

**140: AP Language and Composition**  
**Mr. Aaron Thomas Abell**  
**Summer Reading and Writing Assignment, 2010**  
**“The Formation of the Self”**

Welcome! I would like to start by thanking you for choosing AP Language and Composition for your senior English course. When I think of AP English, I think of an elite group of students who are committed to growth in writing and reading skills. If this applies to you, then you won't be horrified by what follows. I intend for the information below to provide opportunities for you to maintain and maybe even nurture your ability to analyze texts and compose original works.

Here is a condensed schedule of assignments. Thorough explanations of all assignments follow.

- Monday, June 21<sup>th</sup>: brief English class autobiography (20 points)
- Monday, June 28<sup>st</sup>: personal identity essay (50 points)
- First day of classes: book quotes (60 points)
- Middle of first full week of classes: book essay (100 points)

1.) Write a short autobiography of yourself **as an English student**. Make it cohesive and honest. Basically, tell me how you operate in English classrooms, what you enjoy about English classes, what frustrates you about them, etc. I ask you to do this only because I want to get to know you and the way that you operate in English classes. Write **about a full page to 1.5 pages** in which you address these questions or other issues relevant to your life as an English student. **I will only grade this one on completeness, specificity, perceived level of honesty (don't write a bunch of insincere nonsense), and GRAMMAR / EDITING.** Get used to submitting a clean presentation for all assignments in this class. This assignment will be worth 20 points.

**Please submit this essay to me via email at [abella@saintxfac.com](mailto:abella@saintxfac.com) no later than Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup>.**

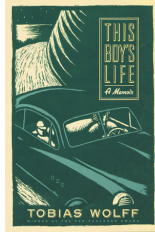
2.) The summer reading assignment, which I will introduce below, deals with a young man's attempt to create an identity, a sense of self—this is a universal theme. You have experienced it yourself over the last three years of high school and earlier. Thus, I want you to write an essay in which you **assert some key facet of your identity**. Think about some quality, belief, strength, weakness, interest, etc. that defines you. In an essay of about two or three pages, explain it thoroughly. Unlike assignment #1, I want you to focus on the crafting of this one...I will grade it more thoroughly for quality and content. Below, find a list of “do's and don'ts.”

<b>Do:</b>	<b>Don't:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be specific.</li> <li>• Use specific details, scenes, anecdotes, examples, and other pieces of specific material to illustrate your overall idea.</li> <li>• Attempt to create a unique, creative, assertive voice. <b>1<sup>st</sup> person is acceptable for this essay. This one is about you!</b></li> <li>• Maintain some sort of cohesive topic.</li> <li>• Organize your thoughts into a flowing process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be general, bland, cliché, or vague.</li> <li>• Rely on nebulous claims or unspecific universalisms.</li> <li>• Write blandly or stiffly. Or with excessive informality.</li> <li>• Tell me a bunch of random stuff about you—this essay, like others you may have written—should maintain focus.</li> </ul>

**Please submit this essay to me via email at [abella@saintxfac.com](mailto:abella@saintxfac.com) no later than Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup>. It should be approximately 2-3 pages in length. The grading rubric will involve the following:**

- 10 points—choose a specific, cohesive topic.
- 10 points—organize detail into a cohesive, flowing whole.
- 10 points—include specific illustrative examples, anecdotes, etc.
- 10 points—write with engaging and unique voice—including specific and vivid word choice, varied sentence structure, etc.
- 10 points—edit and proofread meticulously.

3.) Obtain and read a copy of *This Boy's Life* by Tobias Wolff.



After you have read it, complete the following assignments:

A.) The AP Language and Composition course is ultimately an exploration of writing skills and writing style. We learn to write well by reading the works of established, professional writers. With this goal in mind, simply choose three brief passages from the book that you enjoy on a *stylistic level*...in other words, passages that are well-written. Include the following steps for each of them:

- Set up the context in terms of plot (5 points)
- Quote the passage or thoroughly summarize it if it's too long to type out...CITE (5 points)
- Thoroughly explain what it is about the writing of the passage that you find effective, enjoyable, or captivating. The central focus of the class is this: RHETORIC, the use of language effectively. What is it about the selected quotation or passage that makes it RHETORICALLY interesting? (10 points)

Thus, you will have 3 paragraphs x 20 points each = 60 points total for this assignment.

**This is an assessment of your reading, so make sure that you choose three passages from *different parts of the book*. If you turn in three from the first 20 pages, what do you think I'll assume?**

**Submit this assignment on the first day of classes.**

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B.) **Due during the first full week of classes (but I'm giving the assignment to you now so that you can consider the topic as you read:** write an essay in which you examine some key statement of the book in terms of *the theme of identity formation*. Some possible topics might include the following:

- A revelation about the overall growth of the character (or lack thereof)
- An observation about some tool or method that he uses to form his sense of self
- A contributing factor to his identity formation
- An obstacle that hinders his identity formation.

Regardless, stick with the central theme, and write an interesting essay. I will judge the work based on the following standards:

- Original, interesting, insightful thesis developed throughout the essay (20 points)
  - Fluid, engaging organization (use transitions between paragraphs and write your essay as an interesting thought process) (20 points)
  - Use of **QUOTED DETAIL** from throughout the book...show your knowledge of its content by quoting from different sections! Shoot for three or so quotations, and don't recycle those chosen for previous assignment (30 points)
  - Strong voice including varied sentence structure and strong word choice (NOTE: words like "thing," "positive," "negative," "good," "bad," etc. are weak; also, strive for action verbs wherever possible) (10 points)
  - Thorough and consistent editing and proofreading (20 points)...**100 points total!**
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**\*\*\*NOTE #1:** I am aware of the fact that online summaries and analyses of *This Boy's Life* can be found; a movie version has also been made. However, let me make something clear: if your first inclination is to seek these out instead of reading the assignment and responding to it through original thinking and writing, you do not belong in an AP English course. Please drop the course as soon as possible if your initial instinct is to find shortcuts.

**\*\*\*NOTE #2:** Please feel free to email me at [abella@saintxfac.com](mailto:abella@saintxfac.com) with any questions that arise. I am happy to consider potential topics and give feedback before you start writing if you wish.