
Department of Secondary Language Arts and Reading
Love K. Foy, Coordinator

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENTS
GRADES 9-11
2018



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to Students.....	3
Managing Your Reading.....	5
Choosing a Book.....	6
Parent Letter.....	7
Grades 9 through 11 (All Schools).....	8
AP Seminar.....	12
AP Language.....	13
New York Times Summer Reading Contest Guidelines.....	15

Letter to Students

Dear Half Hollow Hills Student,

Welcome to Summer Reading 2018! It is our hope that you will spend the summer months reading and enjoying the fiction and non-fiction books we have asked you to read over the next few months. The goal of summer reading is to give you the opportunity to explore newness – a concept, a place, a culture unfamiliar yet brought to life in a book. Emily Dickinson eloquently provides perspective:

THERE is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.

This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!

Whether you plan to travel across the world or across Long Island, we hope your summer reading books become a companion for you and a source of inspiration as well.

All students in grades nine through eleven¹ are expected to complete summer reading. The benefits of reading during the summer months are applicable to all students and we hope that every one of you takes advantage of this opportunity. If you are interested in an alternative assignment, in lieu of reading a *nonfiction* book, you may participate in [The New York Times Summer Reading Contest](#). For more information, click [here](#). Please note, this contest may replace your nonfiction title, but you are still required to read a fiction title.

The following themes are covered:

Grade 9: Lives in Transition

Grade 10: War and Peace

Grade 11: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

If you are participating in The New York Times Summer Reading Contest (in lieu of reading a nonfiction book), articles can be on any topic and do not have to fall within the grade level theme.

¹ Students in AP Literature, College English, Contemporary Issues in Literature and Composition, and Senior Experience cover assignments specific to grade 12. Please visit the HHH website to access these assignments.

Your assignment is as follows:

1. Choose one fiction and one non-fiction book related to your grade level theme to read over the summer. (In lieu of a nonfiction book, participate in the [New York Times Summer Reading Contest](#).)

In September:

2. Bring in your signed parent letter that you read both a fiction and nonfiction book (or participated in the New York Times contest in lieu of a nonfiction title).
3. You may be asked to share a response to the books either in a book chat or in a brief written assignment. (If you chose to complete the NYT contest, simply print out your entries.)

Students in AP Literature, College English, Contemporary Issues in Literature and Composition, and Senior Experience have assignments specific to these courses. Please visit the HHH website to access these assignments.

If you have any questions about Summer Reading 2018, please contact Love Foy, District-wide Coordinator of Secondary Language Arts and Reading at 631.592.3186.

Enjoy your books!

Sincerely,
The English Language Arts Department of Half Hollow Hills

Managing Your Reading

- Try to read every day. You can read after breakfast or before dinner. If you are using an audio book downloaded to your e-reader you can read almost anywhere. (Please don't try to read and cross the street at the same time though!)
- Have a purpose for reading. Is there a question you have about the book? Are you in the middle of the book and wondering about a character's choices or motivations? Are you wondering where the author is taking the story? Are you looking for something to connect to or relate to your own life? Each time you read, read with purpose.
- Discuss what you are reading with someone else – a friend, a parent, a sibling, a camp counselor, the librarian, or the bookstore clerk to name a few. Talking about a book helps you understand it better and motivates you to go back and read more.
- Does the book remind you of something you read before? Are you making a text-to-text connection? Try to find that other text (it can be another book, a movie, a newspaper or a magazine article, a website) and revisit it to strengthen the connection. It may also help you understand and appreciate your main text even more.
- Remember that reading is a way to communicate. What message is the author trying to share with you, the reader? How will what you read impact your own life? Reflect on these questions as you read.

How to Choose a Book

- Read the back of the book. Often the synopsis on the back (hard covers have an additional synopsis on the inside cover) will give you a brief overview of the plot and themes in the book.
- Think about the title. Sometimes authors create titles that are a clue or a representation of the major themes in the book.
- Talk to the bookstore clerk or your neighborhood librarian. These professionals can be used as a resource in finding a book which appeals to both your interests and to the requirements of the project.
- Flip through the book. Read a chapter while sitting in the library or bookstore. Make predictions about how you think the story will develop.
- There are many websites that offer guidance in choosing a summer reading text. Here are a few from which to choose:
 - <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/index.html>
 - <http://www.nypl.org/voices/blogs/blog-channels/sta>
 - <http://www.googlelittrips.org/>
 - <http://www.guysread.com/>
 - <http://www.teenreads.com>
 - <http://www.hhhlteens.blogspot.com/>
- Go online to <http://www.barnesandnoble.com> or <http://www.amazon.com> and keyword a title. Typing in a title will lead you to information about the specific book you have chosen. You can read the publisher's synopsis as well as comments from people who have read the book.
- Visit the iTunes website <http://itunes.apple.com/us/genre/books/id38?mt=11> to see a list of iBook categories. Click on a category of interest. You can also visit <http://itunes.apple.com/us/genre/ios-books/id6018?mt=8> to view a list of audio book applications for iTunes.

June 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Please review this English project with your son or daughter and sign below to confirm that your child completed the assignment.

This letter should be returned **in September** to your child's English teacher for the 2018-2019 school year.

I have read the above information regarding the English Department's summer reading assignment and confirm that my child read both a fiction and nonfiction book (or participated in the New York Times Summer Reading Contest) over the summer.

Student's name (PRINT) _____

Fiction Choice _____

Non-Fiction Choice _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Thank you.

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENTS
Grades 9 - 11
2018

NINTH-GRADE

Ninth grade English covers fiction and non-fiction literature that centers on the theme *Heroes as Archetypes*. We will explore the following essential questions:

- What makes a hero?
- How is the modern hero different from the classical hero?
- What is an anti-hero?
- What is a comedic hero?

You must choose one fiction and one non-fiction text. Recommendations are provided in the lists below, but you are free to make an independent choice. Remember that texts in the school curriculum cannot be used as summer reading selections:²

Fiction

Fat Kid Rules the World, K.L. Going
Girl in the Blue Coat, Monica Hesse
Homeless Bird, Gloria Whelan
Life As We Knew It, Susan Beth Pfeffer
Marcelo in the Real World, Francisco X. Stork
The Loud Silence of Francine Green, Karen Cushman
When Dimple Met Rishi, Sandhya Menon

Non-Fiction

Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—The World’s Most Dangerous Weapon by Steve Sheinkin
Getting COMFY: Your Morning Guide to Daily Happiness, Jordan Gross
I’d Like to Apologize to Every Teacher I Ever Had: My Year as a Rookie Teacher at Northeast High, Tony Danza
Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood, Marjane Satrapi
The Pact, Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream, Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt
Tomorrow Will Be Different: Love, Loss and the Fight for Trans Equality, Sarah McBride

When you return to school in September, please make sure to **bring your signed parent letter with you.**

² Curriculum maps for grades 9 through 12 can be found on the Half Hollows Hills webpage under the headings Academics, English Language Arts, Curriculum Maps. The following link may also be used:
<http://www.halfhollowhills.k12.ny.us/page.cfm?p=976063>

TENTH-GRADE

Tenth grade English covers fiction and non-fiction literature that centers on the theme War and Peace: What is the Paradox Within? We will explore the following essential questions:

- How does literature reflect the human experience?
- How does one's social and cultural environment influence or shape one's identity?
- What are the ethical implications of our decisions?
- How does a speaker persuade his or her audience?

You must choose one fiction and one non-fiction text. Recommendations are provided in the lists below, but you are free to make an independent choice. Remember that texts in the school curriculum cannot be used as summer reading selections:³

Fiction

A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini

Code Talker, Joseph Bruchac

Flight, Sherman Alexie

Lilac Girls, Martha Hall Kelly

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison

The Book Thief, Markus Zusak

The Hate You Give, Angie Thomas

Non-Fiction

A Long Walk to Water, Linda Sue Park

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, Ishmael Beah

Farewell to Manzanar, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston

Lone Survivor, Marcus Luttrell

Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History, Art Spiegelman

Red Scarf Girl, Ji-li Jiang

Travels with Charley in Search of America, John Steinbeck

When you return to school in September, please make sure to **bring your signed parent letter with you.**

³ Curriculum maps for grades 9 through 12 can be found on the Half Hollows Hills webpage under the headings Academics, English Language Arts, Curriculum Maps. The following link may also be used:
<http://www.halfhollowhills.k12.ny.us/page.cfm?p=976063>

ELEVENTH-GRADE

Eleventh grade English covers fiction and non-fiction literature that centers on the theme Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. We will explore the following essential questions:

- To what extent do competing values impede upon or shape the American Dream?
- How do race, gender, and economic status affect one's social standing in America?
- What are the vices and virtues of the American Dream?
- How has America failed to deliver its promises to its citizens?

You must choose one fiction and one non-fiction text. Recommendations are provided in the lists below, but you are free to make an independent choice. Remember that texts in the school curriculum cannot be used as summer reading selections⁴:

Fiction

Americanah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Little Brother, Cory Doctorow

On the Road, Jack Kerouac

The Invention of Wings, Sue Monk Kidd

The Jungle, Upton Sinclair

Non-Fiction

A Brilliant Solution, Inventing the American Constitution, Carol Berkin

Can't Stop Won't Stop, A History of the Hip Hop Generation, Jeff Chang

Censorship Now!! Ian F. Svenonius

Decoded, Jay-Z

Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis, J. D. Vance

Life on the Color Line, Gregory Howard Williams

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America, by Barbara Ehrenreich

The Color of Water, James McBride

When you return to school in September, please make sure **to bring your signed parent letter with you.**

⁴ Curriculum maps for grades 9 through 12 can be found on the Half Hollows Hills webpage under the headings Academics, English Language Arts, Curriculum Maps. The following link may also be used:
<http://www.halfhollowhills.k12.ny.us/page.cfm?p=976063>

AP SEMINAR

Welcome to the inaugural class of AP Seminar — and thank you for joining us! The purpose of this summer assignment⁵ is to prepare you for the demanding nature of the class, while exposing you to a variety of texts, writing styles, modes, and purposes. The ultimate goal of the AP Seminar class is to teach you the art of reading, writing and critical thinking through research and perspective.

To get a sense of the spirit of our course, we ask that each student evaluate the following four texts⁶:

1. "[Harper's Index](#)"
2. "[The Really Big One](#)" by Kathryn Schultz (article from *The New Yorker*)
3. "[Doppelgangers](#)" This American Life (podcast & transcript)
4. "[The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers](#)" by Adam Grant (TED talk & transcript)

First, think of these four texts as a collection. That said, (1) what *makes* them a collection? (2) What *binds* them together? Go beyond the obvious. Try to see the texts — and their possible meanings — from multiple viewpoints. (3) What central idea, issue, tension, or conflict do these four texts have in common? Note that there is no single correct answer; the possibilities are, perhaps, limitless. Use whatever note taking strategy works for you to document your thinking. Please be ready to share your thoughts with your fellow students. Your response to the above questions should be 250 - 500 words. Be sure to answer all three questions. **Your response should be created in a Google Doc to be shared with your teachers.**

12

Second, once you have identified what unites these texts as a collection, propose one additional text — written, audio, visual, or otherwise (film, documentary, etc.) — to add to this collection. You may select your text from any source you deem appropriate. Bring to class the observations and insights gleaned from the text you have selected, and be prepared to share your rationale for adding it — how does your choice extend or deepen the existing collection of texts? Your response to this should be 100 words and must answer the posed question.

You should come to class the first day of school with a copy of your written responses. Be prepared to share your work and discuss your claims. Questions that come up over the summer should be sent via email to lfoy@hhh.k12.ny.us or llupinskie@hhh.k12.ny.us.

We look forward to our conversations in September! Please note work from the AP Seminar Summer Assignment will go toward your first grade of the year. Until then, enjoy your summer.

⁵ Assignment adapted from similar assignments used by the Wooster City School District, the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District & the Spring-Ford Area School District

⁶ For the purposes of this course, the word “text” means written, audio, visual, and any other media form.

AP LANGUAGE

High School East

Please read the following information **closely**:

“An AP course in English Language and Composition engages students in becoming skilled readers of prose written in a variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts, and in becoming skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes. Both their writing and their reading should make students aware of the interactions among a writer’s purposes, audience expectations, and subjects as well as the way generic conventions and the resources of language contribute to effectiveness in writing (collegeboard.com, 6).

“The AP English Language and Composition course follows this emphasis. As in the college course, its purpose is to enable students to read complex texts with understanding and to write prose of sufficient richness and complexity to communicate effectively with mature readers.” (6)
“The intense concentration on language use in the course enhances students’ ability to use grammatical conventions appropriately and to develop stylistic maturity in their prose. Stylistic development is nurtured by emphasizing the following:

- A wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively;
- A variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination;
- Logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis;
- A balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail; and an effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure. (8)

“When students read, they should become aware of **how stylistic effects are achieved** by writers’ linguistic choices. Since imaginative literature often highlights such stylistic decisions, fiction and poetry clearly can have a place in the AP English Language and Composition course. The main purpose of including such literature is to aid students in understanding rhetorical and linguistic choices, rather than to study literary conventions.” (8)

Please read the following texts:

- *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion

As you read, keep a reader’s notebook/journal to help you pay attention to detailed content. Complete all notebooks/journals in your own print or script – no typing or computer generated text will be accepted. Your notebook/journal can be used during the assessment given the first week of school. There will be one content-specific reading test AND one literary-based multiple choice test. The exam will count as a full test grade.

AP LANGUAGE

High School West

Dear AP Composition student:

Welcome to AP Language and Composition! In an effort to keep your reading and writing skills sharp and to begin our course immediately when you return to school in September, I have created this assignment. As with all skills, the only way we develop and improve is through practice; in other words, read and write as often and as much as possible. To start you on your way to improving your writing skills, please complete these activities before the start of the school year.

- **Read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.**

“All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.” – Ernest Hemingway

I cannot say that I agree with all that Hemingway has to say, but I do believe you will enjoy this journey. I will warn you that the dialect is difficult to read in the beginning, but in the end you will have your own southern accent.

There is another old man with whom I happen to agree, my father-in-law, Pop; he is one of the most well-read people I have ever encountered in my life. I asked him to reread *Huck Finn* with me so we could discuss it before I had to teach it for the first time. I provided a copy for him that was full of annotations from a previous teacher. Within two days I received a phone message, “I finished *Huck Finn*, I forgot what a wonderful novel it is. Thank you for having me read it again. BUT, as for all that underlining and margin notes and other scribbles—what is that for? I found it so distracting I could barely keep reading. I hope you don’t make your students do that!”

So in respect to Pop, I will not require annotations. I personally find them extremely helpful when I need to engage with a text for academic purposes. If you feel this is not necessary for a deep understanding of the novel then I will respect your opinion. Please keep in mind that we will be discussing the book in detail and each of you will be expected to discuss this book using textual evidence as support. I might suggest that, in the least, you note page numbers of scenes you feel are pivotal to both plot and character development.

At the conclusion of our *Huck Finn* unit, you will be assessed on your knowledge of the text with an in-class argumentative essay on various topics that are discussed. Any annotations you write will be assessable to you. These notes must be either in the novel itself, or pre-approved before exam day. I have extra used copies of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in Room 170.

Please remember that all work must be brought to school on the first day of class. All responses should be highly introspective and detailed, reflecting work on an AP level.

Lastly, you **MUST** go to guidance to pick up your summer packet regarding grade abatement for AP Language and Composition. This packet details exactly what grade abatement is and how it will work in our classroom. Please pick up the packet before the last day of school or within the first week of July. I look forward to meeting you on the first day of classes in September.

New York Times Summer Reading Contest Guidelines

15

Ninth Annual New York Times Summer Reading Contest

This PDF is adapted from a blog post published in May, 2018. You can find it [here](#).



Teenagers who participate in our Summer Reading Contest can choose anything published on NYTimes.com in 2018 – including cartoons and illustrations, like this one by Grant Snider [for the Times Book Review](#). Grant Snider

By Katherine Schulten
May 2, 2018

Every year since [2010](#) we have invited teenagers around the world to add The New York Times to their summer reading lists, and, so far, over 30,000 have.

At a time when [breaking-news alerts](#) are as constant as [concerns about “fake news.”](#) teachers and students alike may feel that keeping up with a reliable source of information is more important than ever. We hope our 10-week contest can make that easy.

But we also hope students will realize that reading The Times is fun. As you’ll see in the guidelines below, literally anything published on NYTimes.com in 2018 is fair game. We don’t care if you choose a piece about [politics](#) or [polar bears](#), [baseball](#) or “[Black Panther](#),” [food](#), [fashion](#), [Fortnite](#) or [Flyball](#); we just care about why you chose it.

Interested? **The contest runs from June 15 to Aug 24, and all the details are below.** In a nutshell, though: Every Friday we ask students, “What interested you most in The Times this week? Why?” You then have until the following Friday to answer, when a team of Times journalists choose their favorite responses, and we publish them [here](#).

Post any questions you might have in the comments or write us at LNFeedback@nytimes.com. You can also [watch our webinar](#) on summer and independent reading to learn more.



Visitors at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios Hollywood. A [2017 winner](#) wrote about [related Op-Ed](#). Valerie Macon/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Here's how it works:

The contest runs from **June 15 to Aug. 24**.

Every Friday beginning **June 15** we will publish a post asking the same two questions: What interested you most in The Times this week? Why? You can always find that link in an update at the top of the page. It will also appear in [this column](#).

Anyone 13 to 19 years old from anywhere in the world can post an answer any week until Friday, Aug. 24, and contestants can choose from any Times article, essay, video, interactive or photograph published in 2018, on any topic they like.

Every Tuesday starting July 3 we will announce winners from a previous week and [publish their writing](#).

To get an idea of the breadth of topics students have chosen in the past — from [refugees](#) and “[post-truth politics](#)” to [power napping](#) and [junk food](#) --- you can read the work of our 2017 winners [here](#), and our 2010-2016 winners [here](#).

Scroll down to find more details and tips, all of which are also on [this handy PDF](#).

More questions? Here are some that have been frequently asked over the years, but please post anything else you'd like to know in the comments, or write to us at LNFeedback@nytimes.com, and we'll answer you there.



Beyoncé posed with her twins, Sir Carter and Rumi, in an image released by Parkwood Entertainment in July, 2017. [A winner of our Summer Reading Contest that month](#) wrote about a [related article](#). (Credit: Mason Poole/Parkwood Entertainment, via Associated Press)

Q. What kinds of responses are you looking for?

A. We don't care what you choose or whether you loved or hated it; what we care about is what you have to say about why you picked it.

If you don't believe us, scroll through our [2017 winners](#), or, via our old blog, view the work of [winners](#) from 2010 to 2016.

They have written on serious topics like [gender, race and identity](#), [space exploration](#) and [21st-century concentration camps](#), but they have also written on [Beyoncé](#), [Disney shows](#), [bagels](#), [running](#) and [Jon Stewart withdrawal](#).

Whatever the subject, you'll see that the best pieces year after year make both personal connections to the news and go beyond the personal to discuss the broader questions and ideas that the topic raises.

So whether you were moved by an [article](#), enlightened by an [essay](#), bowled over by a [photo](#), irked by an [editorial](#) or inspired by a [video](#), find something in The Times that genuinely interests you and tell us why, as honestly and originally as you can.

Q. What are the rules?

A. [First, here is a PDF of all the rules and details in this post](#). Please share.

— We will post the same questions every Friday, starting June 15. Each week we will ask, “What interested you most in The Times this week? Why?” That is where you should post your picks (and reasons) any time until the next Friday. Then we will close that post to comments and open a new one with the same questions. That means that students can write in any day until Friday, Aug. 24, at 7 a.m. Eastern when the contest ends.

— You can choose from anything published in the print paper or on [NYTimes.com](#) in 2018, including [videos](#), [graphics](#), [slide shows and podcasts](#).

— Feel free to participate every week, but we allow only *one* submission per person per week.

— The contest is open to *teenagers only* — anyone from 13 to 19 years old, from anywhere in the world.

— Our commenting system allows responses up to 1,500 characters, which is somewhere between 250 and 300 words.

— Make sure to provide us with the full URL or headline (for example, “Review: ‘Harry Potter and the Cursed Child’ Raises the Bar for Broadway Magic” or <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/22/theater/review-harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-raises-the-bar-for-broadway-magic.html>)



[A 2017 winner](#) wrote about a related Op-Ed, [“I Don’t Want to Watch Slavery Fan Fiction.”](#) (Leonardo Santamaria)

Q. Who will be judging my work?

The Learning Network staff, plus a team of as-yet-to-be-named New York Times journalists.

Q. When should I check to see whether my submission won?

Every Tuesday from July 3 to Sept. 4, we will publish a previous week’s winner or winners in a separate article you can find [here](#). We will also celebrate the winners on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Q. How do I participate in this contest if I don’t have a digital subscription?

NYTimes.com has a digital subscription system in which readers have free access to five articles each month. If you exceed that limit, you will be asked to become a [digital subscriber](#).

One thing you should know, however, is that The Learning Network posts for students, as well as all Times articles linked from them, [are accessible without a digital subscription](#). That means that if you use any of the articles we have linked to on this blog for summer reading, they will not count as part of the five-article limit. And remember: you can use anything published in 2018.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, right, compared socks with Randy Boissonnault, a member of Parliament, during a Gay Pride flag-raising ceremony in Ottawa in June, 2017. A Summer Reading Contest [winner](#) that year wrote about a [related article](#). (Credit: Chris Wattie/Reuters)

Q. How do I prove to my teacher that I participated?

A. When you comment, make sure to check the box that asks you if you would like to be emailed when your comment is published.

If you do so, the system will send you a link to your comment, which you can use to show your teacher, your parents, your friends or anyone else you'd like to impress.

Please note that you will not get an email until the comment has been approved, which may take up to 48 hours over weekends.

Another method? Some teachers ask students to take screenshots of their comments before they hit "submit," then gather those all together at the end of the summer.

Q. How can teachers, librarians and parents use this challenge?

A. Through the years, adults have told us over and over that participating in this contest has made their students both more aware of and more interested in what’s going on in the world. Many see it as a low-stakes way to help teenagers start building a news-reading habit.

If that’s not enough of a reason to assign it, our contest is also an easy way to add more nonfiction to your students’ reading lists — and to encourage teenagers to [make their own choices](#) about what to read, as anything published in The Times in 2018 is fair game.

Participating also meets the recommendations given in [this joint statement on independent reading](#) given by the International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

But maybe the most compelling reason to assign this contest is what students themselves say about it. Reflecting on participating in 2017, a teenager named Emma Weber, from London, [echoed](#) what many have told us over the years:

What interested me this week in the Times? There was a lot to reflect on, as usual: Barcelona, Charlottesville, and, on a more cheerful note, the solar eclipse. Despite the plethora of options, I am writing about the Summer Reading Contest itself and how it has interested, and transformed, me over the past ten weeks.

Prior to this summer, the only writing I did was for school assignments or Google searches. And if I did get around to it, I never reread what I wrote. That’s why, as the weeks went on, I surprised myself when I began double and triple checking my comments for mistakes, of which there were far more than expected!

Another transformation is my newfound interest in the news. I used to be the kind of person who opened a newspaper and went straight to the puzzles section, and though that may be unchanged, I now feel compelled to read a few articles that catch my eye too. In return, exposing myself to current affairs has fine-tuned my political opinions, and through consistent writing I learned to express them in a way that accentuates them.

The result? I feel grounded in my views and understand what’s going on in the world. It’s amazing what a change 1,500 characters a week make.

Thank you for making this contest a hit year after year, and please spread the word that it’s back for a ninth season.

Good Luck!

Questions? Please write to us at LNFeedback@nytimes.com.

We will add the link to the top of this post on June 16, when the contest begins. And if you [watch our webinar](#), you’ll get many more tips, including ideas for practicing in class before you send students away for summer break, and ideas for keeping their independent news-reading habits alive back in the classroom this fall.