Purpose: To synthesize a variety of informational sources in order to make a cohesive and persuasive argument defending a claim.

Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are arguably the two most influential poets in American history. Both poets addressed universal themes in groundbreaking ways and redefined how poetry could look and sound and what subjects poetry could address. Furthermore, Whitman and Dickinson were the first American poets to break with the traditional forms (sonnets, iambic pentameter, etc.) and subjects (unrequited love, nature, etc.) of the European poetry tradition and create a new uniquely American poetic voice.

Because this is AP Language, however, you are going to use one poem by each poet, research on the poets’ lives, and a visual of your choice to write a persuasive research paper on the theme of your choice.

Poems and Theme
First, pick one poem by Whitman and one poem by Dickinson that share a similar theme (you can find all poems by each poet under the Bartleby.com link in the LibGuide). “What theme might I choose?” you ask? Ultimately the theme of this paper is up to you. The paper is persuasive, so you must make a claim regarding an aspect of your theme and then argue your claim. Before your works cited page, you will include copies of both poems with line numbers every five lines.

I will give you some suggestions for your theme based on common themes in Whitman and Dickinson’s poetry: logic and reason versus intuition and imagination, the source of true happiness or fulfillment, diversity, equality, God or religion, brotherhood, separation, death, priorities, the American Dream, everyday experiences and simple things, nature, individuality, sacrifice, love, immortality, disappointment, helping others, failure, identity, social status or lack of social status, loneliness, loss, and pain. You will integrate quotes from each poem and explicate each poem thoroughly to support your claim regarding the theme. Your claim must be an arguable opinion based upon your theme.

For example, if you choose the theme of happiness and fulfillment, you might argue in your paper the claim that one finds true happiness and fulfillment only through helping others. However, a claim that everyone seeks happiness and fulfillment in some way would NOT be good because it is obvious and no one would argue against it.

Biographical Research
Next, using the links to databases (GALE, GALILEO, the LRC) and scholarly websites on the LibGuide, you will research the lives of Whitman and Dickinson and use details from their very interesting (and bizarre) lives to help support your argument. You must use a minimum of two database sources (GALE, GALILEO, the LRC) and a minimum of two scholarly website sources (4
sources total) for this part of your paper. Wikipedia is NOT an acceptable source, and I will take 20 points off for each time I see an entry for Wikipedia on your works cited page.

Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual
Then you will “read” and analyze a visual in order to further support your argument. This visual may be either a political cartoon, an advertisement, a work of art, a famous photograph, or an iconic image. You must conduct a rhetorical analysis of this visual (see The Language of Composition Chapter 1 for directions on analysis of a visual) and explain how this visual further supports the overall argument of your paper.

Just before your works cited page, you will include a color picture of your visual so that I may reference it while reading your analysis.

Requirements
Your paper should be a minimum of three pages in length, typed, and in MLA format (12 point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, one-inch margins, proper header and heading, title, parenthetical citations of sources, and properly formatted works cited page).

You will end your paper with copies of both poems, a color copy of your visual, and an MLA style works cited page citing (1) the source or sources of both poems, (2) the sources of all research used in your paper, and (3) the source of the visual.

Timeline
We will be researching/writing/conferencing/editing in the computer lab Tuesday, March 13, through Thursday, March 29. A typed rough draft* will be due for a grade on Monday, March 26. On Tuesday, March 27, Wednesday, March 28, and Thursday, March 29, you will be peer editing each other’s essays, conferencing with me regarding your essay, and working on your final drafts.

*In order to receive a good grade on your rough draft, it must be a full three pages in length, typed and in MLA format, address each aspect of analysis (the poem, the biographical research, and the visual), and have a complete MLA-style works cited page.

Your final draft will be due to www.turnitin.com by 12:01 AM on Friday, March 30. A hard copy of your final draft will be due in class on Friday, March 30.