

Course: AP English Language and Composition\*

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Welcome to a challenging course of reading, writing and rhetoric. This entry-level college-level English course, will “enable students to write effectively and confidently in their college courses across the curriculum and in their professional and personal lives” (The English Language and Composition Course Description, 2009-2010). [C1] But to write, and to write well, one must first develop the skills necessary to read critically and analytically. Therefore, the predominant focus of class readings will be rich and complex non-fiction texts, including personal, expository, analytical and argumentative works from a variety of authors and historical contexts. [C6] Additionally, fiction and occasional works of poetry are selected for their richness in rhetoric and linguistic technique, and film and artistic works are included in the curriculum to develop a discerning and critical eye. [C7]

The students kick-start their AP Language experience with a summer assignment sent through Remind and available on CGHS website.

1. Common Read:

- a. Everyone read this year’s **Pulitzer Prize** winner for fiction:  
<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/colson-whitehead>
  - i. Note from Penguin, RandomHouse, *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead introduces Cora, a young African American woman who journeys to freedom from the antebellum South on a fantastically imagined physical—rather than metaphorical—railroad. Told in episodes, the places and people Cora encounters provide her and the reader with profound revelations of the impact of enslavement. Given the enduring struggle of this country to grapple with the treatment of Africans in America, *The Underground Railroad* is a critical text for opening up conversations about the lasting legacies of slavery. Through Cora, the reader is reminded of the necessity of hope, of rebellion, and of freedom. This book contains scenes of violence. Please email me if you require an alternate assignment.
- b. Answer the following questions (from Penguin) aligned with CCSS 11-12:
  - i. In South Carolina, celebrations among the slaves are still engineered by whites, but free people are able to gather and spend time together at will. Compare these free gatherings to those on the Randall plantation for Jockey’s birthday, and later at the Valentine farm. What do these gatherings suggest about community, kinship, and joy? What is significant about these gatherings at the Valentine farm?

- ii. Cora spends her time in North Carolina reading in the attic. Her reading material includes a Bible and almanacs, which “Cora adored . . . for containing the entire world” (183). How does the act of reading, and of literacy, help Cora be free? What might the significance of what she reads suggest about her growing understanding of the world? Think, too, about how the Bible and religion are used by Ethel and Ridgeway to justify slavery: “If God had not meant for Africans to be enslaved, they wouldn’t be in chains” (195), and about Cora’s observation: “Slavery is a sin when whites were put to the yoke, but not the African” (182).
  - iii. Ridgeway explains his position as follows: “I’m a notion of order. The slave that disappears--it’s a notion, too. Of hope. Undoing what I do so that a slave the next plantation over gets an idea that it can run, too. If we allow that, we accept the flaw in the imperative. And I refuse” (223). What is the “flaw in the imperative,” and why is it important for Ridgeway and the broader institution of enslavement that relies on Black bodies, that the flaw is exterminated? Why is the hope of freedom so dangerous?
  - iv. Cora muses about the Underground Railroad, “Who are you after you finish something this magnificent--in constructing it you have also journeyed through it, to the other side” (303–304). Critique the significance of how each person who worked on the Railroad—from station agents to conductors—were affected by their work. How is each person a reflection of what awaits Cora in the next part of their journey? In what ways, also, do these people understand resistance, agency, and responsibility?
- c. We will do more work with this when we return to school.
2. Access the following link:
- a. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/02/learning/the-ninth-annual-new-york-times-summer-reading-contest.html>
  - b. Submit one entry to NYT this summer. The summer reading contest runs from 6/15 to 8/24. Turn in a copy of your entry the first week of school.
  - c. If NYT publishes your work, you will receive 1<sup>st</sup> quarter extra credit!