

## A.P. English Language and Composition Summer Assignment

Dear Future English Language and Composition Student,

This class deals primarily with critical reading of non-fiction sources and the art of rhetorical argument, and applying critical analysis to those sources. The following assignments are intended to familiarize you with these types of sources and to help you begin to sharpen the critical skills you will need to succeed in this class and the Language and Composition AP test. Prior to the first day of class, we are asking you to have done the following:

1. Read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, available from the library.
2. Listen to **at least 3** episodes of either “**This American Life**” or “**Radio Lab**”, which are weekly radio programs that appear on National Public Radio. They may be heard on the radio at the same time each week on 91.7 FM, streaming on the internet at [www.thisamericanlife.org](http://www.thisamericanlife.org) or [www.radiolab.org](http://www.radiolab.org) , or downloaded as a podcast. In each episode, these shows connect multiple stories together around a common theme. For each episode you listen to, write an analysis, citing evidence from the show, of how each of the smaller segments within the show connects to that episode’s broader theme. Then write a reflection on the importance of the theme to yourself personally or to society as a whole.
3. On the first day of class, bring in a well written response to the following essay prompt from this year’s AP Language and Composition exam:

The passage below is an excerpt from *Empire of Illusion* by Chris Hedges. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on Hedges’ argument that “the most essential skill ... is artifice.” Use appropriate, specific evidence to illustrate and develop your position.

The most essential skill in political theater and a consumer culture is artifice. Political leaders, who use the tools of mass propaganda to create a sense of faux intimacy with citizens, no longer need to be competent, sincere, or honest. They need only to appear to have these qualities. Most of all, they need a story, a personal narrative. The reality of the narrative is irrelevant. It can be completely at odds with the facts. The consistency and emotional appeal of the story are paramount. Those who are best at deception succeed. Those who have not mastered the art of entertainment, who fail to create a narrative or do not have one furnished for them by their handlers, are ignored. They become “unreal.” An image-based culture communicates through narratives, pictures and pseudo-drama

See you next year,

Mr. Hislop

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