

# Think Like a Freak AP Seminar Summer Reading Assignment

Welcome to AP Seminar, “a foundational course that engages students in cross-curricular conversations that explore the complexities of academic and real-world topics and issues by analyzing divergent perspectives” (College Board).

## What does this mean for you as a student?

How is this different from other AP Courses? The answer: a challenging, yet gratifying, year of critical thinking, analysis, research, and collaboration that will help you gain confidence with your own voice in writing and speaking. You will look at other author’s arguments through a variety of perspectives and then will examine real-world issues and develop and defend your own credible arguments, both individually and collaboratively.

The main goal of the summer reading assignment is for you to read, think about, and enjoy a book with an important set of ideas. With that in mind, I do not want to bog down your reading with a lot of journaling, questions, or tasks; however, there are few things you will need to accomplish this summer as you read *Think Like a Freak* by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner.

## PART B: In addition, you will need to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why is it difficult for people to say, “I don’t know?” What is one’s moral compass and how can it get in the way of free thinking?
- 2) Explain why thinking small is thinking like a freak and is advantageous over thinking big.
- 3) In economics, what are declared preferences and what are revealed preferences? How can these economic terms be applied to thinking like a freak?
- 4) What conclusions did Brian Mullaney reach about what incentivizes people to give to charity? Why was his “once and done” option successful?
- 5) What are relationship frameworks? Describe some specific instances in which they can be violated. What is ping-pong diplomacy and how was it a positive shift in a traditional framework?
- 6) What are the three main reasons incentives fail? What are the guidelines for successfully determining the way to find the right incentives that will appeal to the individual and will also get the job done?
- 7) What is game theory? How did both David Lee Roth, lead singer for Van Halen, and King Solomon both engage in it? What are the benefits and what are the risks?
- 8) What is the Spanish Prisoner? Why do Nigerians continue to send out emails promising the recipients millions if they help a Nigerian prince when everyone knows that they are scams?
- 9) What is the mission of the Cultural Cognition Project? What were their findings about climate change deniers?
- 10) What is the Concorde fallacy? What are the three forces that keep people from abandoning a project?

\* Questions taken from “Think like a Freak Study Guide,” BookRags, Inc., 2015. Digital.

## PART A. As you read, annotate and question the book. Your annotations should focus on things like:

- 1) Levitt and Dubner’s main points.
- 2) Facts, observations that you find interesting, surprising, important.
- 3) Questions you may have.
- 4) Parallels to other reading selections or current events.
- 5) Observations or assumptions that you want to argue with (i.e. where you think Levitt and Dubner are wrong or didn’t consider something).
- 6) Definitions of unfamiliar terms, vocabulary, and concepts.

Annotations should reflect insight and questioning of ideas. **Annotating** is any action that deliberately interacts with a **text** to enhance the reader's understanding of, recall of, and reaction to the text. You should annotate **IN THE BOOK** – in the margins, inside the cover, etc. You can keep additional annotations on separate pages if you wish. **I recommend annotating as you read.** This does not need to be a lengthy assignment! Use the annotations to help remind you of the important parts of the book.



*Think Like a Freak* - Softcover  
Dubner, Stephen J. & Levitt, Steven D.  
ISBN 10: 0141980117 ISBN 13: 9780141980119  
Publisher: Penguin, 2014

**NOTE: The summer reading/writing assignments are to help get you acclimated to critical thinking of a non-fiction text. The summer reading assignment will be due the first week of school. You will be expected to bring your annotated book AND the answers to the above questions in order to critically discuss themes from the book on the first day of school.**

*As the AP Program engages students in college-level work, the AP Seminar course may include perspectives that could be considered controversial, including references to ethnicity, nationality, religion, politics, race, dialect, sexuality, gender, or class. AP Seminar requires students to have a level of maturity and skill to thoughtfully consider and analyze diverse perspectives. The inclusion of topics, readings, texts, and other source material is not intended as an endorsement by the College Board or the instructor of the content, ideas, or values expressed in the material.*