# Thank you, English teachers

*DECK: Pens and highlighters in one hand, books and papers in the other, you’ve shaped us into the readers, writers and thinkers we are today.*

# ***by:*** *Kaitlyn Tsai*

## **Word Count:** 464

## Image:

## Attribution:

## ID: english-teachers

## Date: April 19 2021

## Tag: farewells

## Photo/Graphic with credit (required for sign off):

**Caption:**

## Linked to spreadsheet?

From teaching us that no, Juliet is not asking where Romeo is, to walking us through the most ambiguous passages of “Beloved,” English teachers, you’ve given us arguably the greatest gifts of our high school careers.

You’ve taught us how to read closely, scrutinizing every passage, every metaphor, every word of the text to understand the deeper meanings of even the most confusing pieces, even ones like e.e. cummings’ “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r.” You’ve sharpened our writing skills beyond anything our freshman selves could have imagined, arming us with an arsenal of complex sentence structures and eloquent vocabulary so that surely, we can at least impress guests at cocktail parties with words like “verisimilitude.”

But above all, you’ve taught us how to think — how to reflect on the way war dehumanizes soldiers as depicted in “All Quiet on the Western Front,” how to analyze John Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of Wrath” for its commentary on class struggles and the migrant experience during the Great Depression, how to wrestle with the nuances of the ethical dilemmas involved issues like affirmative action.

Through everything from novels and poems to daily discussions and Socratic seminars, you’ve guided us through our explorations of the world and helped us grapple with some of society’s toughest questions. From “Of Mice and Men,” we began exploring the various types of prejudice that existed in the 1930s and plague society today. From “Lord of the Flies,” we investigated theories on morality and the natural state of mankind. From “The Great Gatsby,” we grappled with our own discomfort in understanding how upper-class people (perhaps even like ourselves) exacerbate the wealth gap. And from “The Awakening,” we examined hostility toward feminism and the role society plays in suicides.

English teachers, you’ve changed us from naive, sheltered adolescents to mature young adults ready to face the complexity of the real world — its ugliness and beauty, its cruelty and kindness, its brutality and resilience. And ironically, in a time when we should be proudly flaunting all that we’ve learned from you, we can find no words to express the breadth and depth of our gratitude.

Thank you for helping us tap into the power of language and literature, for showing us how words can transport people into worlds and experiences like nothing else can. Thank you for showing us how words can bring pain and discomfort to their readers and, in so doing, foster empathy and openness and inspire change. And above all, thank you for giving us the keys to unlock the doors in society that no one has yet dared to open, to dive headfirst into the questions no one dares to ask or answer. Murky as these paths are, we know that we can take them one step at a time, one word at a time, and come back to tell you our stories.