AP Language Summer-Reading: Current Events Assignment, 2020

Mr. R. F. Restaino (rrestaino@elginisd.net)

Is this Required? No, but I am offering a major grade of extra credit for incoming AP English Language & Composition students who complete it, and in addition, your work over the summer will ensure that you have a leg up on your classmates coming into class in the fall because you will have already started working on your reading and analysis skills, plus you will have kept up with our ever-changing world.

Rationale: One of the key expectations of AP Language & Composition is that you become a more-savvy consumer of news and current events and that you are aware of important issues and events in your world. As well, one of the essays on the AP test asks you to make an argument about a topic without providing you any sources. Therefore, exposure to as many ideas, stories, issues, and events will put you in a better position to be able to come up with evidence to support your arguments.

Current Events Assignment Instructions:
- Over the summer, you will need to find and complete summary/analysis sheets for four (4) different news articles and one (1) opinion/editorial article. (I talk about the difference between news and opinion articles later in this sheet, and it is essential to be able to tell the difference.)
- The articles will all need to come from reputable news sources (I talk about what this means later in this packet, and I will give you plenty of examples of possible sources).
- I will not accept articles over sports or entertainment—not because we cannot learn things from these or that serious issues do not affect sports or entertainment, but because chances are you are already keeping up with your favorite sports and entertainment news! So, you will need to focus on world, national, or local news, politics, criminal justice, environmental issues, economic issues, etc.
- Articles should be a decent length—no news briefs! As well, articles should be recent—no more than a few months old. You also should space out your 5 articles throughout the summer. I don't want to see all five of the articles come from the same week. The idea is to keep up with the news a bit throughout the summer.
- You will not need to provide a copy of the article, but you WILL need to provide key information about the article so that I can find it.

What Is a "Reputable" Source?
- **"Reputable"** means the source as a reputation for fair, factual news coverage. Does that mean the source has *never* made a mistake or that it expresses *no* political bias? No. In fact, every news source has gotten some stories wrong and every news source has some sort of bias. However, reputable sources make corrections, keep the opinions limited to "opinion/editorial" articles, and make attempts to be fair in coverage.
- **How can we tell if a source is NOT reputable?** There is no one way to tell if a source should not be trusted, but there are a few things to look out for:
  - First, identify your own biases! If you know you lean one way or the other politically, chances are you probably will seek out news sources that confirm what you already think! Does that mean those sources are NOT reputable? Not necessarily. However, if the source seems to *only* pus one particular point of view, then it may not be the most trustworthy source.
  - Have you heard of the source? Even if you don't regularly read the news, most people have heard of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street* Journal, the *Houston Chronicle*, *Time*, and *NBC*. Chances are, if the source has been around a while, the source is one that is generally trustworthy, even if it might show bias on occasion.
  - Can you find the information in the article in OTHER sources, especially ones you've heard of? If not, chances are, the story and source may not be trustworthy.
  - When in doubt, feel free to ask me if you are unsure about the reliability of a source.

- **A Short List of Reputable Sources**: Again, this list is NOT the end-all-be-all, and just because a source appears on this list, doesn't mean that they have no issues with bias or with occasionally reporting information that turns out to be false. However, it does mean that they do not have a history of intentionally reporting misleading information and their news reporting is not heavy with bias or opinion. The opinion sections of these sources will sometimes be heavily biased, and with others, far more fair and even-handed. Here is a general breakdown:

Leans Liberal/Left	More Neutral /Center	Leans Conservative/Right
Slate Magazine	*New York Times*	*Washington Times*
Salon.com	*Washington Post*	*National Review*
Huffington Post	*Los Angeles Times*	*New York Post*
The Nation	*The Atlantic*	*Weekly Standard*
Mother Jones	*Austin American-Statesman*	*Fox News*
MSNBC	*Houston Chronicle*	*Forbes*
	Dallas Morning News	
	Wall Street Journal	
	BBC	
	NPR	
	Associated Press	
	Reuters	
	Christian Science Monitor	
	Al-Jazeera America	

How to Tell If Article Is NEWS or OPINION/EDITORIAL?
Except for a few exceptions that I will announce, I want you to focus on NEWS articles, not opinion or editorials. In other words, you're looking for EXPOSITORY texts, not persuasive ones. Here are some ways to spot the difference:

News (Expository)	Opinion/Editorial (Persuasive)
Purpose is to inform	Purpose is to persuade (look for words like "should/should not; ought to/ought not; we need to; etc"
Based on multiple viewpoints (sources)	Often based on singular viewpoint (the author's), although many opinion articles also cite outside sources.
Allows the facts to speak for themselves	Uses facts to make an argument / often offers solutions to a problem and/or places blame for causing a problem
Objective and usually impersonal (the writer keeps him or herself out of the story)	Subjective and often personal (the writer's own opinions, feelings, biases are part of the story)
Types of News Stories	**Types of Opinion Articles**
Hard News: Based on a recent event and focuses on the five "W's": Who, What, Where, When, and Why	**Editorials:** Often no author is given because it was written by more than one editor of the news organization. Gives opinion on a particular issue, news event, etc. These will often be labeled "editorial," so look for it!
Issue Story: Not based on just one recent event, but a whole issue (which is made up of several events).	**Opinion Columns:** Written by one writer, expressing only his/her own opinion on a certain issue, news event, etc. These will sometimes, but not always, be labeled as "opinion"
Profile Story: A story about the life and/or work of one subject	
Feature Story: Lighter and not as "important" as hard news, often about the parts of life we don't normally associate with "the news"	

Current Event Summary and Reflection 1 (News)

No need to attach a copy of the article. However, please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible so I can find it if I need to.

Full Title of Article: _____

_____

Author (If more than one, list all names; if no author listed, leave blank): _____

_____

Source (not the URL; the place where it was published— CNN, Time, New York Times, etc.):

_____   **Date Published:** _____

Topic: _____

Summary of Article: Write a summary paragraph of the article. Yes, that means *in your own words*. Do not just copy from the article. **Summary should be around 6-8 sentences long and should NOT include quotes**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MORE→

Significance: Write at least 3-4 sentences discussing why you chose the article **and** how it is important to society. Think about who this event/issue impacts and how. Explain why it is significant or provide your opinion about the topic.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions: Write three relevant questions about the article. These can be questions you would like answered for your own interest or clarification.

1) _____

_____

2) _____

_____

3) _____

_____

New Words I Learned: (*Yes*, you MUST have three words. If you have even the slightest doubt, look the word up.)

Word	Definition	Part of Speech

Current Event Summary and Reflection 2 (News)

No need to attach a copy of the article. However, please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible so I can find it if I need to.

Full Title of Article: _____

_____

Author (If more than one, list all names; if no author listed, leave blank): _____

_____

Source (not the URL; the place where it was published— CNN, Time, New York Times, etc.):

_____ **Date Published:** _____

Topic: _____

Summary of Article: Write a summary paragraph of the article. Yes, that means *in your own words*. Do not just copy from the article. **Summary should be around 6-8 sentences long and should NOT include quotes**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MORE→

Significance: Write at least 3-4 sentences discussing why you chose the article *and* how it is important to society. Think about who this event/issue impacts and how. Explain why it is significant or provide your opinion about the topic.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions: Write three relevant questions about the article. These can be questions you would like answered for your own interest or clarification.

1) _____

_____

2) _____

_____

3) _____

_____

New Words I Learned: (*Yes*, you MUST have three words. If you have even the slightest doubt, look the word up.)

Word	Definition	Part of Speech

Current Event Summary and Reflection 3 (News)

No need to attach a copy of the article. However, please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible so I can find it if I need to.

Full Title of Article: _____

_____

Author (If more than one, list all names; if no author listed, leave blank): _____

_____

Source (not the URL; the place where it was published— CNN, Time, New York Times, etc.):

_____ **Date Published:** _____

Topic: _____

Summary of Article: Write a summary paragraph of the article. Yes, that means *in your own words*. Do not just copy from the article. **Summary should be around 6-8 sentences long and should NOT include quotes**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MORE→

Significance: Write at least 3-4 sentences discussing why you chose the article **_and_** how it is important to society. Think about who this event/issue impacts and how. Explain why it is significant or provide your opinion about the topic.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions: Write three relevant questions about the article. These can be questions you would like answered for your own interest or clarification.

1) _____

_____

2) _____

_____

3) _____

_____

New Words I Learned: (_Yes_, you MUST have three words. If you have even the slightest doubt, look the word up.)

Word	Definition	Part of Speech

Current Event Summary and Reflection 4 (News)

No need to attach a copy of the article. However, please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible so I can find it if I need to.

Full Title of Article: _____

_____

Author (If more than one, list all names; if no author listed, leave blank): _____

_____

Source (not the URL; the place where it was published— CNN, Time, New York Times, etc.):

_____   **Date Published:** _____

Topic: _____

Summary of Article: Write a summary paragraph of the article. Yes, that means ***in your own words***. Do not just copy from the article. **Summary should be around 6-8 sentences long and should NOT include quotes**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MORE→

Significance: Write at least 3-4 sentences discussing why you chose the article ***and*** how it is important to society. Think about who this event/issue impacts and how. Explain why it is significant or provide your opinion about the topic.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions: Write three relevant questions about the article. These can be questions you would like answered for your own interest or clarification.

1) _____

_____

2) _____

_____

3) _____

_____

New Words I Learned: (*Yes*, you MUST have three words. If you have even the slightest doubt, look the word up.)

Word	Definition	Part of Speech

Current Event Summary and Reflection 5 (OPINION)

No need to attach a copy of the article. However, please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible so I can find it if I need to.

Full Title of Article: _____

_____

Author (If more than one, list all names; if no author listed, leave blank): _____

_____

Source (not the URL; the place where it was published— CNN, Time, New York Times, etc.):

_____   **Date Published:** _____

Topic: _____

Summary of Article: Write a summary paragraph of the article. Yes, that means ***in your own words***. Do not just copy from the article. **Summary should be around 6-8 sentences long and should NOT include quotes**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your Evaluation of the Speaker: How would you describe the speaker? Does the author sound more conservative or liberal? What biases does the author seem to have? What can you learn about the author by Googling their name? Give some explanation of where the speaker is "coming from":

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your View and Analysis: Write at least 3-5 sentences on your own views of issue discussed in the article. Then explain whether or not you think the opinions presented in the article are fair or not. Explain why you think as you do.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions: Write three relevant questions about the article. These can be questions you would like answered for your own interest or clarification.

1) _____

_____

2) _____

_____

3) _____

_____

New Words I Learned: (*Yes*, you MUST have three words. If you have even the slightest doubt, look the word up.)

Word	Definition	Part of Speech