English II Summer Assignments

CP English II
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Honors English II
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Welcome to our English II Course. Summer assignments are meant to help prepare you for the upcoming year and allow us to hit the ground running in August. One of the ways they help prepare you for the year is by letting you see the teacher's expectations and how she thinks about the class you're about to take. A second way they are meant to prepare you is by giving you a chance to practice the skills you'll be using throughout the year. Finally, your summer assignments introduce ideas or themes that run throughout the course, and by encountering them in the weeks before class starts, you're ready to begin discussing them and making connections early in the year. These assignments do all three.

You will submit your assignments via Canvas by August 12th.

Part 1: Analytical Essay

Read William Zinsser's essay "Simplicity" (See below). Identify one central idea from the text and write an essay that summarizes and analyzes how the author develops that central idea over the course of the text (i.e., how does the author explain and talk about that central idea?), including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by particular details.

Be sure to cite evidence from the text to support your analysis. Use MLA format (12-point font, Times New Roman, double spaced) and follow the conventions of formal, written English.

Part 2: Reflection Essay

Watch the video of *and/or* read "The Danger of a Single Story" (transcript below) by Chimamanda Adichie.

Write a personal reflection on the video/transcript. Describe a time when you felt like others had a single story of you. Or perhaps the source made you think of a time when you realized you had a single story of someone else. In the conclusion of your essay, explain why it is important that we see people as more complex than these single stories.

Your reflection should be a multi-paragraph response of at least one page. You should use MLA format with a header, Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double spaced.

Because this is a personal reflection, it is acceptable to use personal pronouns in your writing, but try to keep a formal, academic tone.

Part 3: Honors English II Extension

*If you are pursuing the honors track, this additional component is a prerequisite to achieve good standing by the end of the school year.

During the weeks of your summer break, you'll need to read some nonfiction current event articles from high-quality news sources.[1] For each article, you must complete a 5W summary and create an accurate and complete MLA works cited entry. The articles need to be evenly distributed throughout the summer and demonstrate that you were reading a little every week. In other words, you cannot simply try to read twenty articles in the last week of July. In addition to making you miserable, that would defy the spirit and purpose of the assignment! Here are the basic grading criteria:

- For an A, you must read and complete a 5W summary for at least 30 articles; ~3/week.
- For a B, you must read and complete a 5W summary for at least 25 articles; ~2.5/week.
- For a C, you must read and complete a 5W summary for at least 20 articles; ~2/week.
- For a D, you must read and complete a 5W summary for at least 15 articles; ~1.5/week
- For an F, you don't have to read and complete any 5W summaries!

You should use the template provided on page 9 to complete your own summaries.

Assignment submission:

You will submit your assignments digitally upon our return to school in August. Please write each essay in its own Google Doc. If you are completing the Honors assignment, copy the blank 5W summary templates into one Google Doc so you can submit them all at once.

[1] As a rule of thumb for determining if the source is high quality, the publication should also appear in print. If it does not, it is suspect. Another great source for nonfiction current event articles is https://newsela.com/

Simplicity

by William Zinsser

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.

Who can understand the viscous language of everyday American commerce and enterprise: the business letter, the interoffice memo, the corporation report, the notice from the bank explaining its latest "simplified" statement? What member of an insurance or medical plan can decipher the brochure that tells him what his costs and benefits are? What father or mother can put together a child's toy - on Christmas Eve or any other eve - from the instructions on the box? Our national tendency is to inflate and thereby sound important. The airline pilot who wakes us to announce that he is presently anticipating experiencing considerable weather wouldn't dream of saying that there's a storm ahead and it may get bumpy. The sentence is too simple - there must be something wrong with it.

But the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components. Every word that serves no function, every long word that could be a short word, every adverb which carries the same meaning that is already in the verb, every passive construction that leaves the reader unsure of who is doing what - these are the thousand and one adulterants that weaken the strength of a sentence. And they usually occur, ironically, in proportion to education and rank.

During the late 1960s the president of a major university wrote a letter to mollify the alumni after a spell of campus unrest. "You are probably aware," he began, "that we have been experiencing very considerable potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction on issues only partially related." He meant that the students had been hassling them about different things. I was far more upset by the president's English than by the students' potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction. I would have preferred the presidential approach oaken by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he tried to convert into English his own government's memos, such as this blackout order of 1942:

> "Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination."
>
> "Tell them," Roosevelt said, "that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the windows."

Simplify, simplify. Thoreau said it, as we are so often reminded, and no American writer more consistently practiced what he preached. Open Walden to any page and you will find a man saying in a plain and orderly way what is on his mind:

> "I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than

> when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert."

How can the rest of us achieve such enviable freedom from clutter? The answer is to clear our heads of clutter. Clear thinking becomes clear writing: one can't exist without the other. It is impossible for a muddy thinker to write good English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there is no sin so grave, for he will not easily be lured back.

Who is this elusive creature the reader? He is a person with an attention span of about twenty seconds. He is assailed on every side by forces competing for his time: by newspapers and magazines, by television and radio and stereo, by his wife and children and pets, by his house and his yard and all the gadgets that he has bought to keep them spruce, and by that most potent of competitors, sleep. The man snoozing in his chair with an unfinished magazine open on his lap is a man who was being given too much unnecessary trouble by the writer.

It won't do to say that the snoozing reader is too dumb or too lazy to keep pace with the train of thought. My sympathies are with him. If the reader is lost, it is generally because the writer has not been careful enough to keep him on the path.

This carelessness can take any number of forms. Perhaps a sentence is so excessively cluttered that the reader, hacking his way through the verbiage, simply doesn't know what it means. Perhaps a sentence has been so shoddily constructed that the reader could read it in any of several ways. Perhaps the writer has switched pronouns in mid-sentence, or has switched tenses, so the reader loses track of who is talking or when the action took place. Perhaps Sentence B is not a logical sequel to Sentence A - the writer, in whose head the connection is clear, has not bothered to provide the missing link. Perhaps the writer has used an important word incorrectly by not taking the trouble to look it up. He may think that "sanguine" and "sanguinary" mean the same thing, but the difference is a bloody big one. The reader can only infer (speaking of big differences) what the writer is trying to imply.

Faced with these obstacles, the reader is at first a remarkably tenacious bird. He blames himself - he obviously missed something, and he goes back over the mystifying sentence, or over the whole paragraph, piecing it out like an ancient rule, making guesses and moving on. But he won't do this for long. The writer is making him work too hard, and the reader will look for one who is better at his craft.

The writer must therefore constantly ask himself: What am I trying to say? Surprisingly often, he doesn't know. Then he must look at what he has written and ask: Have I said it? Is it clear to someone encountering the subject for the first time? If it's not, it is because some fuzz has worked its way into the machinery. The clear writer is a person clear-headed enough to see this stuff for what it is: fuzz.

I don't mean that some people are born clear-headed and are therefore natural writers, whereas others are naturally fuzzy and will never write well. Thinking clearly is a conscious act that the writer must force upon himself, just as if he were embarking on any other project that requires logic: adding up a laundry list or doing an algebra problem. Good writing doesn't come naturally, though most people obviously think it does. The professional writer is forever being bearded by strangers who say that they'd like to "try a little writing sometime" when they retire from their real profession. Good writing takes self-discipline and, very often, self-knowledge.

Many writers, for instance, can't stand to throw anything away. Their sentences are littered with words that mean essentially the same thing and with phrases which make a point that is implicit in what they have already said. When students give me these littered sentences I beg them to select from the surfeit of words the few that most precisely fit what they want to say. Choose one, I plead, from among the three almost identical adjectives. Get rid of the unnecessary adverbs. Eliminate "in a funny sort of way" and other such qualifiers they do no useful work.

The students look stricken - I am taking all their wonderful words away. I am only taking their superfluous words away, leaving what is organic and strong

"But," one of my worst offenders confessed, "I never can get rid of anything - you should see my room." (I didn't take him up on the offer.) "I have two lamps where I only need one, but I can't decide which one I like better, so I keep them both." He went on to enumerate his duplicated or unnecessary objects, and over the weeks ahead I went on throwing away his duplicated and unnecessary words. By the end of the term - a term that he found acutely painful - his sentences were clean.

"I've had to change my whole approach to writing," he told me. "Now I have to think before I start every sentence and I have to think about every word." The very idea amazed him. Whether his room also looked better I never found out.

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time. Or the third. Keep thinking and rewriting until you say what you want to say.

From: Zinsser, W., 1980. Simplicity. *In* On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction. New York: Harper & Row. Copyright 1980 by William K. Zinsser. Reprinted by permission of the author.

In: Miles, Thomas H., Critical Thinking and Writing for Science and Technology. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, 290-294.

Taken from: http://www.as.wvu.edu/~tmiles/zinsser.html

“The Danger of a Single Story”

adapted from the TEDTalk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books. I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out.

Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to.

...

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So, the year I turned eight, we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner, my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday, we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S., I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S., whenever Africa came up, people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I think of myself now as African... So, after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images,I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family. …

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleecing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then, I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself.

So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

…

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called "American Psycho" — and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers. Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation. But it would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. This is not because I am a better person than that student, but because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. I had read Tyler and Updike and Steinbeck and Gaitskill. I did not have a single story of America.

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Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

Honors 5W Summary Template

Article #

Article Title/Headline:

Article Source (Link):

Date Published:

Date Read:

WHO:	
WHAT:	
WHEN:	
WHERE:	
WHY:	
One sentence summary:	