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AP Language and Composition- Summer Assignment  
MacArthur High School  
June 2021

Dear AP Language Student,

Welcome! AP Language and Composition is a challenging course that will help you think about the way writers write. This course focuses primarily on non-fiction and the rhetorical strategies authors use to create their works and engage their readers.

In order to prepare for the year ahead, you will read and analyze several speeches, articles and examples of visual rhetoric, and complete the assignments that follow. In addition, you will be responsible for familiarizing yourself with the glossary of terms from the first chapter of our textbook for an upcoming quiz.

**Everything you need to complete this assignment is in this packet. In addition, we are supplying you with some important handouts that will help you, not only with the summer assignment, but also when we are working on new skills in the classroom.**

**Assignments:**

1. Review the Aristotelian Appeals on page 2 of this packet. Then read the directions and the letter on page 3 and complete the chart on page 5.
2. Select one speech from AmericanRhetoric.com. They have compiled a list of the Top 100 speeches. *You may NOT use a speech by Martin Luther King Jr. or JFK.* Print your chosen text, and then complete the SOAPSTonE chart for this speech on page 6 of this packet. If you are unfamiliar with “exigence,” it is defined as an issue, problem, or situation that causes or prompts someone to write or speak.
3. Choose ONE of the rhetorical situations on page 8 of the packet and type your response.
4. Read the discussion of visual rhetoric on page 11 of this packet. Then examine the image on page 12, and fill in the SOAPSTonE chart.
5. Complete a rhetorical précis for “Come Back, New York, All Is Forgiven” on page 13. The précis template is on page 11 of the packet, and an example is on page 12. Do not just fill in the template – you must write or type the paragraph.
6. Select A or B:
  - A. Complete a rhetorical précis for the essay “Superman and Me” on page 15 or
  - B. Complete a rhetorical précis for an op-ed piece of your own choosing. Article must be at least 500 words and published by a reputable source such as *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic, or The New Yorker.*

**This is an independent assignment; your work should be entirely your own. It is due on the first day of school in September. It will not be accepted after then.**

Have a great summer!  
Mrs. Tonn and Mrs. Wellenreuther

## Aristotelian Appeals: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos

Whenever you read an argument you must ask yourself, "Is this persuasive? If so, why? And to whom?" There are many ways to appeal to an audience. Among them are appealing to logos, ethos, and pathos. These appeals are identifiable in almost all arguments, and are often used in combination.

<b>To appeal to LOGOS (logic, reasoning)</b>	<b>To develop or appeal to ETHOS (character, ethics)</b>	<b>To appeal to PATHOS (emotion)</b>
The argument itself; the reasoning the author uses; logical evidence	How an author builds credibility and trustworthiness	Words or passages an author uses to activate emotions
<b>TYPES OF APPEALS TO LOGOS</b>	<b>WAYS TO DEVELOP ETHOS</b>	<b>TYPES OF APPEALS TO PATHOS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theories, scientific facts</li> <li>• Indicated meanings or reasons (because...)</li> <li>• Literal or historical analogies</li> <li>• Definitions</li> <li>• Factual data &amp; statistics</li> <li>• Quotations</li> <li>• Citations from experts/authorities</li> <li>• Informed opinions</li> <li>• Examples (from real life)</li> <li>• Personal anecdotes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author's profession/background</li> <li>• Author's publication</li> <li>• Appearing sincere, fair-minded, knowledgeable</li> <li>• Conceding to opposition when appropriate</li> <li>• Morally / ethically likeable</li> <li>• Appropriate language for audience and subject</li> <li>• Appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>• Correct grammar</li> <li>• Professional format</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotionally loaded language</li> <li>• Vivid descriptions</li> <li>• Emotional examples</li> <li>• Anecdotes, testimonies, or narratives about emotional experiences or events</li> <li>• Figurative language</li> <li>• Emotional tone (humorous, sarcastic, disappointed, excited, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on Audience</b>	<b>Effect on Audience</b>	<b>Effect on Audience</b>
Evokes a cognitive, rational response. Readers get a sense of, "Oh, that makes sense" or "Hmm, that really doesn't prove anything."	Helps reader to view the author as reliable, trustworthy, competent, or credible; reader might respect the author or his views.	Evokes an emotional response. Persuasion by emotion (often eliciting fear, sympathy, empathy, or anger).
<b>How to Write About It</b>	<b>How to Write About It</b>	<b>How to Write About It</b>
<p>The author appeals to logos by defining relevant terms, and then supporting her claim with numerous citations from authorities.</p> <p>The author's use of statistics and expert testimony are convincing appeals to logos.</p>	<p>Through his use of scientific terminology, the author builds his ethos by demonstrating expertise.</p> <p>The author's credibility/reputation/believable is developed as readers see that he is sympathetic to the struggles that minorities face.</p>	<p>By referencing 9/11, the author is appealing to pathos. Specifically, she is eliciting both sadness and anger from her readers.</p> <p>The author's description of the child's cancer evoked sadness and guilt from the audience.</p>

**Directions: Read/highlight/annotate this letter from Toni Morrison to then Senator Obama. This letter was later published in the *New York Times*. After reading, pull out examples of appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos that emerge in this letter.**

Dear Senator Obama,

This letter represents a first for me—a public endorsement of a Presidential candidate. I feel driven to let you know why I am writing it. One reason is it may help gather other supporters; another is that this is one of those singular moments that nations ignore at their peril. I will not rehearse the multiple crises facing us, but of one thing I am certain: this opportunity for a national evolution (even revolution) will not come again soon, and I am convinced you are the person to capture it.

May I describe to you my thoughts?

I have admired Senator Clinton for years. Her knowledge always seemed to me exhaustive; her negotiation of politics expert. However I am more compelled by the quality of mind (as far as I can measure it) of a candidate. I cared little for her gender as a source of my admiration, and the little I did care was based on the fact that no liberal woman has ever ruled in America. Only conservative or “new-centrist” ones are allowed into that realm. Nor do I care very much for your race[s]. I would not support you if that was all you had to offer or because it might make me “proud.”

In thinking carefully about the strengths of the candidates, I stunned myself when I came to the following conclusion: that in addition to keen intelligence, integrity and a rare authenticity, you exhibit something that has nothing to do with age, experience, race or gender and something I don’t see in other candidates. That something is a creative imagination which coupled with brilliance equals wisdom. It is too bad if we associate it only with gray hair and old age. Or if we call searing vision naivete. Or if we believe cunning is insight. Or if we settle for finessing cures tailored for each ravaged tree in the forest while ignoring the poisonous landscape that feeds and surrounds it. Wisdom is a gift; you can’t train for it, inherit it, learn it in a class, or earn it in the workplace—that access can foster the acquisition of knowledge, but not wisdom.

When, I wondered, was the last time this country was guided by such a leader? Someone whose moral center was un-embargoed? Someone with courage instead of mere ambition? Someone who truly thinks of his country’s citizens as “we,” not “they”? Someone who understands what it will take to help America realize the virtues it fancies about itself, what it desperately needs to become in the world?

Our future is ripe, outrageously rich in its possibilities. Yet unleashing the glory of that future will require a difficult labor, and some may be so frightened of its birth they will refuse to abandon their nostalgia for the womb.

There have been a few prescient leaders in our past, but you are the man for this time.

Good luck to you and to us.

Toni Morrison

<b>Direct Quotation/Specific Detail from Text</b>	<b>Your Observation/ Effect on the Reader</b>
<b>LOGOS</b>	
<b>ETHOS</b>	
<b>PATHOS</b>	

**SOAPStone for AmericanRhetoric.com speech**

**S**peaker

**O**ccasion

**A**udience

**P**urpose

**S**ubject

**T**one

**E**xigence

## RHETORICALLY ACCURATE VERBS

Rhetorically accurate verbs are action words.

- Examples:
1. Ayn Rand **championed** radical capitalism.
  2. Douglas Engelbart **invented** the computer mouse.
  3. Galileo **discovered** sunspots.
  4. Salk **cured** smallpox.
  5. Jimi Hendrix **redefined** the electric guitar.

*In AP Language, you will work from this list to describe what an author DOES.*

### RHETORICALLY ACCURATE VERBS

Accentuates	Calls	Declares	Elevates	Fantasizes	Intensifies
Accepts	Challenges	Deduces	Elicits	Focuses	Interprets
Achieves	Champions	Defends	Elucidates	Forces	Interrupts
Acknowledges	Changes	Defines	Embodies	Foreshadows	Introduces
Adds	Characterizes	Defies	Empathizes	Forewarns	Inundates
Adopts	Chooses	Deifies	Emphasizes	Fortifies	
Advocates	Chronicles	Delineates	Empowers	Fosters	Juxtaposes
Affects	Claims	Demonstrates	Encounters	Functions	Justifies
Affirms	Clarifies	Denigrates	Encourages		
Alleges	Comments	Denotes	Enhances	Heightens	Lampoons
Alleviates	Compares	Denounces	Enlightens	Highlights	Lists
Allows	Completes	Depicts	Enriches	Hints	
Alludes	Concerns	Describes	Enumerates	Holds	Maintains
Amplifies	Concludes	Details	Envisions	Honors	Magnifies
Analogizes	Condemns	Determines	Escalates	Hypothesizes	Manages
Analyzes	Condescends	Develops	Establishes		Manipulates
Approaches	Conducts	Deviates	Evokes	Generalizes	Masters
Argues	Conforms	Differentiates	Evaluates	Guides	Meanders
Arouses	Confronts	Differs	Excludes		Minimizes
Ascertain	Connotes	Directs	Excuses	Identifies	Moralizes
Asserts	Considers	Disappoints	Exemplifies	Illuminates	Motivates
Assesses	Constrains	Discerns	Exhibits	Illustrates	Muses
Assails	Constructs	Discovers	Exhorts	Imagines	
Assumes	Contends	Discusses	Expands	Impels	Notes
Attacks	Contests	Dispels	Experiences	Implements	
Attempts	Contradicts	Displays	Explains	Implies	Observes
Attests	Contrasts	Disputes	Explicates	Includes	Offers
Attributes	Contributes	Disrupts	Expounds	Indicates	Opines
Augments	Conveys	Dissuades	Exposes	Indicts	Opposes
Avoids	Convinces	Distinguishes	Expresses	Infers	Organizes
	Creates	Distorts	Exemplifies	Initiates	Outlines
Bases	Critiques	Downplays	Extends	Inspires	Overstates
Believes		Dramatizes	Extrapolates	Intends	

Belittles Bolsters					
Paints Patronizes Performs Permeates Permits Personifies Persuades Pervades Ponders Portrays Posits Postulates Praises Predicts Prepares Presents Presumes Produces Proffers Projects Promotes Proposes Provides Provokes Purports  Qualifies Questions	Rationalizes Reasons Recalls Recapitulates Recites Recollects Records Recounts Reflects Refers Refutes Regales Regards Regrets Relates Reinforces Rejects Remarks Reminds Represents Repudiates Reveals Reverts Ridicules  Satirizes Sees Selects Serves Solidifies Specifies Speculates States Strengthens Strives	Submits Suggests Summarizes Supplies Supports Suppresses Sustains Symbolizes Sympathizes  Theorizes Traces Transcends Transforms  Understands Understates Unpacks Uses  Vacillates Values Venerates Verifies Views Vilifies Vindicates  Wants Wishes	OTHERS:		

### KILLER WORDS

Words to AVOID in academic writing. This is a starter list. It will grow!

A lot	Interesting	Amazing
Very	Bad	Awesome
Many	Great	Ways
Things	Definitely	Really
Lots	Extremely	Wonderful
Stuff	Nice	In today's society, ...

## • ACTIVITY •

Select one of the following rhetorical situations, and discuss how you would establish your ethos and appeal to logos and pathos.

- You are trying to persuade your skeptical parents that a “gap year”—taking a year off between high school graduation and college—will be beneficial.
- You have been asked to make a presentation to your school’s principal and food service staff to propose healthier food choices in the cafeteria at a time when the overall school budget is constrained.
- You are making the case for the purchase of a specific model and make of car that will best fit your family’s needs and resources.
- You are the student representative chosen to go before a group of local businesspeople to ask them to provide financial support for a proposed school trip.

## Rhetorical Analysis of Visual Texts

Many visual texts are full-fledged arguments. Although they may not be written in paragraphs or have a traditional thesis, they are occasioned by specific circumstances, they have a purpose (whether it is to comment on a current event or simply to urge you to buy something), and they make a claim and support it with appeals



SOURCE: Toles © 2005 The Washington Post. Reprinted with permission of UNIVERSAL UCLICK. All rights reserved.

to authority, emotion, and reason. Consider the cartoon on page 21, which cartoonist Tom Toles drew after the death of civil-rights icon Rosa Parks in 2006. Parks was the woman who in 1955 refused to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama; that act came to symbolize the struggle for racial equality in the United States.

We can discuss the cartoon rhetorically, just as we've been examining texts that are exclusively verbal: The occasion is the death of Rosa Parks. The speaker is Tom Toles, a respected and award-winning political cartoonist. The audience is made up of readers of the *Washington Post* and other newspapers—that is, it's a very broad audience. The speaker can assume that his audience shares his admiration and respect for Parks and that they view her passing as the loss of a public figure as well as a private woman. Finally, the context is a memorial for a well-loved civil-rights activist, and Toles's purpose is to remember Parks as an ordinary citizen whose courage and determination brought extraordinary results. The subject is the legacy of Rosa Parks, a well-known person loved by many.

Readers' familiarity with Toles—along with his obvious respect for his subject—establishes his ethos. The image in the cartoon appeals primarily to pathos. Toles shows Rosa Parks, who was a devout Christian, as she is about to enter heaven through the pearly gates; they are attended by an angel, probably Saint Peter, who is reading a ledger. Toles depicts Parks wearing a simple coat and carrying her pocketbook, as she did while sitting on the bus so many years ago. Her features are somewhat detailed and realistic, making her stand out despite her modest posture and demeanor.



National Geographic / May 2018

**Speaker:**

**Occasion:**

**Audience:**

**Purpose:**

**Subject:**

**Tone:**

**Exigence:**

## Four-Sentence Rhetorical Précis Template

1. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, in his/her \_\_\_\_\_,  
*(author's credentials-optional)*                      *(author's first and last name)*                      *(genre)*

\_\_\_\_\_ (*title of text*) \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*), argues (or some other appropriate verb)

that \_\_\_\_\_  
*(major assertion of author's text)*

2. He/She supports his/her claim by first \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, and finally \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ purpose is to \_\_\_\_\_  
*(author's last name)*                      *(purpose: persuade, inform, entertain, etc.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ in order to

\_\_\_\_\_ *(to accomplish what?)*

4. He/She \_\_\_\_\_ a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ tone for  
*(verb: adopts, establishes, creates, etc.)*                      *(tone descriptive: confident, hostile)*

\_\_\_\_\_ *(intended audience)*

**Rhetorical précis model: “What I Saw When I Rode Out Florence”**

In his op-ed piece for The New York Times, “How I Rode Out Florence” (18 September 2018), novelist Taylor Brown illustrates that although Mother Nature wreaked havoc on the Carolina landscape, she was unable to quash the spirit of survivors, who closed ranks to face her wrath. Brown supports his assertion **first by explaining** that his circumstances made fleeing the storm a formidable task, although he was fortunate enough to have that decision to make, unlike many Carolinians who had no recourse but to shelter at a gym, **then recounting** the storm’s fury, which awakened them with “a heavy thump” to stare transfixed at the violence, **then giving examples** of “haunting, heartbreaking” text updates of the water rising ever higher into the homes of friends and relatives over the next few days, **and finally, detailing** anecdotes of neighbors helping neighbors, as when one siphoned gas from his own car to power the refrigerator at a local deli. Brown’s purpose is to describe living through a hurricane with *readers who had followed the news of Florence’s deadly destruction* for days **in order to** help them feel the sense of community that disasters can engender. His tone is both humble and awestruck at the might of the storm, and at the tenacity of human nature.

# Come Back, New York, All Is Forgiven

By Roger Cohen / Opinion Columnist / The New York Times – April 10, 2020

I forgive you, New York. I forgive you your snarl, your aggression, your hustle and hassle. I forgive you LaGuardia and your summer stench of uncollected garbage. I forgive you no cabs in the rain. I forgive you the crusty, deceptive puddles of slush at curbside. I even forgive you the Mets and no place to park and delivery trucks in the bike lane.

All is forgiven if you will only return: the subway soliloquies of the homeless, the trains that never come, the trains that stop in the middle of the tunnel, the traffic, the garbage trucks blocking cross streets, the jackhammering of construction, the hiss of smoke from a manhole cover, the idling stretch-limo S.U.V.s, the drone of a million air-conditioning units, the drivers leaning on horns, the city hum that never ceases, until it did.

I forgive you. I forgive you now and forever. How could I ever begrudge you your restlessness, your relentlessness, your lip, your effrontery, your appraising glance, your pushiness, your impatience, your disregard for social niceties, when I knew all along that your great secret was that an extreme degree of ambition coexists in your streets with the empathy every New Yorker feels for a fellow New Yorker?

Only come back and all is pardoned: the tourists meandering in the theater district, your roads pitted with potholes, your crazy prices, your dinner parties ending at 9:30 because tomorrow is another New York day and there's money to be made, your awful basketball, your restaurants that have a table — maybe — in a couple of months, your overcrowded sidewalks, your iPhone addicts gathered at the exit of a subway station, your way of never ever relenting until you turn every one of your workers into a zombie by nightfall.

I forgive you the rats — yes, even the rats — and I'll throw in the roaches. The swelter of August, forgiven. The icy winter winds off the Hudson and the East River, forgiven. The impossibility of getting across town, forgiven. I forgive you the crowds, the craziness, the cruelty, the cursing, the complaining customers, the impatient merchants and the most uncomfortable cabs in the world.

I forgive you your kale salads, your restaurants that sell only oatmeal, your trends. I forgive you your street preachers, your sanctimonious parents who drone on about their children's schools. I forgive you Macy's during the Christmas season and Times Square always. I forgive you your ticket-holder lines, your throngs blocking out the paintings at MoMA, your rush-hour subways crammed with humanity. I forgive you the holding of subway doors, your drunks peeing and puking on the street.

I forgive you Penn Station. I forgive you the Port Authority, yes, even that! I forgive you the brutal division of haves and have-nots. I forgive you the bus to the cabs at LaGuardia-in-construction and the recording that tries to persuade you that the bus is really *great news*.

Look, I'll pardon the madness of having AirTrain JFK start in Queens rather than Manhattan. I forgive you the whiff of urine on a Sunday morning, the broken glass in Central Park and the way you persuade people that saying "I may have a window next month" is OK behavior.

I forgive you for driving me crazy at times, for making me want to scream, "Get me out of here!" I forgive you everything without exception if you will only promise to reappear.

Please, do not be proud. I know, we cursed you with irresponsible abandon. Forgive us, as I forgive you. We did not imagine the silence that could fall, the sirens that would fill the night, the sick and the dying, the doctors laboring on the 10th circle of the inferno, the ghostliness of shuttered stores, the empty skies, the canceled events, the post- apocalypse latex gloves scattered here and there. We took you too much for granted. Yes, forgive us for not giving daily praise for the miracle of New York.

I know I did not thank you enough for those clear winter mornings, for that dive I love on West 26th, for your tolerance, for your open arms, for the sun glinting on the Empire State Building, for your amplex, for New York Noodletown, for your secrets slowly revealed, for your endlessness, for your boldness, for your churn, for the Met Cloisters, for your humanity, for your wit, for Coney Island, for the water towers, for the Staten Island Ferry being free, for banking over the city into LaGuardia or J.F.K. and seeing you and thinking this is *home*, for taking me in as no other city ever could.

Being a New Yorker, I was in a hurry. I was forgetful. You get that. Please forgive me. Please forgive us all. I'll throw in the pigeons. Forgive you for every one of those awful birds. Just come back, just return, please. I know we can make a deal.

# Superman and Me

By Sherman Alexie

I learned to read with a Superman comic book. Simple enough, I suppose. I cannot recall which particular Superman comic book I read, nor can I remember which villain he fought in that issue. I cannot remember the plot, nor the means by which I obtained the comic book. What I can remember is this: I was 3 years old, a Spokane Indian boy living with his family on the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington state. We were poor by most standards, but one of my parents usually managed to find some minimum-wage job or another, which made us middle-class by reservation standards. I had a brother and three sisters. We lived on a combination of irregular paychecks, hope, fear and government surplus food.

My father, who is one of the few Indians who went to Catholic school on purpose, was an avid reader of westerns, spy thrillers, murder mysteries, gangster epics, basketball player biographies and anything else he could find. He bought his books by the pound at Dutch's Pawn Shop, Goodwill, Salvation Army and Value Village. When he had extra money, he bought new novels at supermarkets, convenience stores and hospital gift shops. Our house was filled with books. They were stacked in crazy piles in the bathroom, bedrooms and living room. In a fit of unemployment-inspired creative energy, my father built a set of bookshelves and soon filled them with a random assortment of books about the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, the Vietnam War and the entire 23-book series of the Apache westerns. My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well.

I can remember picking up my father's books before I could read. The words themselves were mostly foreign, but I still remember the exact moment when I first

understood, with a sudden clarity, the purpose of a paragraph. I didn't have the vocabulary to say "paragraph," but I realized that a paragraph was a fence that held words. The words inside a paragraph worked together for a common purpose. They had some specific reason for being inside the same fence. This knowledge delighted me. I began to think of everything in terms of paragraphs. Our reservation was a small paragraph within the United States. My family's house was a paragraph, distinct from the other paragraphs of the LeBrets to the north, the Fords to our south and the Tribal School to the west. Inside our house, each family member existed as a separate paragraph but still had genetics and common experiences to link us. Now, using this logic, I can see my changed family as an essay of seven paragraphs: mother, father, older brother, the deceased sister, my younger twin sisters and our adopted little brother.

At the same time I was seeing the world in paragraphs, I also picked up that Superman comic book. Each panel, complete with picture, dialogue and narrative was a three-dimensional paragraph. In one panel, Superman breaks through a door. His suit is red, blue and yellow. The brown door shatters into many pieces. I look at the narrative above the picture. I cannot read the words, but I assume it tells me that "Superman is breaking down the door." Aloud, I pretend to read the words and say, "Superman is breaking down the door." Words, dialogue, also float out of Superman's mouth. Because he is breaking down the door, I assume he says, "I am breaking down the door." Once again, I pretend to read the words and say aloud, "I am breaking down the door" In this way, I learned to read.

This might be an interesting story all by itself. A little Indian boy teaches himself to read at an early age and advances quickly. He reads "Grapes of Wrath" in kindergarten when other children are struggling through "Dick and Jane." If he'd been

anything but an Indian boy living on the reservation, he might have been called a prodigy. But he is an Indian boy living on the reservation and is simply an oddity. He grows into a man who often speaks of his childhood in the third-person, as if it will somehow dull the pain and make him sound more modest about his talents.

A smart Indian is a dangerous person, widely feared and ridiculed by Indians and non-Indians alike. I fought with my classmates on a daily basis. They wanted me to stay quiet when the non-Indian teacher asked for answers, for volunteers, for help. We were Indian children who were expected to be stupid. Most lived up to those expectations inside the classroom but subverted them on the outside. They struggled with basic reading in school but could remember how to sing a few dozen powwow songs. They were monosyllabic in front of their non-Indian teachers but could tell complicated stories and jokes at the dinner table. They submissively ducked their heads when confronted by a non-Indian adult but would slug it out with the Indian bully who was 10 years older. As Indian children, we were expected to fail in the non-Indian world. Those who failed were ceremonially accepted by other Indians and appropriately pitied by non-Indians.

I refused to fail. I was smart. I was arrogant. I was lucky. I read books late into the night, until I could barely keep my eyes open. I read books at recess, then during lunch, and in the few minutes left after I had finished my classroom assignments. I read books in the car when my family traveled to powwows or basketball games. In shopping malls, I ran to the bookstores and read bits and pieces of as many books as I could. I read the books my father brought home from the pawnshops and secondhand. I read the books I borrowed from the library. I read the backs of cereal boxes. I read the newspaper. I read the bulletins posted on the walls of the school, the clinic, the tribal offices, the post office. I read junk mail. I read auto-repair manuals. I read magazines. I

read anything that had words and paragraphs. I read with equal parts joy and desperation. I loved those books, but I also knew that love had only one purpose. I was trying to save my life.

Despite all the books I read, I am still surprised I became a writer. I was going to be a pediatrician. These days, I write novels, short stories, and poems. I visit schools and teach creative writing to Indian kids. In all my years in the reservation school system, I was never taught how to write poetry, short stories or novels. I was certainly never taught that Indians wrote poetry, short stories and novels. Writing was something beyond Indians. I cannot recall a single time that a guest teacher visited the reservation. There must have been visiting teachers. Who were they? Where are they now? Do they exist? I visit the schools as often as possible. The Indian kids crowd the classroom. Many are writing their own poems, short stories and novels. They have read my books. They have read many other books. They look at me with bright eyes and arrogant wonder. They are trying to save their lives. Then there are the sullen and already defeated Indian kids who sit in the back rows and ignore me with theatrical precision. The pages of their notebooks are empty. They carry neither pencil nor pen. They stare out the window. They refuse and resist. "Books," I say to them. "Books," I say. I throw my weight against their locked doors. The door holds. I am smart. I am arrogant. I am lucky. I am trying to save our lives.