



Incoming 11th Graders  
SUMMER READING 2023  
*AP Language and Composition*

# BOOKPIX

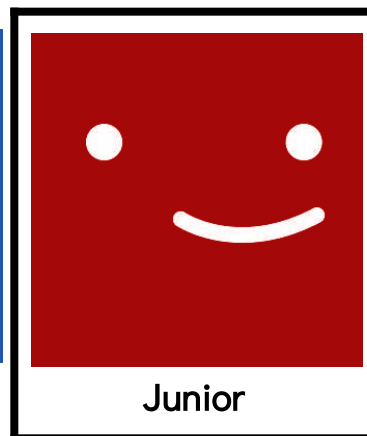
Who's reading?



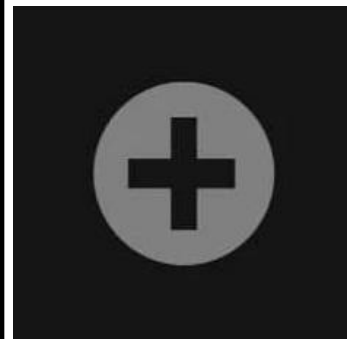
Freshman



Sophomore



Junior



Add Profile

## 2023-2024 AP LANG Summer Reading

Dear AP Lang Juniors,

Congratulations! Due to your outstanding academic performance in ELA, you have been placed into AP Language and Composition. This is a rigorous, college-level course unlike any ELA class you've ever taken before!

The CollegeBoard's description of the course below:

An AP English Language and Composition course cultivates the reading and writing skills that students need for college success and for intellectually responsible civic engagement. The course guides students in becoming curious, critical, and responsive readers of diverse texts and becoming flexible, reflective writers of texts addressed to diverse audiences for diverse purposes. The reading and writing students do in the course should deepen and expand their understanding of how written language functions rhetorically: to communicate writers' intentions and elicit readers' responses in particular situations.

The first step in ensuring that your time in AP Lang will be successful is to start working on the core skills early with the completion of a summer reading assignment. Reading may be the last thing on your mind right now, but the data is very clear on the subject – summer reading is extremely beneficial to your success. Going extended periods of time without reading leads to all sorts of losses: loss of comprehension progress, loss of cognitive sharpness, loss of knowledge, and loss of reading speed and endurance. In short, if you don't read, you lose. If you read, you **gain**. And because your college and career plans will require the discipline to work outside of classroom parameters and complete work independently, this is great preparation for your future, regardless of what that might be.

Your summer reading assignment will be to read and annotate THREE books. The first two books will be assigned to you, and for the third, you will select a choice from a menu of options.

Your work is due on the first day of school, and your annotations will be checked for a grade. Additionally, you will use your books and annotations to help you complete an in-class writing activity during the first week of school.

If you have any questions at all, do not hesitate to email me at [abongiorno@belovedccs.org](mailto:abongiorno@belovedccs.org).

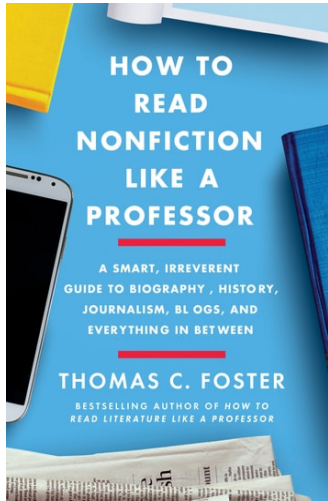
Sincerely,

*Mr. Bongiorno*

Mr. Anthony Bongiorno, MA, MEd  
BelovED Community Charter HS

### Task 1: *How to Read Nonfiction Like A Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

- ★ Read the book and either annotate it OR complete a dialectical journal. If you have a physical copy, annotate the pages with a pen or a pencil. If you do not want to write on the pages, use post-it notes. You must have at least one marginal annotation per page.
- ★ Whether you annotate a physical copy or complete a dialectical journal for a digital book, you must have at least one note per page.

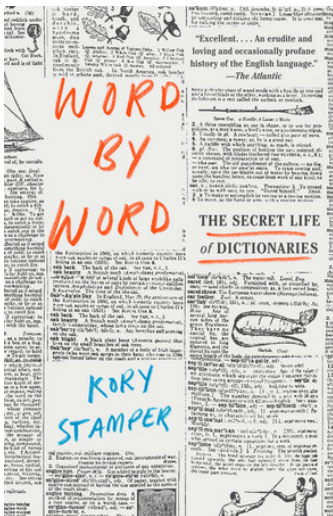


### *How to Read Nonfiction Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster

**BOOKPIX Summary:** A helpful how-to guide to prepare you for the kind of rhetorical and nonfiction analysis we will be doing in class throughout the year.

### Task 2: *Word by Word* by Kory Stamper

- ★ Read the book and either annotate it OR complete a dialectical journal. If you have a physical copy, annotate the pages with a pen or a pencil. If you do not want to write on the pages, use post-it notes. You must have at least one marginal annotation per page.
- ★ Whether you annotate a physical copy or complete a dialectical journal for a digital book, you must have one note per page.

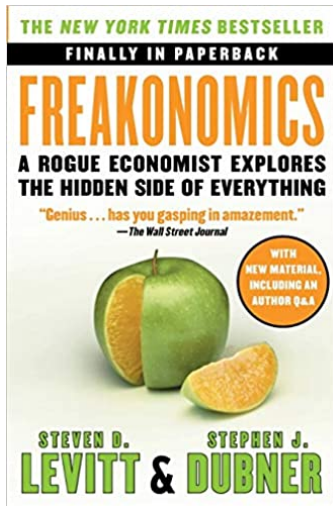


### *Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries* by Kory Stamper

**BOOKPIX Summary:** Part memoir, part history of dictionaries, this book is an ode to language and those dedicated individuals who quietly shape how we communicate. It will make you laugh, it will make you appreciate language on a deeper level, and it will change the way you look at the dictionary forever.

**Task 3: Choice: Choose a book from the options below.**

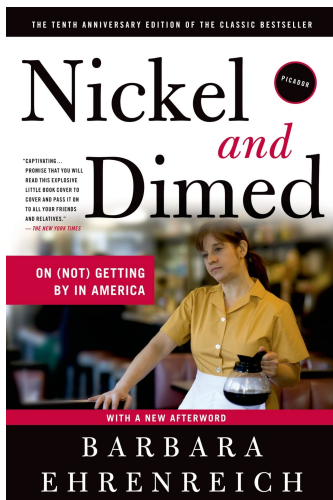
- ★ **Read the book and either annotate it OR complete a dialectical journal.** If you have a physical copy, annotate the pages with a pen or a pencil. If you do not want to write on the pages, use post-it notes. You must have at least one marginal annotation per page.
- ★ Whether you annotate a physical copy or complete a dialectical journal for a digital book, you must have at least one note per page.



**Option #1: *Freakonomics* by Steven D. Levitt & Stephen J. Dubner**

**BOOKPIX Summary:** Which is more dangerous, a gun or a swimming pool? What do schoolteachers and sumo wrestlers have in common? How much do parents really matter?

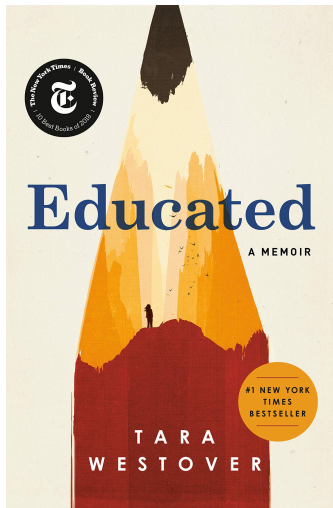
These may not sound like typical questions for an economist to ask. But Steven D. Levitt is not a typical economist. He studies the riddles of everyday life—from cheating and crime to parenting and sports—and reaches conclusions that turn conventional wisdom on its head. *Freakonomics* is a groundbreaking collaboration between Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, an award-winning author and journalist. They set out to explore the inner workings of a crack gang, the truth about real estate agents, the secrets of the Ku Klux Klan, and much more. Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, they show that economics is, at root, the study of incentives—how people get what they want or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing.



**Option #2: *Nick and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich**

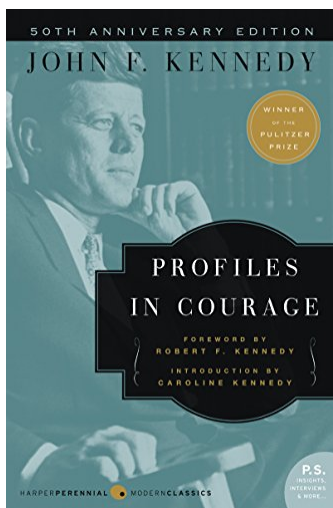
**BOOKPIX Summary:** Millions of Americans work full time, year round, for poverty-level wages. In 1998, Barbara Ehrenreich decided to join them. She was inspired in part by the rhetoric surrounding welfare reform, which promised that a job—any job—can be the ticket to a better life. But how does anyone survive, let alone prosper, on \$6 an hour?

To find out, Ehrenreich left her home, took the cheapest lodgings she could find, and accepted whatever jobs she was offered. Moving from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, she worked as a waitress, a hotel maid, a cleaning woman, a nursing-home aide, and a Wal-Mart sales clerk. She lived in trailer parks and crumbling residential motels. Very quickly, she discovered that no job is truly "unskilled," that even the lowliest occupations require exhausting mental and muscular effort. She also learned that one job is not enough; you need at least two if you intend to live indoors.



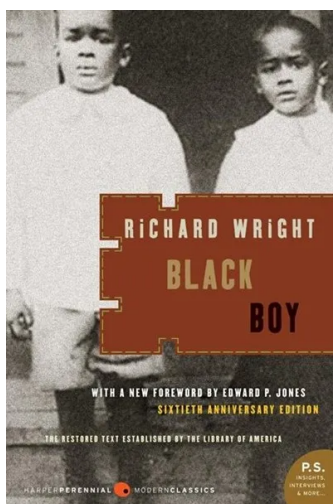
### Option #3: *Educated* by Tara Westover

**BOOKPIX Summary:** Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home.



### Option #4: *Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy

**BOOKPIX Summary:** Written in 1955 by the then junior senator from the state of Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* served as a clarion call to every American. The inspiring true accounts of eight unsung heroic acts by American patriots at different junctures in our nation's history, Kennedy's book became required reading, an instant classic, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Now, a half-century later, it remains a moving, powerful, and relevant testament to the indomitable national spirit and an unparalleled celebration of that most noble of human virtues.



### Option #5: *Black Boy* by Richard Wright

**BOOKPIX Summary:** When it exploded onto the literary scene in 1945, *Black Boy* was both praised and condemned. Orville Prescott of the *New York Times* wrote that "if enough such books are written, if enough millions of people read them maybe, someday, in the fullness of time, there will be a greater understanding and a more true democracy." Yet from 1975 to 1978, *Black Boy* was banned in schools throughout the United States for "obscenity" and "instigating hatred between the races."

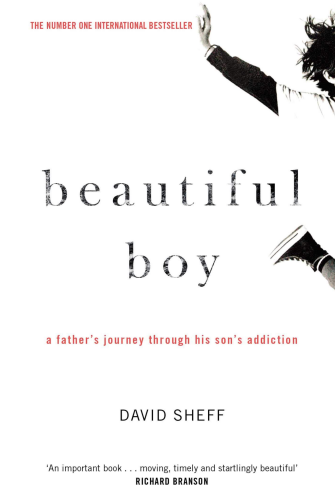
Wright's once controversial, now celebrated autobiography measures the raw brutality of the Jim Crow South against the sheer desperate will it took to survive as a Black boy. Enduring poverty, hunger, fear, abuse, and hatred while growing up in the woods of Mississippi, Wright lied, stole, and raged at those around him—whites indifferent, pitying, or cruel and Blacks resentful of anyone trying to rise above their circumstances. Desperate for a different way of life, he headed north, eventually arriving in Chicago, where he forged a new path and began his career as a writer. At the end of *Black Boy*, Wright sits poised with pencil in hand, determined to "hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo." Seventy-five years later, his words continue to reverberate. "To read *Black Boy* is to stare into the heart of darkness," John Edgar

Wideman writes in his foreword. “Not the dark heart Conrad searched for in Congo jungles but the beating heart I bear.”

One of the great American memoirs, Wright’s account is a poignant record of struggle and endurance—a seminal literary work that illuminates our own time.

### Option #6: *Beautiful Boy* by David Sheff

**BOOKPIX Summary:** What had happened to my beautiful boy? To our family? What did I do wrong? Those are the wrenching questions that haunted David Sheff’s journey through his son Nic’s addiction to drugs and tentative steps toward recovery. Before Nic became addicted to crystal meth, he was a charming boy, joyous and funny, a varsity athlete and honor student adored by his two younger siblings. After meth, he was a trembling wraith who lied, stole, and lived on the streets. David Sheff traces the first warning signs: the denial, the three a.m. phone calls—is it Nic? the police? the hospital? His preoccupation with Nic became an addiction in itself. But as a journalist, he instinctively researched every treatment that might save his son. And he refused to give up on Nic.



### Option #7: *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser

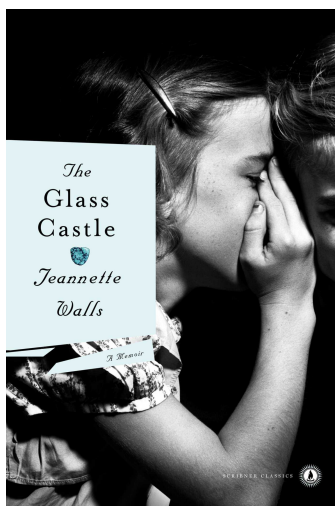
**BOOKPIX Summary:** This fascinating study reveals how the fast food industry has altered the landscape of America, widened the gap between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and transformed food production throughout the world. Eric Schlosser inspires readers to look beneath the surface of our food system, consider its impact on society and, most of all, think for themselves. This book has changed the way millions of people think about what they eat and helped to launch today’s food movement.

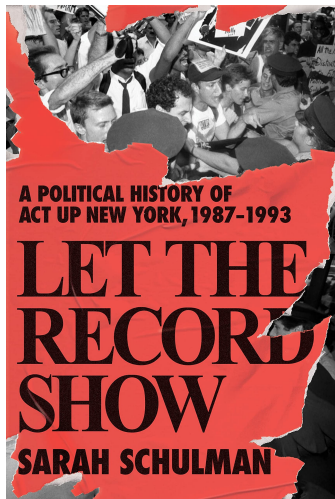


### Option #8: *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls

**BOOKPIX Summary:** *The Glass Castle* is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette’s brilliant and charismatic father captured his children’s imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn’t want the responsibility of raising a family.

The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed, and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children prospered.

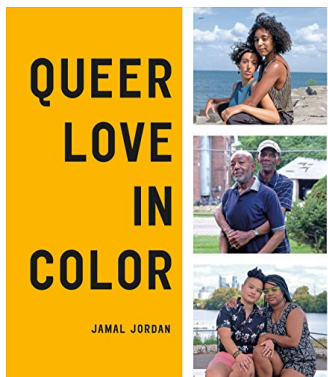




### Option #9: *Let the Record Show* by Sarah Schulman

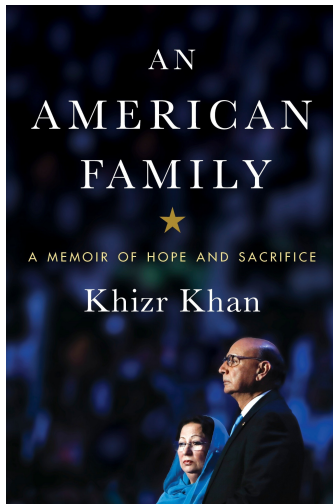
**BOOKPIX Summary:** In just six years, ACT UP, New York, a broad and unlikely coalition of activists from all races, genders, sexualities, and backgrounds, changed the world. Armed with rancor, desperation, intelligence, and creativity, it took on the AIDS crisis with an indefatigable, ingenious, and multifaceted attack on the corporations, institutions, governments, and individuals who stood in the way of AIDS treatment for all. They stormed the FDA and NIH in Washington, DC, and started needle exchange programs in New York; they took over Grand Central Terminal and fought to change the legal definition of AIDS to include women; they transformed the American insurance industry, weaponized art and advertising to push their agenda, and battled—and beat—The New York Times, the Catholic Church, and the pharmaceutical industry. Their activism, in its complex and intersectional power, transformed the lives of people with AIDS and the bigoted society that had abandoned them.

Based on more than two hundred interviews with ACT UP members and rich with lessons for today’s activists, *Let the Record Show* is a revelatory exploration—and long-overdue reassessment—of the coalition’s inner workings, conflicts, achievements, and ultimate fracture. Schulman, one of the most revered queer writers and thinkers of her generation, explores the how and the why, examining, with her characteristic rigor and bite, how a group of desperate outcasts changed America forever, and in the process created a livable future for generations of people across the world.



### Option #10: *Queer Love in Color* by Jamal Jordan

**BOOKPIX Summary:** *Queer Love in Color* features photographs and stories of couples and families across the United States and around the world. This singular, moving collection offers an intimate look at what it means to live at the intersections of queer and POC identities today, and honors an inclusive vision of love, affection, and family across the spectrum of gender, race, and age.

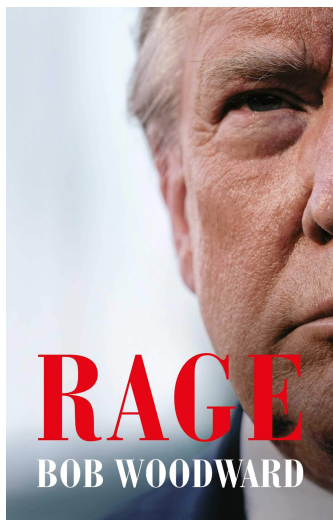


### Option #11: *An American Family* by Nicola Yoon

**BOOKPIX Summary:** In fewer than three hundred words, Khizr Khan electrified viewers around the world when he took the stage at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. And when he offered to lend Donald Trump his own much-read and dog-eared pocket Constitution, his gesture perfectly encapsulated the feelings of millions. But who was that man, standing beside his wife, extolling the promises and virtues of the U.S. Constitution?

In this urgent and timeless immigrant story, we learn that Khizr Khan has been many things. He was the oldest of ten children born to farmers in Pakistan, and a curious and thoughtful boy who listened rapt as his grandfather recited Rumi beneath the moonlight. He was a university student who read the Declaration of Independence and was awestruck by what might be possible in life. He was a hopeful suitor, awkwardly but earnestly trying to win the heart of a woman far out of his league. He was a brilliant and diligent young family man who worked two jobs to save enough money to put himself through Harvard Law School. He was a loving father who, having instilled in his children the ideals that brought him and his wife to America—the sense of shared dignity and mutual responsibility—tragically lost his son, an Army captain killed while protecting his base camp in Iraq. He was and is a patriot, and a fierce advocate for the rights, dignities, and values enshrined in the American system.

*An American Family* shows us who Khizr Khan and millions of other American immigrants are, and why—especially in these tumultuous times—we must not be afraid to step forward for what we believe in when it matters most.



### Option #12: *Rage* by Bob Woodward

**BOOKPIX Summary:** Woodward, the number-one international bestselling author of *Fear: Trump in the White House*, has uncovered the precise moment the president was warned that the Covid-19 epidemic would be the biggest national security threat to his presidency. In dramatic detail, Woodward takes readers into the Oval Office as Trump's head pops up when he is told in January 2020 that the pandemic could reach the scale of the 1918 Spanish Flu that killed 675,000 Americans.

In 17 on-the-record interviews with Woodward over seven volatile months - an utterly vivid window into Trump's mind—the president provides a self-portrait that is part denial and part combative interchange mixed with surprising moments of doubt as he glimpses the perils in the presidency and what he calls the “dynamite behind every door”.

At key decision points, *Rage* shows how Trump's responses to the crises of 2020 were rooted in the instincts, habits and style he developed during his first three years as president.

Revisiting the earliest days of the Trump presidency, *Rage* reveals how

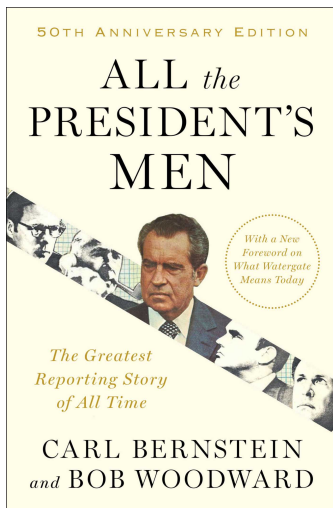


Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats struggled to keep the country safe as the president dismantled any semblance of collegial national security decision making.

Rage draws from hundreds of hours of interviews with firsthand witnesses as well as participants' notes, emails, diaries, calendars and confidential documents.

Woodward obtained 25 never-seen personal letters exchanged between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who describes the bond between the two leaders as out of a "fantasy film".

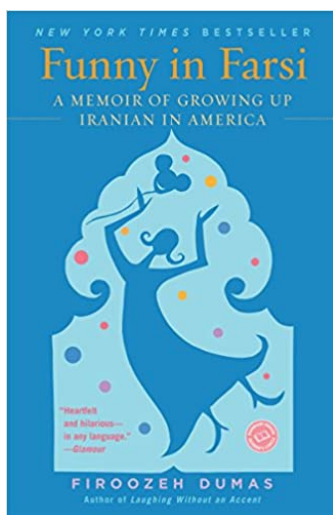
Trump insists to Woodward he will triumph over Covid-19 and the economic calamity. "Don't worry about it, Bob. Okay?" Trump told the author in July. "Don't worry about it. We'll get to do another book. You'll find I was right."



### Option #13: *All the President's Men* by Carl Bernstein & Bob Woodward

**BOOKPIX Summary:** In the most devastating political detective story of the 20th century, two Washington Post reporters, whose brilliant, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation smashed the Watergate scandal wide open, tell the behind-the-scenes drama the way it really happened.

Beginning with the story of a simple burglary at Democratic headquarters and then continuing with headline after headline, Bernstein and Woodward kept the tale of conspiracy and the trail of dirty tricks coming - delivering the stunning revelations and pieces in the Watergate puzzle that brought about Nixon's scandalous downfall. Their explosive reports won a Pulitzer Prize for The Washington Post and toppled the president. This is the book that changed America.

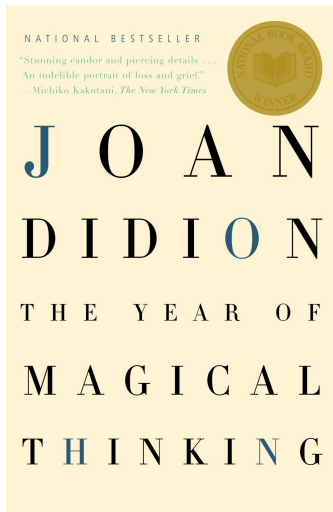


### Option #14: *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Dumas

**BOOKPIX Summary:** In 1972, when she was seven, Firoozeh Dumas and her family moved from Iran to Southern California, arriving with no firsthand knowledge of this country beyond her father's glowing memories of his graduate school years here.

In a series of deftly drawn scenes *Funny in Farsi* chronicles the American journey of Dumas' wonderfully engaging family: her engineer father, a sweetly quixotic dreamer who first sought riches on Bowling for Dollars and in Las Vegas; her elegant mother, who never fully mastered English (nor cared to); her uncle, who combated the effects of American fast food with an army of miraculous American weight-loss gadgets; and Firoozeh herself, who as a girl changed her name to Julie, and who encountered a second wave of culture shock when she met and married a Frenchman, becoming part of a one-couple melting pot.

An unforgettable story of identity, discovery, and the power of family love,

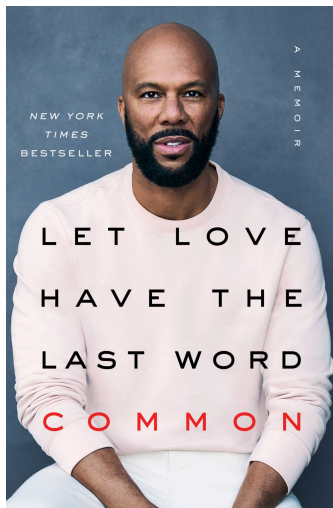


Funny in Farsi will leave us all laughing without an accent.

**Option #15: *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion**

**BOOKPIX Summary:** "Life changes fast.... You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends." These were among the first words Joan Didion wrote in January 2004. Her daughter was lying unconscious in an intensive care unit, a victim of pneumonia and septic shock. Her husband, John Gregory Dunne, was dead. The night before New Year's Eve, while they were sitting down to dinner, he suffered a massive and fatal coronary. The two had lived and worked side by side for nearly 40 years.

The weeks and months that followed "cut loose any fixed idea I had about death, about illness, about probability and luck...about marriage and children and memory...about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself."



**Option #16: *Let Love Have the Last Word* by Common**

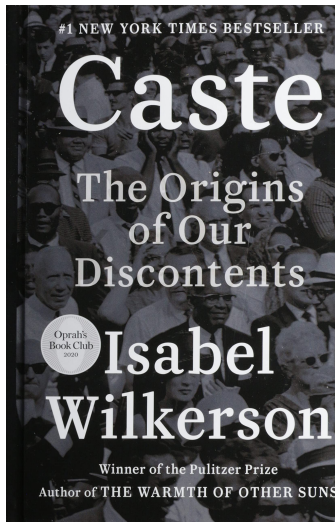
**BOOKPIX Summary:** The inspiring New York Times best seller from Common - the Grammy Award, Academy Award, and Golden Globe-winning musician, actor, and activist - explores how love and mindfulness can build communities and allow you to take better control of your life through actions and words.

Common believes that the phrase "let love have the last word" is not just a declaration; it is a statement of purpose, a daily promise. Love is the most powerful force on the planet, and ultimately, the way you love determines who you are and how you experience life.

Touching on God, self-love, partners, children, family, and community, Common explores the core tenets of love to help us understand what it means to receive and, most important, to give love. He moves from the personal - writing about his daughter, to whom he wants to be a better father - to the universal, where he observes that our society has become fractured under issues of race and politics. He knows there's no quick remedy for all of the hurt in the world, but love - for yourself and for others - is where the healing begins.

In his first public reveal, Common also shares a deeply personal experience of childhood molestation that he is now confronting...and forgiving.

Courageous, insightful, brave, and characteristically authentic, *Let Love Have the Last Word* shares Common's own unique and personal stories of the people and experiences that have led to a greater understanding of love and all it has to offer. It is a powerful call to action for a new generation of open hearts and minds, one that is sure to resonate for years to come.



### Option #17: *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

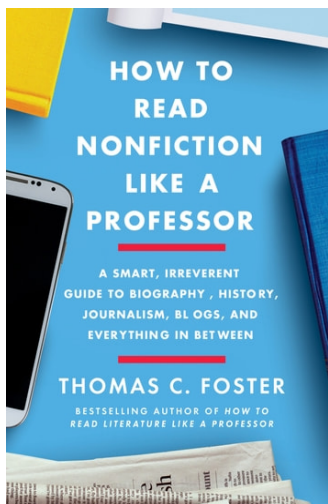
**BOOKPIX Summary:** In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system that influences people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more. Using riveting stories about people—including Martin Luther King, Jr., baseball's Satchel Paige, a single father and his toddler son, Wilkerson herself, and many others—she shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day. She documents how the Nazis studied the racial systems in America to plan their outcasting of the Jews; she discusses why the cruel logic of caste requires that there be a bottom rung for those in the middle to measure themselves against; she writes about the surprising health costs of caste, in depression and life expectancy, and the effects of this hierarchy on our culture and politics. Finally, she points forward to ways America can move beyond the artificial and destructive separations of human divisions, toward hope in our common humanity.

Beautifully written, original, and revealing, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* is an eye-opening story of people and history, and a reexamination of what lies under the surface of ordinary lives and of American life today.

Task 1  
*How to Read Nonfiction Like A Professor*  
by Thomas C. Foster  
Annotation Focus/Dialectical Journal Template

**\*\*Click [HERE](#) to make a copy of this Task 1 document\*\***



Directions: While you read this book, you may **either** do an annotation on the physical book or complete a dialectical journal. See instructions for each below.

If you are annotating a physical copy of this book, your annotation focus and some helpful guidelines are listed below.

- OR -

If you are completing a dialectical journal, use the dialectical journal template that can be found in the following pages.

**Annotation Focus: What is Foster teaching his reader about how to interpret nonfiction, and how does he illustrate his points?**

**You must have at least one marginal annotation per page. Some good strategies for annotating:**

- Question → ask about something in the passage that is unclear
  - *What does he mean by “Western culture”?*
- Clarify → answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction
  - *Western culture = traditions, customs, beliefs associated with Europe*
- Connect → make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
  - *Mr. Santoni said this in class when we were reading Sula.*
- Evaluate → make a judgment about what the author is trying to say
  - *Good point. Never thought of it like this.*

**Annotating a book is like having a conversation with it as you read! Turn the page to see an example.**

**Sample Annotation Page**

## Introduction: How'd He Do That?

MR. LINDNER? THAT MILQUETOAST?

? = timid, bland, meek

Right. Mr. Lindner the milquetoast. So what did you think the devil would look like? If he were red with a tail, horns, and cloven hooves, any fool could say no.

♥ read in 8th grade

!!  
The class and I are discussing Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), one of the great plays of the American theater. The incredulous questions have come, as they often do, in response to my innocent suggestion that Mr. Lindner is the devil. The Youngers, an African American family in Chicago, have made a down payment on a house in an all-white neighborhood. Mr. Lindner, a meekly apologetic little man, has been dispatched from the neighborhood association, check in hand, to buy out the family's claim on the house. At first, Walter Lee Younger, the protagonist, confidently turns down the offer, believing that the family's money (in the form of a life insurance payment after his father's recent death) is secure. Shortly afterward, however, he discovers that two-thirds of that money has been stolen. All of a sudden the previously insulting offer comes to look like his financial salvation.

= deliverance from evil, harm

Bargains with the devil go back a long way in Western culture. In all the versions of the Faust legend, which is the dominant form of this type of story, the hero is offered something he desperately wants - power or knowledge or a fastball that will beat the Yankees - and all he has to give up is his soul. This pattern holds from the Elizabethan Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* through the nineteenth-century Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* to the twentieth century's Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster" and *Damn Yankees*. In Hansberry's version, when Mr. Lindner makes his offer, he doesn't demand Walter Lee's soul; in fact, he doesn't even know that he's demanding it. He is, though, Walter Lee can be rescued from the monetary crisis he has brought upon the family; all he has to do is admit that he's not the equal of the white residents who don't want him moving in, that his pride and self-respect, his identity, can be bought. If that's not selling your soul, then what is it? Facts.

Like Ariel giving up her voice

The chief difference between Hansberry's version of the Faustian bargain and others is that Walter Lee ultimately resists the satanic temptation. Previous versions have been either tragic or comic depending on whether the devil successfully collects the soul at the end of the work. Here, the protagonist psychologically makes the deal but then looks at himself and at the true cost and recovers in time to reject the devil's - Mr. Lindner's - offer. The resulting play, for all its tears and anguish, is structurally comic - the tragic downfall threatened but avoided - and Walter Lee grows to heroic stature in wrestling with his own demons as well as the external one, Lindner, and coming through without falling.

Devil never plays fair

It comes so easily to ELA teachers!

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## Dialectical Journal

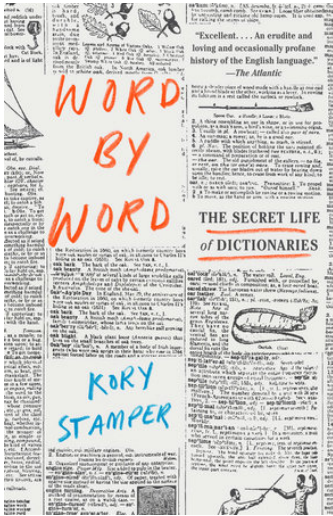
The term "Dialectic" means "the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation



# Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries

## Annotation Focus/Dialectical Journal Template

**\*\*Click [HERE](#) to make a copy of this Task 2 document\*\***



Directions: While you read, you may **either** do an annotation on the physical book or complete a dialectical journal. See instructions for each below.

If you are annotating a physical copy of this book, your annotation focus and some helpful guidelines are listed below.

- OR -

If you are completing a dialectical journal, use the dialectical journal template that can be found in the following pages.

**Annotation Focus:** What does Stamper teach the reader about language and about herself? How does she deliver her messages and illustrate her points?

**You must have at least one marginal annotation per page.** Some good strategies for annotating:

- Question → ask about something in the passage that is unclear
  - *What does he mean by "Western culture"?*
- Clarify → answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction
  - *Western culture = traditions, customs, beliefs associated with Europe*
- Connect → make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
  - *Mr. Santoni said this in class when we were reading Sula.*
- Evaluate → make a judgment about what the author is trying to say
  - *Good point. Never thought of it like this.*

Annotating a book is like having a conversation with it as you read! Turn the page to see an example.

**Sample Annotation Page**



Introduction: How'd He Do That?

MR. LINDNER? THAT MILQUETOAST?

? = timid, bland, meek

Right. Mr. Lindner the milquetoast. So what did you think the devil would look like? If he were red with a tail, horns, and cloven hooves, any fool could say no.

♥ read in 8th grade

!!

The class and I are discussing Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), one of the great plays of the American theater. The incredulous questions have come, as they often do, in response to my innocent suggestion that Mr. Lindner is the devil. The Youngers, an African American family in Chicago, have made a down payment on a house in an all-white neighborhood. Mr. Lindner, a meekly apologetic little man, has been dispatched from the neighborhood association, check in hand, to buy out the family's claim on the house. At first, Walter Lee Younger, the protagonist, confidently turns down the offer, believing that the family's money (in the form of a life insurance payment after his father's recent death) is secure. Shortly afterward, however, he discovers that two-thirds of that money has been stolen. All of a sudden the previously insulting offer comes to look like his financial salvation.

= deliverance from evil, harm

Like Ariel giving up her voice

Bargains with the devil go back a long way in Western culture. In all the versions of the Faust legend, which is the dominant form of this type of story, the hero is offered something he desperately wants - power or knowledge or a fastball that will beat the Yankees - and all he has to give up is his soul. This pattern holds from the Elizabethan Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* through the nineteenth-century Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* to the twentieth century's Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster" and *Damn Yankees*. In Hansberry's version, when Mr. Lindner makes his offer, he doesn't demand Walter Lee's soul; in fact, he doesn't even know that he's demanding it. He is, though, Walter Lee can be rescued from the monetary crisis he has brought upon the family; all he has to do is admit that he's not the equal of the white residents who don't want him moving in, that his pride and self-respect, his identity, can be bought. If that's not selling your soul, then what is it? Facts.

Facts.

The chief difference between Hansberry's version of the Faustian bargain and others is that Walter Lee ultimately resists the satanic temptation. Previous versions have been either tragic or comic depending on whether the devil successfully collects the soul at the end of the work. Here, the protagonist psychologically makes the deal but then looks at himself and at the true cost and recovers in time to reject the devil's - Mr. Lindner's - offer. The resulting play, for all its tears and anguish, is structurally comic - the tragic downfall threatened but avoided - and Walter Lee grows to heroic stature in wrestling with his own demons as well as the external one, Lindner, and coming through without falling.

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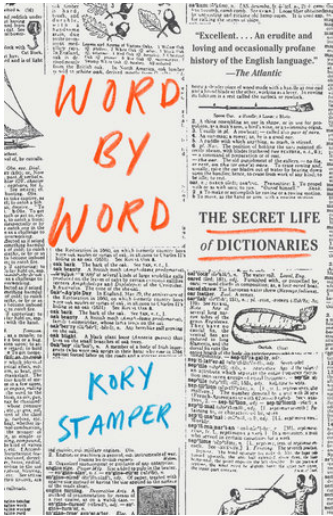
**Dialectical Journal**

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## Annotation Focus/Dialectical Journal Template

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**Annotation Focus: What are the messages delivered by your book's author(s), and how do they deliver them to their reader?**

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**Sample Annotation Page**

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