AP Lang Summer Assignment

Rationale
As Stephen King once said, “If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.” So to help you become better writers this year, you are going to be following King’s advice. You will be reading and writing a lot this year. To begin this process, you will be following two op-ed columnists over the summer, marking and charting their work, and determining the purpose of the piece.

Since its origin in the early 1920’s, the op-ed page (short for opposite the editorial page) has been an important staple in American culture, providing writers an opportunity to share their personal views on current events. For readers, it has been a source of information, entertainment, and conversation. For you, it will provide an understanding of argumentation and inspiration for your own writing.

The Assignment
1. You will choose two op-ed columnists from the list provided and select 5 pieces of each author’s writing. The op-ed pieces must not come from earlier than January 1, 2014. The goal is for them to be current articles and issues that can help you become a more informed student.

2. Mark and chart each article for the following:
   a. Circle key words, repeated words, words that indicate tone
   b. Underline key claims
   c. In the left margin, paraphrase what the author is saying
   d. In the right margin, address what the author is doing (e.g. using compare/contrast, alluding to..., using understatement or hyperbole)
   e. At the end, write a 2 – 3 sentence statement that addresses author’s purpose and the main strategies.

3. Write a paper.
   a. You will write your own op-ed piece, addressing a current event of your choice. Attached, we have included two examples written by students: “A Righteous Fight” and “Enough is Enough.”

4. When you return from summer vacation, you will be submitting all 10 articles and your op-ed. In class, each AP Lang teacher might do something different with the activities, but you should be prepared to discuss the op-ed articles and to address rhetorical style and strategies. You should also be prepared to write a rhetorical analysis on your op-eds during the first week of class.

Authors (choose two):
1. Leonard Pitts, Jr. – The Miami Herald
2. Peggy Noonan- The Wall Street Journal
6. Esther J. Cepeda – 600words.com
Rhetorical Terms You Should Know

(in the context of making some larger point about how the author accomplishes his/her purpose)
Please focus your analysis of your op-eds on the terms below. How does the author use these strategies to craft their argument?

1. **concession**--A rhetorical device in which the author anticipates the probable objections of the target audience(s) and incorporates into the text an admission of the (at least partial) validity of those objections
2. **refutation**--A rhetorical device in which the author anticipates the probable objections of the target audience(s) and incorporates into the text a rejection of those objections
3. **analogy**--A rhetorical device in which the author uses a comparison in order to develop a persuasive claim; e.g. "If you can join the military at age 18, then you should be able to drink at age 18"
4. **metaphor**--A rhetorical device in which the author makes an imaginative, non-literal comparison between two essentially unlike things, the vehicle and the tenor (one of which may be implied rather than expressed); subcategories of metaphor include simile, personification, synecdoche, and metonymy.
5. **parallelism**--A pattern in the grammatical structure; parallelism may occur at the level of the word, the phrase, the clause, or the sentence; e.g. "I came. I saw. I conquered." Or "I stumbled out the door, thrashed through the corn field, and fell headlong down the hill."
6. **logos**--One of the three rhetorical appeals; the appeal to logic, including both inductive paradigms and deductive syllogisms
7. **ethos**--One of the three rhetorical appeals; the appeal to credibility; how the author establishes his or her "authority" in the text; how the messenger influences the message; may be "intrinsic" (in the text) or "extrinsic" (in the author's known identity)
8. **pathos**--One of the three rhetorical appeals; the appeal to the emotions; how the author tugs our heartstrings
9. **anaphora**--A hybrid of repetition and parallelism; e.g. "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." Or "I will watch o'er you as the sun shrugs off his morning veil of mist. I will watch o'er you as he gently sets in the western fold. I will watch o'er you 'til Time himself doth cease to tick his passage."
10. **fragment**--The deliberate, stylistic use of an incomplete sentence, often as part of a parallel series, and often to accentuate an idea; e.g. "I told you. A thousand times. Don't talk to strangers. Not ever."
11. **hyperbole**--A rhetorical device in which in author overstates or exaggerates a point, often to accentuate an idea; e.g. "If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times...."
12. **understatement**--A rhetorical device in which an author understates or minimizes a point, often ironically; e.g. a coach might say, "We've had better games," after losing 120-13.
13. **verbal irony/sarcasm**--A type of irony featuring a distinction between what is said and what is meant; e.g. a person might say ruefully, "Well, thanks so much for being on time," if a friend has arrived half an hour late to an appointment.
14. **allusion**--A reference within a text to another text; e.g. the knife-wielding, slightly psychotic protagonist of a short story set during wartime apparently knows his Shakespeare, as he mutters under his breath (all the while gesticulating wildly) "To kill or not to kill; that is the only question."
15. **antithesis**--A pair of opposites; e.g. "mountain of hope" versus "valley of despair"
Below are two sample student op-eds.

**A Righteous Fight**  
Ahmed Aedan, Englewood HS, Jacksonville, Fla.

I saw the vile images, from innocent people dying to ravished children crying on the laps of the unmoving corpses of their mothers.

I never could have dreamed I’d experience the hell as I, a few months earlier, lay peacefully on a comfortable window ledge in my home in Baghdad, Iraq. I watched as the breeze brushed against the small branches of the tree outside and heard the comforting sound of birds singing above the quiet drone of city life below, bustling with life.

I became intoxicated in that simple, divine cycle of nature.

Suddenly, on the other side of the house, I heard a shriek and my heart jumped. I had to rise. Out of nowhere came the sound of a broken plate echoing through the house, then the sound of my infant brother weeping.

Iraq had been a country with no voice, the oppressed opinions of people held back by a tyrant full of lust and ego. I sat upright from the window ledge two weeks before the most advanced military power on earth, the United States, waged a “revolution” upon my country.

The clock was ticking, counting the last moments of an oppressed nation. At least, that’s what I thought.

Looking back to that time when I was 9-years-old, I realize the hidden truth no one tells you: what happened to us was not a revolution. It was a military takeover, or what I call a “forced revolution.”

This is different from the standard definition of a revolution: the overthrow of a government by its people. I must emphasize “people,” because a true revolution cannot be inspired by outside forces.

Outsiders spawned a cruel devastation of Iraq, but while trying to establish freedom, they purged all hope away. The people of Iraq had no plan to rise up and take over. The fear factor in Saddam Hussein’s regime played too big a role. Everybody was in a state of illusion and many were too shocked to walk out of their own homes.

As the so-called “revolution” sparked in my homeland, I heard my mom asking my dad what to do. “we must feel now, or else it will be the end of us,” my dad told her with a frightened calm.

Two weeks later, Baghdad was bombarded with a force so powerful it shook cities miles away as 12,000-pound bombs fell like rain on my country. All that was left was the remnant of the building, and ashes that covered the sky like smoky clouds. My mother had to cover up my ears with pillows and blankets to try to cushion the sound of the bombs hitting unceasingly. She screamed when all of the windows in our home exploded from the shockwaves of the assault.

We were hopeless.
One month before the invasion, Saddam prepared for America’s attack by releasing all of the criminals, even those who were imprisoned for barbarous crimes. A power vacuum resulted, followed by brute anarchy, complete paranoia, mass lynching, kidnapping, and car bombing becoming everyday occasions.

After Saddam was toppled, the country should’ve been liberated and redeemed its lost freedom under his reign. But what happened? Why did a country end up like this? What went so wrong, to the extent the country plunged into a state of chaos? Why did a country that needed liberation melt into a complete state of deprivation?

Why did we have to act like fugitives for three years, hiding in a village like Third World refugees with no electricity, sanitation problems, and no connection to the outside world?

When was the time to draw the line? When was somebody going to step up to take charge in this forced revolution?

My family had had enough. In the Spring of 2006, we moved to Jordan. I thought, finally, my life would revive as I escaped the nightmare in Iraq. But I was naïve.

I had no right for citizenship or college education when we arrived in Jordan. Without opportunity, my family decided to look to the catalyst of our troubles: the United States.

We moved to Florida three years later, hoping for a better life.

I look back to the day I rose from that “comfortable” window ledge for a revolution I never wanted. Then I reflect on the heroic feats of the American Revolution, or the Civil Rights Movement, and how absolute the determination was in these movement were valiant people defied forces much bigger than themselves. Like facing a 250-pound bully in school with only a will to win. It is admirable, and to actually walk out victorious is an accomplishment that marks a shift in human history.

For now I can do nothing in the country that I come from but hope. I can grieve, feel wronged, and blame the world, but what is going to change? All I want, all I care about is for the people of my country to stake their future and push themselves in order to establish and sustain a country where unity resides and no crooks like the tyrant Saddam Hussein could impede the future of the next generation.

My country has the potential to hold the torch of freedom. How can that be achieved unless the people, as a collective, carry it?

My definition of revolution has evolved. It can only be realized through conviction and determination, and is possible only if the hearts and souls of the people are one.
Throughout the 2009 summer, white ribbons adorned trees lining the streets of Western Springs. They were a somber and poignant reminder of bullying and depression among high school students, and were raised specifically in remembrance of freshman Iain Steele, who took his life this past June.

National news agencies including the Chicago Tribune, CNN and the Associated Press lent coverage to this local tragedy; through the veritable media hurricane, the Steeles’ unwavering belief in bullying as the culprit was transparent. Statements from some school officials, however, seemed to indicate the school did not believe bullying was an issue in Iain’s situation.

Bullying was an issue while Iain was attending LT. It was. And it persists to this day.

Principal David Franson implied as much during a welcome-back speech to North Campus during the school year’s opening week, placing exaggerated emphasis on one particular First Class Principle: “We treat each other with dignity and respect.” Franson’s message—though Iain’s name was at no point exclusively mentioned—was plenty clear: shape up, this cannot become a trend.

LION would like to echo Franson, only with the explicitness our principal skirted: one teenaged death is too many. And it’s on us, the student body as a whole, to fix a problem for which we alone are culpable.

The LT administration can huff and puff and suspend and discipline and carry on touting the Speak-Up Line as a magnificent trump card in the bullying battle all they like, but, as Iain Steele partially demonstrated, the administration may not always win if fighting alone. Counselors only have so many words and so much advice. The Speak-Up Line is practical in thought, but laughable in theory. To promote anonymous tattling as a solution to this problem is to incorrectly address it. It’s about students calling the bullies out; being vocal and leading. It’s about instructing the bully that this is no game. It’s about knowing that the consequences are far too dire for this to continue in any capacity. And then letting the people who can drop the disciplinary hammer know. The administration may not be the ideal fist line of defense, but the school needs to know about bullying if it’s to try to stop it.

Though, in this battle, at the end of the day, the administration can only go so far and do so much. The LT student body simply must know when to stop; when enough is enough; how far is too far; when to offer a pat on the back instead of a kick in the shin. This isn’t difficult. This is treating each other with the most modest, base level of decency. We learned this in first grade. At least, we should have. If, for whatever reason, this doesn’t mean anything to you—if you don’t think it applies, or it matters—LION encourages you to spend a minute considering the depth of horrifying, gut-wrenching devastation even the most seemingly inoffensive or bland acts of cruelty and bullying can wreak. Consider what’s already happened.

Enough is enough.
Op/Ed Checklist
AP Lang and Composition

CONTENT
Adherence to Topic: Does the op/ed address a current topic of concern for both the author and the author’s audience? Does it avoid veering off-topic or adopting a contrary task?

Purpose: Is there a clear purpose for the op/ed? Does the author clearly develop the argument? Does the development of the whole piece demonstrate the author’s awareness of the complexity of the topic? A statement of purpose in op/ed is often left until the end of the article.

Lead: Does the op/ed engage the reader’s attention with an engaging lead of appropriate length?

Plentiful Evidence: Is the argument well-developed with detailed evidence and examples?

Selection of Evidence: Does the author present an effective selection of evidence based upon personal experiences and observations, historical events, current events, “high” or pop culture, knowledge from the area of focus, etc.?

Awareness of Complexity: Does the author use concession, refutation, or other strategies that demonstrate his or her awareness of multiple points of view regarding the controversy?

Originality of Perception: Does the argument go beyond conventional insights and points of view? Does the author find a fresh, creative approach to the task at hand? Does the author address complex issues from interesting, authentic vantage points? Does the author surprise and inspire us with the quality of his or her ideas?

Structural Sequence, Unity, and Flow: (1) Are the op/ed ideas presented in an effective order, avoiding awkward repetitions, anticlimaxes, etc.? (2) Does each paragraph of the op/ed bear a clear relationship to the development of the purpose? Remember that op/ed paragraphs are often much shorter (1 – 3 sentences) than regular essay paragraphs. (3) Does each section flow into the next with a clear transitions built out of the content of the op/ed?

Conclusion: Does the conclusion provide a satisfying, creative closure for the argument, avoiding a mechanical and uninspiring repetition of ideas established earlier?

STYLE/MECHANICS
Rhetorical Appeals: Does the author maintain an appropriate, effective balance of ethos, pathos, and logos appeals in service of his or her argument?

Stylistic Maturity: Does the op/ed’s style reveal mastery of a varied repertoire of rhetorical devices, including parallelism, metaphors of all types, antitheses, creative diction and imagery, varied syntax, etc.? Without crossing boundaries of good taste, does the author impress us with his or her stylistic command?

Avoidance of Undue Abstraction: Does the op/ed embody clarity and specificity? Does the author avoid setting his or her reader adrift in a sea of abstraction? Op/eds and journalistic writing is mean to be more concise than regular essays. Knowing that, does the author maintain that style?

Mechanics: Does the author maintain a command of grammar and mechanics? Are there few punctuation, modification, and agreement errors in the op/ed?