

AP Language and Composition Summer Reading

AP Lang. is a class that focuses on nonfiction and rhetorical analysis, rather than fiction and literary analysis, which has been the focus of your previous English classes. Therefore, it is essential that you get a basic handle on rhetoric.

You must read *Words Like Loaded Pistols* by Sam Leith. As you read, take notes. There will be a test on the material in the book a few weeks into the school year. You are expected to remember and comprehend the contents of the book. The material will not be reviewed in class.

To begin acquainting yourself with the world of nonfiction and rhetorical analysis, you will also adopt a columnist for the summer. Pick one of the major editorial columnists on the following list (C indicates conservative-leaning, L indicates liberal-leaning):

Andrew McCarthy (<i>Washington Post</i> , C)	George Will (<i>Washington Post</i> , C)
Ben Shapiro (<i>National Review</i> , C)	Jonah Goldberg (<i>National Review</i> , C)
Charles Blow (<i>New York Times</i> , L)	Kathleen Parker (<i>Washington Post</i> , C)
Dana Milbank (<i>Washington Post</i> , L)	Maureen Dowd (<i>New York Times</i> , L)
David Brooks (<i>New York Times</i> , C)	Nicholas Kristof (<i>New York Times</i> , L)
David Frum (<i>The Atlantic</i> , C)	Paul Krugman (<i>New York Times</i> , L)
E.J. Dionne Jr. (<i>Washington Post</i> , L)	Marc A. Thiessen (<i>Washington Post</i> , C)
Fareed Zakaria (<i>Washington Post</i> , C)	Ruth Marcus (<i>Washington Post</i> , L)
Frank Bruni (<i>New York Times</i> , L)	Thomas Friedman (<i>New York Times</i> , L)
Gail Collins (<i>New York Times</i> , L)	Christine Emba (<i>Washington Post</i> , L)

You will read **every** article this columnist writes this summer. There will be an assignment that tests your understanding of this columnist's style during the first quarter. In addition to reading all of his or her articles, you must print and annotate four of your choice (you should think long and hard about which articles you pick, and select ones where you actually see something to analyze).

For **each** of the four articles you selected, you must write a rhetorical précis and clearly identify three of the rhetorical strategies discussed in *Words Like Loaded Pistols* (List below). Specific directions for the rhetorical précis and rhetorical strategies examples are on the back of this sheet.

Rhetorical Strategies:

-Analogy	-Tricolon/Rising Tricolon	-Commonplaces
-Anaphora	-Parallelism	-Decorum
-Asyndeton	-Polysyndeton	-Kairos
Anthesis	-Zeugma	

As AP Language and Composition is also a writing course, it is recommended that you read at least one of the follow books on writing.

- *On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction* by William Zinsser
- *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White
- *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century* by Steven Pinker

How to Write a Rhetorical Précis

After reading the article several times, annotating it, and taking notes on its key ideas, it's time to write your précis. Précis is French for "specific" or "precise." Writing a précis shows that you've read the text closely and understand its major arguments and tone or organizational shifts. A précis is a highly structured four sentence paragraph that conveys both the content (the *what* and *why*) and the delivery (the *how*) of the author's argument:

First sentence: Identifies the article's author, source, title, date (in parentheses) and uses a rhetorical verb (*argues, asserts, claims, etc.*) to introduce a *that* clause stating the article's thesis.

-What is the topic of the article and what does the author claim about the topic?

Second sentence: Conveys how the author develops, structures, and supports the thesis (this should account for all the most important shifts in the article, in chronological order).

-What kind of evidence does it use? Does it build its case by comparing and contrasting, narrating, illustrating, defining, etc.? How does it shift/change as the article continues?

Third sentence: Analyzes the author's purpose (what the author wants the reader to do, believe, feel, or think about the topic) using an *in order to* statement.

Fourth sentence: Describes the article's intended audience (be sure to offer a rationale for how you know that is the audience) and characterizes the author's relationships with that audience, i.e. tone.

-Look back at the source and think about who is likely to read this kind of news source. What kind of language is used in this piece and how much background does the author provide? What does the writer assume readers believe, know, or value?

Sample Rhetorical Précis:

Carl Cederström's *New York Times* article "The Dangers of Happiness" (2015) argues that present-day politicians' definition of happiness holds the poor responsible for their poverty. Cederström traces the development of happiness from Ancient Greece, where it was a result of a pleasurable life, to the Enlightenment and Declaration of Independence, where it became a right. He demonstrates this development in order to illustrate its effect: politicians now discuss happiness as an individual's responsibility—one that they are under no obligation to help them obtain. Cederström addresses an educated liberal audience as he opens with Aristotle and the Epicureans, alludes to classical mythology, and ends with criticism of Jeb Bush and Paul Ryan, consistently aligning himself with his audience by using the royal "we" and treating the establishment with a cautious and chastising tone, instructing his audience to "be wary."

Then you would identify **three** rhetorical strategies that Leith discusses in *Words Like Loaded Pistols* that appear in Cederström's article. You must clearly identify the strategy (and what page in the book it comes from), provide the specific textual evidence from the article, and explain how it demonstrates the strategy.

- Anaphora (Leith 236): Cederström says the modern moral platitudes are "Be real, be strong, be productive—and most important, don't rely on other people to achieve these goals, because your fate is, of course, in your own hands," demonstrating anaphora by repeating "be" at the beginning of each clause.