

English Learner Portfolio

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1 Introduction

Good afternoon Mr. Lam. Today, I will be presenting selected pieces from my IB Learner Portfolio which documents my learning progress from the start of the IB program all the way up to the present.

To start, I would like to catch you up on my growth in semester one of the Higher Level English course. Followed by talking about my situation in the present, as well as discussing my future expectations for the current and next semester. In this video essay, I will cover how the skills I have developed helped me with the three units that were covered this semester, with a greater focus on Emily Dickinson's Poetry and the Maus Graphic Novel. Furthermore, I will also be discussing the preparations I have undertaken for the Independent Oral Presentation as well as the HL Essay.

2 Growth in Previous Semester

During the first semester of the HL English course, I initially struggled with the transition between the difficulty of the Grade Ten to the Grade Eleven course. I felt the pressure of analyzing poetry and novels at a much faster pace in ad-

dition to having to explore each text with significantly more depth and detail. Furthermore, the switch from in-person to online learning negatively impacted my ability to focus and render information I retained from class. Nevertheless, as the course went on, I was able to adapt to the course requirements and eventually caught up with my peers.

Throughout the course, I was introduced to an array of authors and poets that produced literature pieces in drastically different genres. The poetry pieces from Pablo Neruda explored motifs of love, nature and patriotism and the analysis of his poetry was extremely beneficial for the analysis essay of Emily Dickinson that we had written this semester. George Orwell's essays were much more straightforward and used very few words to convey his message. Clarice Lispector's short story Family Ties explored many existentialism themes through the strained relationship between a woman and her mother. Finally, Yu Hua's China in Ten Words novel encompassed many motifs as well as helped me develop text-to-self connections. I was able to discuss many of these topics with my parents who lived through the period in which the story bases off of. The combination of all the competencies learned from these literature pieces helped broaden my perspectives when it comes to analyzing literature pieces. The collection of my experiences in previous English courses helped shape me into the learner that I am today.

3 The Present

Since the start of the semester, all the way up to the present, there has only been only a single summative assessment, being the Emily Dickinson analysis. For this analysis essay, I scored an IB grade of Level 7 and a converted OSSD

mark of 98%. I was rather proud of the mark I had received as I spent a significant amount of effort into the preparation through a series of mock analysis paragraphs that I had written beforehand.

I would like to start off by directing your attention towards some of the improvements that I have made between my analysis of Pablo Neruda's poetry from the previous semester and the analysis I had completed for Emily Dickinson's poetry. I would like to bring your attention to the poem "The Unhappy One" by Neruda and Poem 511 "If you were coming this Fall" by Emily Dickinson. Both poems express the unwavering love that the narrator feels towards their significant other by describing the indefinite period of time they would wait for their return. After reviewing the places where I lost marks last year, the evidence was plain as sight in the graphic organizer where I annotated the poem. I was too broad and tried to encompass too many stylistic elements into my analysis, and ended up not going into enough depth of each individual device.

As can be seen in my annotations, I focused on many different stylistic elements such as simile, metaphor and personification. This is also evident for form elements as well with repetition, alliteration and paragraph formatting all being discussed. Even though my points were all valid and contributed to my Central Assertion, they did not fit well together as I did not go into specific details and provide sufficient evidence for each of my points.

However, contrasting the analysis essay for Emily Dickinson's poem 511 that

I had completed as a practice for my in-class essay, I chose slant rhyme for my form element and metaphors for my stylistic device. By utilizing the Point Evidence and Importance also known as the PEI method taught in class, I was able to only focus on these two stylistic elements as shown in the presentation. The orange colour indicates the point, the green represents the textual evidence and finally, the blue is the importance of this evidence. This method allowed me to stay on track throughout my entire analysis essay and not go off track of introducing new stylistic devices during my body paragraphs. As can be seen in both of the body paragraphs, all of the evidence, as well as points, relate back to the central assertion of the analysis as can be seen highlighted in yellow.

To prepare for the in-class analysis essay, I had written multiple mock analysis essays and I have sent them to you for critique and feedback. I was made aware that the essays I had submitted were in the range of IB Level 5 to IB Level 6. I was not content with this score, hence I found the best way to improve was to simply do more practice. Therefore, I decided to just simply go through the poems in the Dickinson package as many poems as I could before the assessment. This allowed me to get a collective idea of all the stylistic devices that are common in her poems and this made the actual analysis essay much easier to complete in the provided time period. For future assessments, I will also be practicing writing my mock analysis essays by hand, as all of the marks I had lost on my in-class essay were because of the abundant amount of spelling mistakes that I had made. The online learning system has transitioned me to become too dependent on computer features such as auto-correct or the thesaurus. Therefore, to recreate a test environment, I will also be timing myself as well as writing everything down on paper when practicing.

4 Independent Oral

To prepare for the two major IB assessments for the Higher Level English course, being the Independent Oral and the Higher Level Essay, I have already begun reviewing my notes from both last and this year.

For my independent oral presentation, I have decided on doing the Graphic Novel *Maus* by Jewish writer Art Spiegelman because of how intriguing I found the book to be. With each re-read of the book, I was able to discover new details that I did not notice before, and it has intrigued me to investigate this novel in more depth. The book follows the memories of Vladek, a Jew living in Poland during the Second World War. Previous to the *Maus* unit, I had never read Graphic Novels for the purpose of analyzing them, and was initially daunted by *Maus*' complexity. However, the two in class lessons were very beneficial for me as a starting point to getting to know the essay better.

The notes that I took on the historical context, as shown in the slides helped me to get a better grasp on what was happening in the world during the period previous to the war as well as during the war.

The in class lesson and discussion regarding the significant of animals in the novel also helped me better understand the symbolism behind the purpose of having the Jewish people as the mouse, the Nazis as the cat and the Polish as the pigs. The combination of these two lessons followed by the in class discussion questions which I will be talking about on the next slide really helped me with

the understanding of this novel and made the book less challenging for me. However, the in-class discussion questions were of great help to me, as conversing with my peers allowed me to better understand how to approach a Graphic Novel. A question that stood out to me which helped me personally improve my Graphic Novel analysis skills was the second discussion question for the first chapter. The question asked us to analyze the purpose of splitting Vladek's body into three separate panels, as well as the significance of Artie's position in the panels and the symbolism behind the exercise bike. This question taught me the significance of analyzing the panels not individually but as part of a larger piece of artwork. The position of Artie within each of the panels appears to be the less dominant figure, and this reoccurring motif throughout the book helped me understand the power dynamic between Artie and Vladek. The third and final part of the question inquires about the significance of the exercise bike. Conclusively with my peers, we decided that it was to show the effort Vladek is putting in to move on from the past. However, his efforts were in vain as the bike is stationary and does not move no matter how fast or how long he pedals. This leads me to my first Global Issue, which is Culture, Identity and Community, more specifically Generational Trauma. Many of the older characters have gone through many hurtful experiences throughout their life, and have become fixated on these traumatic memories. This global issue is also present in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* where both Vladek and Willy are unable to move on from the past and live fully in the present. Both characters end up projecting this generational trauma onto their family as they believe that they themselves always know best. An example of this is seen in the bottom panel of the presentation, where Vladek throws out Artie's "old" jacket and gives him his even older jacket because he is afraid that Artie was going to be cold. This demonstrates Vladek's belief that he is always right about

everything and further highlights the father-son power dynamic as Artie does not even attempt to fish the Jacket out of the garbage can and does not disobey his father's orders.

5 HL Essay

Finally, I would like to briefly discuss the plans I have for my HL Essay. As I am reading through "Half a Lifelong Romance", I have been really enjoying the novel and I was able to have interesting conversations with my parents about the atmosphere of society at the time. Therefore, I have decided that for my HL Essay, I will be exploring this text.

I plan on exploring my second Global Issue which is Beliefs, Values and Education. Throughout the story, Shijun and Manzhen were forced apart due to a series of societal expectations. I plan on exploring the values of families at the time through my own research as well as having personal conversations with members of my family who have had similar experiences. Therefore, the two controlling ideas of my HL essay will be beliefs and values of the main characters as well as the sense of identity in the book.

6 Conclusion

Although not too long has passed since the Learner Portfolio conference last year, I firmly believe that my literature analysis skills have improved drastically. From the mock Dickinson poetry analysis paragraphs to the in-class discussion questions for Maus, I have broadened my perspectives when it comes to English literature and also grown as both a reader and writer. For the remainder of this

semester, I plan on continuing to work on myself and improve my analysis and writing skills.

Thank you for listening to my presentation, if you have any further questions about my learning journey, feel free to reach out to me in class or through Email. Good-bye.