



AP Language & Composition



Mrs. Reyes, Room 3

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Summer Reading Assignment

Congratulations! You are enrolled in Advanced Placement Language and Composition next year. This will be a challenging course designed to prepare you for the rigor of critical reading, writing, and thinking at a college level.

Over the summer, the required reading has two components: one book and one essay.

- **Book Component:** Select a book from the attached list; it is comprised of several fiction and non-fiction texts. Select any one that interests you. After reading, complete the attached *Major Works Data Sheet* assignment. You may write on the page, or write/type your answers on a separate piece of paper.
- **Essay Component:** Read the essay “Mother Tongue” (included) and answer *seven analytical questions* (also included). Write or type your responses on a separate sheet of paper.

The requirement is for you to read ONE book and ONE essay (included), however, feel free to read more if you can. AP Language focuses heavily on essays and how writers use language; therefore, reading more will benefit you greatly. Additionally, please note that I am looking for *quality* responses when you write about the texts.

Students who do not complete the summer assignment will NOT be dropped from this class; however this assignment counts for 10% of your first quarter grade. Therefore, if you elect to not do this work, the highest grade you will be able to receive for the 1st Quarter will be a B; assuming, of course, that all other work is done well and you are growing as a critical reader, writer, and thinker.

I look forward to working with you during the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Reyes

Included in this packet:

- ✓ **Book Selection List**
- ✓ **Major Works Data Sheet for Book Analysis**
- ✓ **Response to Text Questions for the Essay**
- ✓ **Required Reading Essay: “Mother Tongue,” by Amy Tan**

AP Language Book Selections

The following titles are the reading selections for the AP Language and Composition Summer Reading assignment. This class is highly focused and structured around non-fiction texts, however, students should also be well read and versed in classic literature as well. With that said, students are **REQUIRED** to read **ONE** of texts listed below (you decide which interests you most); however, it is highly recommend that you select one from each column—one fiction and one non-fiction. The titles in bold should be available at the Hoover Library. The other choices can be purchased at Barnes and Noble, downloaded from Amazon.com, or checked out from your local library.

After reading the book, fill out the Major Works Data sheet, which is attached. I am looking for quality responses, ones that go “off the page” and look at what the text reveals about the world we live in. You may write on the page, or write/type your answers on a separate piece of paper. You only need to complete one Major Works Data Sheet, even if you read more than one book.

Fiction	Non-Fiction
<p>1984, by George Orwell</p> <p><i>The Good Earth</i>, by Pearl S. Buck</p> <p>Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury</p> <p><i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i>, by Kurt Vonnegut</p> <p>Catcher in the Rye, JD Salinger</p> <p>The Things They Carried, by Tim O'Brien</p> <p>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, by Maya Angelou</p> <p><i>The Joy Luck Club</i>, by Amy Tan</p> <p><i>The Color Purple</i>, by Alice Walker</p> <p><i>The Kite Runner</i>, by Khaled Hosseini</p> <p><i>A Lesson Before Dying</i>, by Ernest Gaines, Jr.</p> <p><i>Wise Blood</i>, by Flannery O'Connor</p>	<p><i>Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking</i>, by Susan Cain</p> <p><i>Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman</i>, by Jon Krakauer</p> <p><i>The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids</i>, by Alexandra Robbins</p> <p><i>Man's Search for Meaning</i>. By Frankl, Viktor E.</p> <p><i>I Am Malala</i>, by Christine Lamb and Malala Yousafzai</p> <p><i>Freakonomics</i>, by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner</p> <p><i>The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well Is the Key to Success</i>, by Megan McArdle</p> <p><i>Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea</i>, by Mark Kurlansky</p>

Major Works Data Sheet (Book Selection)

Title	Notes on the author: (independent research, add some basic and interesting facts)
Author:	

Significant Quotes: write down 3 substantive quotes that capture an essence of the text or style. Analyze the quotes and discuss the significance of these passages to the work as a whole. What insights are revealed beyond the plot line? Do **NOT** simply summarize the quote or explain what it means literally; think about how these lines reveal something important about the character(s), conflict, the time period, humanity. Think about what the author is revealing to us about life—how it works or doesn't work.

1.	Analysis:
2.	Analysis:
3.	Analysis:

Major Works Data Sheet (Book Selection)

Purpose: Identify the book's central theme. A *minimum* of two healthy paragraphs is expected here—and thorough response will be longer. What is the author's controlling idea or central insight? Express these as developed ideas that go beyond the plot and characters of the text. For example, you might write the central theme as: *Loyalty to country often inspires heroic sacrifice. It is possible, and some might even say necessary, to believe in an idea or a country or government that goes far beyond our concern for our own well-being.* Then provide support not just from the text, but from the world you see today, from the world we have seen in the past, or from other readings that match a similar theme.

REQUIRED ESSAY & RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the following essay, "Mother Tongue," by Amy Tan, and answer these seven questions. You can either type up your answers, or write them neatly in blue or black ink.

Response to Text Questions:

1. Why does Tan open her essay by stating, "I am not a scholar of English or literature," then state in the next paragraph, "I am a writer." What is the difference between a scholar and a writer?
2. In paragraph 3, Tan writes fairly long sentence until she writes, "My mother was in the room." Why is this sentence shorter? What is the effect of the short sentence on the reader?
3. Throughout her essay, Tan uses dialogue, the written reproduction of speech or conversation. Why does she do this? What is the effect of the dialogue? Which sentences of dialogue do you find especially effective, and why?
4. In paragraph 7 Tan writes, "That was the language that helped shape the way I saw things, expressed things, made sense of the world." How was the effect of her mother's English positive, and how was it negative?
5. Why does Tan put quotation marks around "broken" and "limited"?
6. How does Tan use humor as she contrasts the two Englishes in the telephone conversation she records? How does the tone change when Tan shifts to the hospital scene?
7. Why does Tan believe that envisioning a reader—specifically her mother—encouraged her to write more authentically?

Mother Tongue

Amy Tan

I am not a scholar of English or literature. I cannot give you much more than personal opinions on the English language and its variations in this country or others. I am a writer. And by that definition, I am someone who has always loved language. I am fascinated by language in daily life. I spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of language -- the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth. Language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all -- all the Englishes I grew up with.

Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I do use. I was giving a talk to a large group of people, the same talk I had already given to half a dozen other groups. The nature of the talk was about my writing, my life, and my book, *The Joy Luck Club*. The talk was going along well enough, until I remembered one major difference that made the whole talk sound wrong. My mother was in the room. And it was perhaps the first time she had heard me give a

lengthy speech, using the kind of English I have never used with her. I was saying things like, "The intersection of memory upon imagination" and "There is an aspect of my fiction that relates to thus-and-thus"--a speech filled with carefully wrought grammatical phrases, burdened, it suddenly seemed to me, with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phrases, all the forms of standard English that I had learned in school and through books, the forms of English I did not use at home with my mother.

Just last week, I was walking down the street with my mother, and I again found myself conscious of the English I was using, the English I do use with her. We were talking about the price of new and used furniture and I heard myself saying this: "Not waste money that way." My husband was with us as well, and he didn't notice any switch in my English. And then I realized why. It's because over the twenty years we've been together I've often used that same kind of English with him, and sometimes he even uses it with me. It has become our language of intimacy, a different sort of English that relates to family talk, the language I grew up with.

So you'll have some idea of what this family talk I heard sounds like, I'll quote what my mother said during a recent conversation which I videotaped and then transcribed. During this conversation, my mother was talking about a political gangster in Shanghai who had the same last name as her family's, Du, and how the gangster in his early years wanted to be adopted by her family, which was rich by comparison. Later, the gangster became more powerful, far richer than my mother's family, and one day showed up at my mother's wedding to pay his respects. Here's what she said in part:

"Du Yusong having business like fruit stand. Like off the street kind. He is Du like Du Zong -- but not Tsung-ming Island people. The local people call putong, the river east side, he belong to that side local people. That man want to ask Du Zong father take him in like become own family. Du Zong father wasn't look down on him, but didn't take seriously, until that man big like become a mafia. Now important person, very hard to inviting him. Chinese way, came only to show respect, don't stay for dinner. Respect for making big celebration, he shows up. Mean gives lots of respect. Chinese custom. Chinese social life that way. If too important won't have to stay too long. He come to my wedding. I didn't see. I heard it. I gone to boy's side, they have YMCA dinner. Chinese age I was nineteen."

You should know that my mother's expressive command of English belies how much she actually understands. She reads the Forbes report, listens to Wall Street Week, converses daily with her stockbroker, reads all of Shirley MacLaine's books with ease--all kinds of things I can't begin to understand. Yet some of my friends tell me they understand 50 percent of what my mother says. Some say they understand 80 to 90 percent. Some say they understand none of it, as if she were speaking pure Chinese. But to me, my mother's English is perfectly clear, perfectly natural. It's my mother tongue. Her language, as I hear it, is vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery. That was the language that helped shape the way I saw things, expressed things, made sense of the world.

Lately, I've been giving more thought to the kind of English my mother speaks. Like others, I have described it to people as "broken" or "fractured" English. But I wince when I say that. It has always bothered me that I can think of no way to describe it other than "broken," as if it were damaged and needed to be fixed, as if it lacked a certain wholeness and soundness. I've heard other terms used, "limited English," for example. But they seem just as bad, as if everything is limited, including people's perceptions of the limited English speaker.

I know this for a fact, because when I was growing up, my mother's "limited" English limited my perception of her. I was ashamed of her English. I believed that her English reflected the quality of what she had to say. That is, because she expressed them imperfectly her thoughts were imperfect. And I had plenty of empirical evidence to support me: the fact that people in department stores, at banks, and at restaurants did not take her seriously, did not give her good service, pretended not to understand her, or even acted as if they did not hear her.

My mother has long realized the limitations of her English as well. When I was fifteen, she used to have me call people on the phone to pretend I was she. In this guise, I was forced to ask for information or even to complain and yell at people who had been rude to her. One time it was a call to her stockbroker in New York. She had cashed out her small portfolio and it just so happened we were going to go to New York the next week, our very first trip outside California. I had to get on the phone and say in an adolescent voice that was not very convincing, "This is Mrs. Tan."

And my mother was standing in the back whispering loudly, "Why he don't send me check, already two weeks late. So mad he lie to me, losing me money."

And then I said in perfect English, "Yes, I'm getting rather concerned. You had agreed to send the check two weeks ago, but it hasn't arrived."

Then she began to talk more loudly. "What he want, I come to New York tell him front of his boss, you cheating me?" And I was trying to calm her down, make her be quiet, while telling the stockbroker, "I can't tolerate any more excuses. If I don't receive the check immediately, I am going to have to speak to your manager when I'm in New York next week." And sure enough, the following week there we were in front of this astonished stockbroker, and I was sitting there red-faced and quiet, and my mother, the real Mrs. Tan, was shouting at his boss in her impeccable broken English.

We used a similar routine just five days ago, for a situation that was far less humorous. My mother had gone to the hospital for an appointment, to find out about a benign brain tumor a CAT scan had revealed a month ago. She said she had spoken very good English, her best English, no mistakes. Still, she said, the hospital did not apologize when they said they had lost the CAT scan and she had come for nothing. She said they did not seem to have any sympathy when she told them she was anxious to know the exact diagnosis, since her husband and son had both died of brain tumors. She said they would not give her any more information until the next time and she would have to make another appointment for that. So she said she would not leave until the doctor called her daughter. She wouldn't budge. And when the doctor finally called her daughter, me, who spoke in perfect English -- lo and behold -- we had assurances the CAT scan would be found,

promises that a conference call on Monday would be held, and apologies for any suffering my mother had gone through for a most regrettable mistake.

I think my mother's English almost had an effect on limiting my possibilities in life as well. Sociologists and linguists probably will tell you that a person's developing language skills are more influenced by peers. But I do think that the language spoken in the family, especially in immigrant families which are more insular, plays a large role in shaping the language of the child. And I believe that it affected my results on achievement tests, I.Q. tests, and the SAT. While my English skills were never judged as poor, compared to math, English could not be considered my strong suit. In grade school I did moderately well, getting perhaps B's, sometimes B-pluses, in English and scoring perhaps in the sixtieth or seventieth percentile on achievement tests. But those scores were not good enough to override the opinion that my true abilities lay in math and science, because in those areas I achieved A's and scored in the ninetieth percentile or higher.

This was understandable. Math is precise; there is only one correct answer. Whereas, for me at least, the answers on English tests were always a judgment call, a matter of opinion and personal experience. Those tests were constructed around items like fill-in-the-blank sentence completion, such as, "Even though Tom was _____, Mary thought he was _____." And the correct answer always seemed to be the most bland combinations of thoughts, for example, "Even though Tom was shy, Mary thought he was charming." With the grammatical structure "even though" limiting the correct answer to some sort of semantic opposites, so you wouldn't get answers like, "Even though Tom was foolish, Mary thought he was ridiculous." Well, according to my mother, there were very few limitations as to what Tom could have been and what Mary might have thought of him. So I never did well on tests like that.

The same was true with word analogies, pairs of words in which you were supposed to find some sort of logical, semantic relationship—for example, "*Sunset* is to *nightfall* as _____ is to _____." And here you would be presented with a list of four possible pairs, one of which showed the same kind of relationship: *red* is to *stoplight*, *bus* is to *arrival*, *chills* is to *fever*, *yawn* is to *boring*. Well, I could never think that way. I knew what the tests were asking, but I could not block out of my mind the images already created by the first pair, "*sunset* is to *nightfall*"—and I would see a burst of colors against a darkening sky, the moon rising, the lowering of a curtain of stars. And all the other pairs of words—red, bus, stoplight, boring—just threw up a mass of confusing images, making it impossible for me to sort out something as logical as saying: "A sunset precedes nightfall" is the same as "a chill precedes a fever." The only way I would have gotten that answer right would have been to imagine an associative situation, for example, my being disobedient and staying out past sunset, catching a chill at night, which turns into feverish pneumonia as punishment, which indeed did happen to me.

I have been thinking about all this lately, about my mother's English, about achievement test. Because lately I've been asked, as a writer, why there are not more Asian Americans represented in American literature. Why are there few Asian Americans enrolled in creative writing programs? Why do so many Chinese students go into engineering? Well, these are broad sociological questions I can't begin to answer. But I have noticed in surveys—in fact, just last week—that Asian students, as a whole, always do significantly better on math achievement tests

than in English. And this makes me think that there are other Asian-American students whose English spoken in the home might also be described as “broken” or “limited.” And perhaps they also have teachers who are steering them away from writing and into math and science, which is what happened to me.

Fortunately, I happen to be rebellious in nature and enjoy the challenge of disproving assumptions made about me. I became an English major my first year in college, after being enrolled as pre-med. I started writing nonfiction as a freelancer the week after I was told by my former boss that writing was my worst skill and I should hone my talents toward account management.

But it wasn't until 1985 that I finally began to write fiction. And at first I wrote using what I thought to be wittily crafted sentences, sentences that would finally prove I had mastery over the English language. Here's an example from the first draft of a story that later made its way into *The Joy Luck Club*, but without this line: “That was my mental quandary in its nascent state.” A terrible line, which I can barely pronounce.

Fortunately, for reasons I won't get into today, I later decided I should envision a reader for the stories I would write. And the reader I decided upon was my mother, because these were stories about mothers. So with this reader in mind—and in fact she did read my early drafts—I began to write stories using all the Englishes I grew up with: the English I spoke to my mother, which for lack of a better term might be described as “simple”; the English she used with me, which for a lack of a better term might be described as “broken”; my translation of her Chinese, which could, certainly be described as “watered down”; and what I imaged to be her translation of her Chinese if she could speak in perfect English, her internal language, and for that I sought to preserve the essence, but neither an English nor a Chinese structure. I wanted to capture what language ability tests can never reveal: her intent, her passion, her imagery, the rhythms of her speech and the nature of her thoughts.

Apart from what any critic had to say about my writing, I knew I had succeeded where it counted when my mother finished reading my book and gave me her verdict: “So easy to read.”

Amy Tan is a novelist and essayist who was born in California only two and a half years after her parents emigrated from China to the United States. Her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), was extremely popular, and was followed by *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), and, most recently, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001). In 1987 Tan traveled to China for the first time, to meet her older sisters from her mother's first marriage. Her complex relationship with her mother, Daisy, who died of Alzheimer's disease in 1999, at the age of 83, is at the heart of much of her work. Among the experiences that shaped their relationship was the death of Tan's older brother and her father when tan was 14. The two died of brain tumors within six months of each other.

Although she is a writer whose work has enjoyed impressive commercial success, Tan chose to publish this selection in 1990 in a small West Coast literary magazine, *The Threepenny Review*, edited by the writer Wendy Lesser. You might want to ask why she made this choice. The essay's title is a pun, referring at once to the language that nurtures us and, literally, to the language spoken by Tan's mother. Tan presents herself here as a writer and not a student of language, although she holds an M.A. in linguistics from San Jose State University. Speaking and writing in standard English is essential, Tan argues, but the diversity of cultures in America requires that we acknowledge the different “Englishes” spoken by immigrants.