

## AP English Language and Composition Summer Assignment

Welcome to AP English Language and Composition! This course will require significant amounts of reading and writing—as its name suggests—to prepare you for the AP English Language and Composition test by the first week of May. Because this course will involve writing in different genres and analyzing writers' stylistic and rhetorical choices, I would like you to immediately engage in both of these activities by writing a review of the **Introduction and Part One** of *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom. You do not need to read or review the rest of the book.

- The first draft of your review will be due the first Monday of school. You may ask questions about it in class before it is due. If you have any questions before school begins, feel free to email me at [tristan.macdonald@saintjosephprep.org](mailto:tristan.macdonald@saintjosephprep.org).
- Your review should be 2-3 pages in MLA format. If you have questions about MLA format, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>.
- REMEMBER: A review is NOT merely an analysis or a personal reaction; it will include those elements, but its primary purpose is to make a judgment about the text's quality. In other words, you must try to persuade your audience to agree with your positive, negative, or mixed assessment of the text.
- This is NOT a five-paragraph essay! Your first paragraph should include at least the title, author, and genre of the text you are reviewing, as well as your general impression of the text. You can begin your review with a connection to life or another text, your immediate reaction to finishing or starting the text, a philosophical or moral point that you will develop more in your review, or another strategy to draw in your reader. For models of reviews, read the movie and book reviews of the *Boston Sunday Globe* or other major newspapers.
- Your second paragraph should be a BRIEF summary of the text. This summary should be no more than half a page.
- The bulk of your review should explain why you had a positive, negative, or mixed assessment of the text. Consider addressing any or all of the following questions: Are the text's arguments convincing? Are they correct? Does the text promote good morals? Is the author's writing style engaging, boring, lucid, or confusing? Does the text deepen your appreciation or understanding of your own life, philosophy, or faith? In addressing these questions, be sure to back up your judgments with specific examples from the text.
- End your review strongly, reconnecting to a previous important point or using another strategy to persuade your audience of the text's quality or lack thereof. Once again, reviews in newspapers can be helpful models for this.
- The final draft of this assignment will be worth 50 points. Attached is the rubric. Every day it is late, it will drop a letter grade.

Rationale for Assigning *The Closing of the American Mind*

- It is challenging nonfiction that makes an argument, the very type of reading required by the AP guidelines for this class. Indeed, the syntax and allusions of many sentences can be uninviting and confusing, so you should interpret those sentences based on the context of surrounding sentences.
  - It sometimes presents you with a viewpoint different from the one you hold, thereby requiring you to engage with another perspective and broaden your horizons.
  - It could easily inspire argumentative writing—the main form taught in this class—because you will likely agree with certain aspects of it and disagree with others. For example, while I find certain sections to be brilliant, I find others to be wrong or possibly even offensive. The section on race, for instance, is very controversial and has received much criticism. The controversial nature of this book will make it easier for you to write your review of it.
  - It criticizes certain cultural trends among incoming college students, so it is highly relevant to your age group.
  - To counterbalance the book's conservative leanings, I will assign in class some liberal reviews of it. These will also give you ideas for your own review.
- \*\*\* The book is largely a criticism of cultural and moral **relativism**, so I highly suggest that you familiarize yourself with that term before you read!

	Outstanding (9-10)	Above Average (8)	Average (7)	Below Average (6)	Needs Improvement (5)
Persuasiveness	Effectively persuades the reader to accept your judgment of the text's quality	Mostly persuades the reader to accept your judgment of the text's quality	Somewhat more of a personal reflection or textual analysis than a review	Mostly a personal reflection or textual analysis, not a review	Does not persuade
Diction	Professional word choice	High-level word choice	Word choice that is average for the age level	Okay word choice with some misused words	Inappropriate word choice
Mechanics	Perfect spelling and grammar, with varied sentence structures	Mostly perfect spelling and grammar, with some sentence variation	Multiple mistakes in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure that do not detract from the meaning	Numerous mistakes that detract from the meaning	Many mistakes that detract from the meaning
Summary	Brief summary that provides an effective, intelligent sketch of the text	Brief summary that provides an accurate sketch of the text	Mainly accurate summary that may be too long or too short	Somewhat inaccurate summary that may be too long or too short	Summary that is too long or too short
Analysis	Well-presented arguments that back up all their points with specific evidence	Well-presented arguments with some specific evidence	Clear arguments with mainly general evidence	Unclear arguments with general evidence	Unclear arguments with no evidence

