

AP Language and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Read the complete text. Choose ONE of the following questions to answer in a well organized, grammatically correct essay. **Be sure to cite specific evidence to support your answer using proper MLA format for all citations.** Your essay will be due on the first day of class.

1. Choose any person from the book (**except Walter MacMillian**) to research and write a detailed explanation and/or description addressing the following
 - Explain why you chose that person.
 - Were they released? Were their sentences lessened? Did they die in prison?
 - If they were released or given a lesser sentence, why did that occur? What changed?
 - What they are doing now and how they have been affected by the criminal justice system.
2. The book does not address the perspective of Rhonda Morrison's family. Why do you suppose that is? Consider Stevenson's purpose and intended audience as you prepare your answer. Be sure to include specific textual evidence to support your response.
3. The theme of redemption is evident in Walter MacMillan's story when he is proven innocent. How is this theme also present in Stevenson's story? Explain how this theme is or is not present in at least one other person's story from the book.
4. The theme of just and unjust punishment is a major theme of the book. As Catholics, we are called to uphold an ethic of life regardless of guilt or innocence. Is there any justifiable cause for a death penalty? Explain and support your answer with specific textual evidence from *Just Mercy* as well as other sources. Be sure to cite all references.
5. Walter MacMillan's story parallels Tom Robinson's storyline in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Explain the connection and use specific textual evidence from both books to support your answer. Explain how the setting (time and place) affects both Tom and Walter?
6. Throughout *Just Mercy*, there are many examples of oppression (systemic racism, poverty, lack of mental health services, and others) How might events have turned out differently for the men on death row or the women or the juveniles in prison had they not faced such barriers? Choose one of the barriers and research to see if and/or how they have changed since *Just Mercy* was written.

Words Like Loaded Pistols by Sam Leith

Read pp. 1–80. Choose one of the following passages from this first section and write a one-page response to the passage. Questions to consider: What is the meaning of the passage? What is the author’s point or message in this passage? To what extent do I agree/disagree with the passage. While this response should adhere to the conventions of correct mechanics, usage, and grammar, this paper is more informal in tone than the *Just Mercy* assignment. Your response will be due on the first day of class.

1. “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (49).
2. “The wise persuader starts from one or two commonplaces he knows he has in common with his audience--and, where possible, arrives at one too” (65).
3. “Logos usually takes its place as number three in the trinity of persuasive appeals--the small voice of reason blown hither and thither by the emotional muddle of ethos and pathos” (73).
4. “Rhetoric, as cannot be repeated too often, is the imperfect tool of an imperfect world” (73).

College Essay/Personal Narrative

It is in your best interest to get a rough draft of this started before our first day of class in August. In order for us to get a sense of your skill as writers, and to help you get a head start on the college application process, you will submit a formal draft of a college application essay/personal narrative essay.

- If applying to college, please be sure to include the prompt and application for which this essay is being used.
- If you aren’t yet sure about your plans, please choose a prompt from the Common Application. These prompts serve as excellent prompts for a personal narrative essay, not just as application essays.

You will receive a grade for this essay as well as feedback on how to improve it. This draft should be completed prior to the first class meeting of the year.