

AP Language and Composition - 2020

Summer Drop Out

Carefully read the instructions for parts A (Summer Drop Out) and B (Of Friendship) below. After each is a writing assignment that responds to the activity and readings. Both writing assignments are due the first day of class.

PART A Introduction:

Undoubtedly, some of the great questions of our day revolve around the fact we are increasingly being subjected to mass media and smartphone technologies of various kinds—social media, Netflix, 24/7 news, video games, wearables, GPS, and laptops in schools, are just some of the ways that our lives have become saturated with media. Community leaders, parents, teachers, and indeed, many students, have become suspicious of media technology's ubiquity and overbearing influence on our daily experiences. Perhaps the most drastic reaction to this contemporary problem is to “drop out”—that is, simply refuse, indefinitely, or for an allotted time, to interact with new media technology. This means that one goes on with her day without checking social media, watching Netflix, playing games on her phone, or wearing her Fitbit. The point is to experience life without having recourse to our familiar and dependable media technology.

Assignment:

This summer you will be asked to “drop out” on two separate occasions. When you decide to drop out and for how long is up to you. *You should try to drop out for at least 72 hours, but it is recommended that you try for an entire week at some point.* Obviously, some of our daily requirements necessitate access to media technology—as part of your summer job, or to communicate with a family member, for instance—yet everyone ought to be able to sacrifice some kind of media technology they are accustomed to using. Each time you drop out you will record your experiences in a notebook. You should answer questions like:

- What did you give up?
- What are the hardest and easiest parts about “dropping out?”
- Do you go about your day differently without media technology? Do you think different thoughts? Do you have different experiences?
- What do you miss most about your interaction with media technology? Is there something that you simply could not give up? Why?

After or during your “dropping out,” read the following two articles about the influence of new media technology:

Nicholas Carr, “Is Google Making us Stupid?”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/> James Bowman, “Is Stupid Making us Google?”

<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/is-stupid-making-us-google>

***In addition to addressing the above prompts, you should also explain why you agree or disagree that “dropping out” is a worthwhile activity for people. And you need to carefully consider one main point from each of the readings. This writing should be between 1,000 and 1,250 words. ***

Of Friendship

PART B

Introduction:

Another critique of new media, social media especially, is that if it doesn't "ruin" friendships, it at least makes them more superficial, ephemeral, or shallow. In considering how dropping out may have affected your relationships with others, I would like you to read a longer essay that meditates on the importance of friendship. Michel de Montaigne wrote before the advent of modern media, even before newspapers, around 1580.

Assignment:

This is perhaps the greatest examination of what constitutes a "perfect friendship" by the first great essayist, Michel de Montaigne. You can find the essay here: <http://naomigryn.com/Ebooks/Of-Friendship-Montaigne.pdf>

After reading the essay, write a short response that includes a careful examination of the following:

- What is Montaigne's argument? In other words, what does he think makes up a perfect friendship?
- How does Montaigne craft his argument? In other words, discuss the methods, means, and tools he employs in constructing his argument. Use specific references from the text when considering this prompt.
- Finally, do you think Montaigne would consider today's social media friendships "true friendships?" Why or why not?

This writing should be shorter in length—about 700-1,000 words. **It is important that you come up with a creative title for each writing you do.**

Before you return to school you will have "dropped out" twice, recorded your experiences in a notebook, read the three essays, and written two responses based on the experiences and readings.

Have fun and see you in the Fall!!