting you in September.

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**Please have a parent/guardian sign and return this acknowledgement.**

**I am aware of the summer assignment for AP 11 English for 2015**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## 21. "Puff the Magic Dragon"

I can remember the first time my son Danny was exposed to music. He'd just come back with his mum from the hospital where he was born, and I played Shara Nelson's solo CD, which I was playing a lot that autumn, and he suddenly became very still and watchful. It's impossible not to sentimentalize the first few days of a child's life, but I'd have been willing to bet then that music was going to be in-



portant to my son, in some way or another—not a stupid bet, considering how important music is to his mother and me. Maybe he'd turn out to be merely a fan; maybe he'd end up playing an instrument. Didn't—doesn't—matter to me either way, just so long as he felt it somewhere in him.

It was a very happy time of my life. Danny was home and safe, after a difficult birth that had endangered him and nearly killed his mother; meanwhile she and I had, we felt, put a long period of difficulty behind us shortly before his conception, and his emergence into the world was confirmation that these troubles would not be returning. Things didn't stay good for very much longer, though. Danny's development was a constant cause for concern (it would be some time before he was diagnosed as autistic), and, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the stress of those first few years, the Elastoplasts fell off his parents' patched-up relationship, and the wounds underneath had gone gangrenous.

But through it all, Danny continued to feel the music—he feels it so much, in fact, that he invented his own word for it, which is no mean feat when your inability to communicate defines your world. One of the many fascinating things about his condition (and yes, there's fascination there, too, just as there is laughter and pleasure and excitement, mixed in with the heartbreak and worry) is that, though he has very little language, he has managed to find words for things he fears he might not be given unless he asks for them. In other words, there are some things so desirable that they can burst through the blanket of silence

that smothers him, and music (yegge, as he calls it), ranks right up there, along with crisps, and swimming, and biscuits, which is pretty much where I'd put it, too.

Danny's relationship with music is an intense one. He has to listen before going to sleep at night; he sometimes wanders round with a portable cassette player, volume turned up as high as it will go, and occasionally he retreats to his bedroom, like a teenager, in order to listen with a concentration not permitted him elsewhere. I find it almost overwhelmingly moving, watching him when he does that—my little speechless boy, his head lowered on to the speaker, all the better to absorb every note (and—who knows?—maybe every word) of every song.

And he seems to be developing tastes, too. A couple of weeks ago, in the car, he listened quite happily not to his usual nursery rhymes but to *Tiptery*; but when the CD-changer switched to Louis Armstrong's *Hot Fives and Sevens*, an outraged cry came from the backseat: "Goggol Goggol!" Louis Armstrong, the man who single-handedly created one of the most important musical traditions of the twentieth century, did not, apparently, create music. So we moved on to Nick Lowe instead, and he was happy again. This was good news. Any sentence pertaining to Danny that incorporates the words *derelicting* and *tastes* is good news, because he tends to get stuck, to focus wholeheartedly on the tastes he already has (for salt-and-vinegar crisps, and *Possum Pat* videos, and peanut-butter sandwiches), rather than developing new ones: there was a brief open window of opportunity, somewhere between his first and third birthdays, through which he was pre-

pared to admit new experiences and flavors and interests, but this window was shut suddenly, with a bang and with no warning, and any addition to his repertoire in the last five years has been a cause for rejoicing and baffled conversation—"He watched twenty minutes of *Toy Story!*" "He ate half of a cracker!" "He did a poo at school!" This is the sort of thing that passes for radical innovation in Danny's life; you may think of yourself as a creature of habit, but he's gone way beyond creature. He's the Beast, the Tyrannosaurus rex, of habit.

So I've got high hopes for music. I'm trying to switch him from cassettes (which he tends to mangle) to CDs, and to move him away from nursery rhymes; I reckon he could cope with, I don't know, *Rainbows*, or *Rubber Soul*, or *Catch a Fire*, as long as I could get him to listen to the first few bars—usually, all foreign cultural matter (videos he has never seen, music he has never heard) is expelled via the eject button immediately. I've had some modest success recently with a CD called *Reggae for Kids*, which begins with Gregory Isaacs singing "Puff the Magic Dragon," and this modest success comes hot on the heels of another modest success, the introduction of a world music thing that, though he never requests or attempts to play himself, is tolerated and perhaps even quietly appreciated, and I've found a couple of other collections that he might get into . . . Who knows? Maybe soon he'll be listening to Gregory Isaacs singing "Night Nurse." And then we could maybe go to a gig, and he'll be motivated enough to want to learn which CDs come out of which case . . . When you have a child with a disability, you learn

to let go of the ambitions you once had for him very quickly (and you learn, too, that many of those ambitions were worthless anyway, beside the point, precious, silly, indulgent, intimidatingly restrictive), but they get replaced by others, and ambitions involving music (the listening theoretic, rather than some daft *Shine*-style fantasy involving the Royal Albert Hall, an extraordinary talent, and a disbelieving, tearful audience) seem both harmless and achievable.

But to begin with, listening to "Night Nurse" would be enough. If it's true that music does, as I've attempted to argue elsewhere, serve as a form of self-expression even to those of us who can express ourselves tolerably well in speech or in writing, how much more vital is it going to be for him, when he has so few other outlets? That's why I love the relationship with music he has already, because it's how I know he has something in him that he wants others to articulate. In fact, thinking about it now, it's why I love the relationship that anyone has with music: because there's something in us that is beyond the reach of words, something that eludes and defies our best attempts to spit it out. It's the best part of us, probably, the richest and strangest part, and Danny's got it, too, of course, he has; you could argue that he's simply dispensed with all the earthbound, rubbishy bits.