

AP Language and Composition

Best American Essays of the Century, edited by Joyce Carol Oates

Atwan, Robert, and Joyce Carol Oates. ***The Best American Essays of the Century***. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000. (ISBN-10: 0618155872)

Read the following selections (organized by decade)

1900

Corn-pone opinions -- Mark Twain
Of the coming of John -- W.E.B. Du Bois
Law of acceleration -- Henry Adams

1910

Moral equivalent of war -- William James
Handicapped -- Randolph Bourne
Tradition and the individual talent -- T.S. Eliot

1920

Pamplona in July -- Ernest Hemingway
Hills of Zion -- H.L. Mencken
How it feels to be colored me -- Zora Neale Hurston

1930

What are master-pieces and why are there so few of them -- Gertrude Stein
Crack-up -- F. Scott Fitzgerald
Ethics of living Jim Crow: an autobiographical sketch -- Richard Wright
Figure a poem makes -- Robert Frost

1940

Once more to the lake -- E.B. White
Insert flap "A" and throw away -- S.J. Perelman
Bop -- Langston Hughes

1950

Future is now -- Katherine Anne Porter
Artists in uniform -- Mary McCarthy
Marginal world -- Rachel Carson
Notes of a native son -- James Baldwin

1960

Letter from Birmingham jail -- Martin Luther King, Jr.
Putting daddy on -- Tom Wolfe
Notes on "Camp" -- Susan Sontag
Perfect past -- Vladimir Nabokov

1970

I know why the caged bird sings -- Maya Angelou
Lives of a cell -- Lewis Thomas
No name woman -- Maxine Hong Kingston
Looking for Zora -- Alice Walker
Women and honor: some notes on lying -- Adrienne Rich
White album -- Joan Didion

1980

Solace of open spaces -- Gretel Ehrlich
Total eclipse -- Annie Dillard
Heaven and nature -- Edward Hoagland
Creation myths of Cooperstown -- Stephen Jay Gould

1990

Life with daughters: watching the miss
America Pageant -- Gerald Early
Disposable rocket -- John Updike
hey all just went away -- Joyce Carol Oates
Graven images -- Saul Bellow

QUESTIONS for AP Language

1. What is the purpose of the essay? (why you think the author felt the urgency of writing the piece)
2. What is the main argument of the essay? (the central idea)
3. What kind of evidence does the author use? (does the author rely on logical proofs or emotional appeals?)
4. Identify an interesting sentence and explain what makes it interesting to you and what kind of idea you associate to it. .
5. Identify and highlight any part you found confusing.
6. What do you think has made this essay "historical" ? (Why do you think we still read it today?)

AP Literature

All the Pretty Horses - Cormac McCarthy

"How to Read Literature Like a Professor" - Thomas C. Foster
PDF of this will be posted on the web