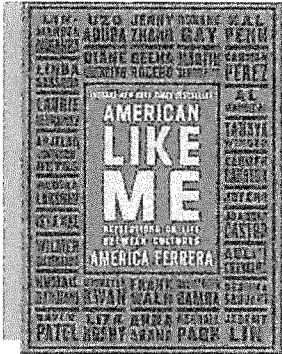


May 14, 2024

Dear AP Language and Composition Student,

Welcome to what we hope will be a terrific experience in English junior year. We want to congratulate you on your decision to take this invigorating course. We are writing this letter to help you understand what's in store for you when you return in the fall and hopefully to help you look forward to AP Lang almost as much as we do. We care a lot about the content of this course, but we care much more about the quality of your experience. When school begins in the fall, you will find our high expectations and our enthusiasm but *not* a workload that will sap your own enthusiasm for the great reading, writing, and thinking we will ask you to do.



Our first request for such reading, writing, and thinking is now with your summer reading assignment. Gloria Anzaldua, an American scholar and writer of Chicana feminism and cultural/queer theory, writes about the unique space many of us reside in—the space between cultures that she identifies as borderlands. She explains, “Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element.”

We begin this conversation with selections from the text *American Like Me: Reflections on Life Between Cultures* (edited by America Ferrara). Each of the writers in this collection shares their stories about the difficulties of assimilating into dominant cultural and social groups while remaining authentic to themselves. They narrate the challenges of navigating language barriers, discrimination, and cultural misunderstandings as they emerge more empowered with a greater understanding and appreciation for their identities.



On the back of this page you will find the assignment that asks you to explore your own experiences of belonging and un-belonging, of navigating the complexities of your borderlands. We hope that you will be inspired by the narratives that you read in telling your own stories. We look forward to reading them as a first step in getting to know you as we think about the rich communities we hope to build in our classrooms.

Thank you for choosing AP Lang for your English experience next year and for giving your best effort to this assignment. You may email us with questions or observations if you need help, but please remember that during the summer response time via email will be significantly longer than during the school year.

Best wishes,

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PDF of excerpts from *American Like Me*

## 2024 Summer Reading & Writing Assignment

We all have experienced times when we didn't feel like we belonged, when cultural, racial, gender, religious, or any other lines, for that matter, seemed there to separate “us” from the “rest.” Often, those moments feel difficult, maybe even painful. These experiences of not belonging can even be our first foray into a loss of innocence, as we feel like an outsider, undesirable, and inferior.

But feeling like you don't belong isn't necessarily terrible.

These feelings of being on the outside often reveal that we live *in* the borderlands of diverse cultures, races, genders, and religions. Because living *between* cultures is so challenging, the resilience we develop celebrates the gifts we earn or reap from having to forge new, hybrid identities and find new communities. Ultimately, living in the borderlands can be spiritually transformative—as seen in the lives of the writers in this anthology, such as America Ferrera, Carmen Carrera, Auli'i Cravalho, and Bambadjan Bamba. Some have used these experiences to change our nation (Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Gloria Steinem, just to name a few). The most powerful moments are when these voices *unite* to enact systemic change.

**Part I:** Annotation Guide: As you read each essay, please annotate for gifts that the experience of not belonging has given each writer. Please write notes in response to the following questions.

1. When was the author's first experience of not belonging? What happened?
2. What was/were the gift(s) the author reaped from that experience?
3. How did this gift empower them?

**Part II:** Written Response: Of all the essays, consider which writers you identified with and, specifically, which of their experiences resonated with you the most.

**Prompt:** In a 500-word essay, tell the story of a time or experience when you felt you were navigating the borderlands of belonging—this could be cultural, racial, gender, or religious communities. But it could also be social (school, teams, extracurriculars, and family). What happened?

- In telling the story of your experience, incorporate reflection about the following:
  - What is the gift you received?
  - How did this gift empower you?
  - What about yourself (your identity) did this experience help you discover?
- Note how these authors tell their stories through specific **details**, thoughtful **voice**, and **imagery**. Aim to do the same in your essay.
- Tell us your authentic story; there is *no* room for AI. Any use of AI will result in a zero for the assignment.

**Part III:** What are some thematic questions you would like to explore this year in AP Lang regarding identity and belonging? List at least three as an addendum to your essay.

**DUE FRIDAY, AUGUST 16: Please print a hard copy of your response and bring it to class.**