

Summer Assignments for AP English Language and Composition 2023-2024

To receive credit for these assignments, you must be prepared to upload a digital copy or picture of your informal notes AND the two completed essays to Schoology on the first day of class. These writing assignments must be submitted in proper [MLA formatting](#). Be prepared to continue working with this assignment as the semester begins. Read all instructions closely. If you have any questions, contact Mr. Kistler at pkistler@kehillah.org

1. Read *Just Mercy* and take notes

Read [Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson \(ISBN: 978-0812984965\)](#). You need to purchase the exact edition of the text. As you read the text, take informal notes and reflect on the following questions and ideas. These will help you with your argument essay revision and book review assignments. You will be submitting these informal notes as part of your summer assignment. The notes are expected to be somewhere between 5-10 pages depending on whether you type or handwrite them

- What are the key claims and arguments made by Stevenson in this book?
- What types of evidence does he use to support his position?
- Does his use of evidence and argumentation convince you? If so, why?
- What are your thoughts, reflections, and feelings about the text as you read? Keep track of your emotional reactions to the stories he tells and make note of the ways his writing choices are crafted to provoke those feelings.

2. Argument Essay:

After reading [Just Mercy](#), consider the following AP Lang style argument prompt:

The passage below is an excerpt of a [2012 TED Talk delivered by author and civil rights activist Bryan Stevenson](#). Read the excerpt carefully. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on Stevenson's argument that in America "the opposite of poverty is justice." Do you agree, disagree, or somewhere in between?

"We have a system of justice in this country that treats you much better if you're rich and guilty than if you're poor and innocent. Wealth, not culpability, shapes outcomes ...In many parts of this country, the opposite of poverty is not wealth. In too many places the opposite of poverty is justice."

Your response should be at least 500 words (two pages double spaced), and should use reasoning, evidence from the text (and your notes) as well as your personal experiences to support your position. There is no wrong answer to this question, but you will be graded on your ability to form and take a position.

Note: This is not a book report, so while evidence from the text should be included, there is NO REASON to summarize the plot of the book. Instead, any textual evidence should be used in support of your own argument on the topic.

3. Book Review (Rhetorical Analysis) Essay:

After reading the book, write a review of *Just Mercy* for *The New York Times Book Review* that runs about 500 words (two pages double spaced). This review should NOT summarize the plot or topic of the book whatsoever. Instead, the essay should focus on the author's style and approach. It should follow MLA essay formatting guidelines, and it should address most of the following questions, although not necessarily in this order.

- What strengths and potential weaknesses did you find in this book? Would you recommend it to others? What suggestions would you make for inclusion/ deletion in the second edition?
- Based on his style and approach, who is Stevenson's intended audience for this book? What, most likely, is their pre-existing attitude towards the subject of incarceration and criminal justice? What specific stylistic or rhetorical choices in the book support your assertion?
- Stevenson weaves together quantitative evidence, anecdote, and personal narrative in this book. Does this technique strengthen or weaken his argument? Support your position with reasoning and evidence.
- In general, what role (if any) should storytelling play in argumentation? Should it be dismissed as anecdotal evidence, or does it have a useful function in negotiating truth? How did it function in *Just Mercy*?
- Stevenson asserts his own personal story and voice strongly into the book. Should this cause us to question the book's accuracy and objectivity? Is objectivity even desirable, given the goal and subject of this book? In a larger sense, when examining a social issue like this, is objectivity even possible?