

***Be a student of the world.***

*One of the major goals of the AP Language and Composition Course is for the instruction to help facilitate informed citizenship. According to the College Board, this course “serves the larger goal of cultivating the critical literacy skills students need for lifelong learning. Beyond their academic lives, students should be able to use the literacy skills practiced in the course for personal satisfaction and responsible engagement in civic life” (College Board 2014).*

*Being an informed citizen is key not only for success with the argument-based prompts on the exam but also for acquisition of a knowledge base that enhances ability to think more critically and make more informed arguments in general.*

This assignment will be graded. Choose a folder with three prongs that will hold regular loose-leaf paper to keep this assignment. Organize your folder neatly, creating tabs for part one, two, and three.

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**Part ONE**

**Read *And Still We Rise* by Miles Corwin.**

While reading, annotate and/or make notes that would help you to later cite textual evidence to defend your position on the issue(s) stated below. These annotations and notes will not be graded. They are for you to use later in class, so consider the work preparation for AP Lang.

**STATEMENT TO CONSIDER:**

If you have watched the news or read popular news magazines or seen major websites’ newsfeed headlines, you will have heard that America’s schools are in crisis—that we rank well behind other industrialized countries in academic test scores – that our schools are in desperate need of reform if we are to compete for jobs and advancement on the world stage.

To the contrary, the following is an excerpt from “School Work” by Nicholas Lemann, published in *The New York Times*:

“The school-reform story draws its moral power from the heartbreakingly low quality of the education that many poor, urban, and minority children in public schools get. This problem isn’t new...The gap in educational achievement between black and white children narrowed during the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and has been mainly stuck since then, but it’s misleading to suggest that the gap is getting bigger. The story line on education, at this ill-tempered moment in American life, expresses what might be called the Noah’s Ark view of life: a vast territory looks so impossibly corrupted that it must be washed away, so that we can begin its activities anew, on finer, higher, firmer principles. One should treat any perception that something so large is so completely awry with suspicion and consider that it might not be true—especially before acting on it.”

**ASSIGNMENT:** Is the idea of "America's failing schools" a justifiable crisis as test scores and drop-out rates suggest, or is it just a popular cultural narrative bolstered by statistics and human entities (such as teachers' unions)? Then, determine your assessment of “America’s failing schools” as fiction or non-fiction, then determine who is primarily responsible for this story? Government? American Education Model? Teachers? Parents? Communities? Media? Students?

1. After you finish reading the book, research these issues and determine your stance. Select and print four editorials, commentaries, or essays: two that support your view and two that directly oppose or challenge it. Each editorial should not exceed two pages in length and should be put into your folder.
2. Read the editorials then annotate the margins (the amount of preparation is up to you). Write a rhetorical précis\* and a personal reaction to each of the editorials/essays. These should be typed in MLA format and put into your folder.

**Part TWO**

Read *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Tip: Skip the first section (“The Custom House”) and begin with Chapter 1 (“The Prison Door”).

While reading, annotate and/or make notes that would help you to later cite textual evidence to defend your position on the issue(s) stated below. These annotations and notes will not be graded. They are for you to use later in class, so consider the work preparation for AP Lang.

**STATEMENT TO CONSIDER:**

DO NOT waste your time reading summaries (e.g. Spark Notes) for this text. Though the story itself is a classic work of fiction, we read this text both to consider the moral issues raised by Hawthorne (and their application today) and to examine Hawthorne’s language. Every year, students in this course find pre-1900 works considerably more difficult to understand than works post-1900. Immersion in the language of this work of fiction will provide you with much-needed experience that will assist you in understanding and analyzing works of similar difficulty.

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Though our country has changed considerably since Hawthorne penned this text in 1850, differences in morality and impacts of personal morals on societal ethics still greatly influence our American and global community. To what extent do you think moral beliefs should impact governmental policy (ex. Domestic and foreign aid, etc.)? Now, consider the same question not in the context of government but as a private citizen—to what extent should our individual moral beliefs impact our consideration of others’ actions (particularly the actions of those whose morals differ from our own).

After you finish reading the book, determine your stance on **a particular facet of this issue**.

*Now, time to do some evidence gathering. Evidence-gathering is intended to foster a cultural awareness of the world and spark a quest for more knowledge that will benefit you as you transition into college. Knowing more about the world around us enables us to support more informed and logical arguments and ultimately to promote more civil discourse. Your evidence gathering is going to come from the acronym, REHUGO:*

R = reading

E = entertainment

H = history

U = universal concepts/truths

G = government & current events

O = observations & personal experiences

**Your REHUGO collection requires you to collect, analyze, and expand your cultural knowledge through reading, watching, and listening. This assignment will help strengthen your awareness of the world around you while also improving your ability to write and think and connect critically many important social issues to the argument you’re making. See the criteria chart on the next page.**

As seen in the chart below, you’ll be creating 4 paragraphs total.

- One is required, using *The Scarlet Letter* as the “R”.
- Three are your choice. You’ll select three other categories from REHUGO and a genre from each to help you write the other three paragraphs.

REHUGO CATEGORIES	GENRE	TASK
R (reading)	Fiction: <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (required)	<p><b>Required paragraph</b></p> <p>From the genre column, write a Toulmin paragraph connecting your stance to an argument made by Hawthorne in <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>. Quote or summarize evidence and warrant the data.</p> <p><b>“Your Choice” paragraphs</b></p> <p>Choose three other categories besides R from REHUGO.</p> <p>Then choose one genre from the genre column for each of those categories.</p> <p>Then write a Toulmin paragraph for each (for example, you might choose a protest song from E, a significant invention from H, and a personal anecdote from O).</p> <p>You should have FOUR paragraphs in the end. Type up your paragraphs using MLA formatting. Use the genre column as your headings:</p> <p><u>Example:</u></p> <p><i>The Scarlet Letter</i></p> <p>[Reminder: A Toulmin paragraph is a paragraph structured as a claim followed by supporting evidence and a warrant in which the claim and data are connected to the argument you’re making.]</p>
E (entertainment)	Documentary Film	
	Protest Song Analysis (the link below is an example of protest songs. There are of course many other songs like “This is America by Gambino—have fun with this).  <a href="https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/BornintheUSA_final.pdf">https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/BornintheUSA_final.pdf</a>	
H (history)	Philosophical Movement	
	Historical Event	
	Significant Invention	
U (universal truths)	Famous Quotes  Shakespearean Quotes	
G (government and current events)	Laws  Current news events  Popular culture events	
O (observation and personal experiences)	Anecdotes about someone else’s situation  Personal anecdote (your own story)	

### **Part THREE**

Compile a bibliography of all the sources you consulted during your research on these two issues. Type and print it using MLA formatting, and include it in your folder.

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### **Part FOUR**

Purchase / acquire ***Thank You For Arguing, Revised and Updated Edition: What Aristotle, Lincoln, And Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion*** by Jay Heinrichs

You will need this book the first week of class.

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**\*Directions for writing a rhetorical précis and a Toulmin paragraph are attached.**

## Directions for the Rhetorical Précis

The précis is a highly structured four-sentence paragraph that records the essential elements of a unit of spoken or written discourse, including the name of the speaker/writer, the context of the delivery, the major assertion, the mode of development and/or support, the stated and/or apparent purpose, and the relationship established between the speaker/writer and the audience (the last element is intended to identify the tone of the work). Each of the four sentences requires specific information; you are also encouraged to integrate brief quotations to convey the author's sense of style and tone. Format is as follows:

1. Name of author [optional: a phrase describing author], genre and title of work [date and additional publishing information in parenthesis]; a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "suggest," "imply," "claim," etc.); and a THAT clause containing the major assertion (thesis statement) of the work.
2. An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis, usually in chronological order – always identifying the rhetorical modes and strategies employed.
3. A statement of the author's apparent purpose followed (introduce with the infinitive "to").
4. A description of the intended audience and the relationship the author establishes with it.

### Further Details and Explanation of Purpose:

The first sentence is probably the most difficult. Be careful to employ a rhetorically accurate verb followed by a THAT clause, avoiding the use of more general words such as "writes" and "states." The THAT clause is designed to demand a complete statement: a grammatical subject (the topic of the essay) and predicate (the claim that is made about that topic). If the THAT clause is not employed, you will end up allowing "about" and "how" to slip out in stating the thesis: i.e., "Sheridan Baker writes about attitudes in writing" or "... states how attitudes affect writing" -- neither of which reports what he claims to be true about attitudes.

The second sentence is less structured. Sometimes it works best to report the order of development: "The author develops this assertion by applying these techniques to two poems, by providing definitions, and by explaining the history of each approach." A more general statement may also work in the second sentence: "The author develops this idea by comparing and contrasting the lives of these two Civil War heroes."

The third sentence sometimes inadvertently restates the thesis: "The author's purpose is to prove that..." Remember that one's purpose is always to put forward a thesis, but there are others as well. The infinitive "to" phrase should transcend a phrase such as "Her purpose is to inform;" look beyond such a simplistic response to assess what the author wants the audience to do or to feel as a result of reading the work.

In the fourth sentence, you need to answer how the language of the work excludes certain audiences (non-specialists would not understand the terminology; children would not understand the irony) in order to see that the author did make certain assumptions about the pre-existing knowledge of the audience. This sentence may also report the author's tone.

### Student Produced Example:

In her essay "Women Who Write too Much" from *Remembered Rapture* (1999), Bell Hooks suggests that all dissident writers, particularly black female writers, face enormous time pressures: if they are not prodigious, they are never noticed by mainstream publishers. She supports her position first by describing her early writing experiences that taught her to "not be afraid of the writing process"; second, by explaining her motives for writing, including "political activism"; and lastly, by affirming her argument, stressing that people must strategically schedule their writing and "make much of that time." Her two-pronged purpose is to respond to critics and to encourage minority writers to develop their own voice. Although at times her writing seems almost didactic, Hooks ultimately establishes a companionable relationship with her audience of both critics and women who seek to improve the effectiveness of their own writing.

### Toulmin Paragraph Example

**Prompt:** Violent video games played in public places are a tiny fraction of the media violence to which modern American children are exposed. Tiny - and judging from the record of this case, not very violent compared to what is available to children on television and in movie theaters today. Richard Posner

Many argue that this pervasion of violence in the media has led to the increasing violence we experience in our real lives, arguing that media should be regulated. Do you agree with this premise? Develop your own stance on the regulation of violence in the media.

**The factors leading to real-life acts of violence are complex and cannot be diminished to one area like violence in the media; in fact, most people watch violent video games every day and never become killers. Take, for example, the Columbine school shooting in Colorado in 1999. Those who argue that violence in media has led to violence in real life often reference this school shooting pointing out the boys' obsession with violent video games. The boys, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were heavy gamers who spent hours of their lives in their parents' basements sheltered from reality buried in their fantastical violent video games. However, according to Andrew Gumbel (writer for *The Guardian*), the boys were troubled by far more than video games. They were bullied social outcasts and Dylan appeared to struggle with depression. Eric was described as the mastermind of the killing spree while Dylan appeared to be an easily affected teen desperate to rid himself of his despair. Sure, the violent media may have played a role in turning the boys into their own real-life monsters, but this is one small part of a much more complicated story of two different boys with different problems with a twisted motive to enact terror upon the American way of life. To regulate an entire industry because of the behavior of two boys, whose troubles appear to be far more complex than their obsession with video games, would be an infringement on the freedom of the millions of other Americans who clearly understand the difference between shooting up the enemy in a video game versus living and functionally normally in the real world.**

Did you notice the structure of the paragraph? It begins with the stance/claim. What follows is the evidence/data—did you notice the evidence as an example of historical evidence? Can you tell when the warrant begins?