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Welcome to English 9!

GOALS

Become excited about learning.

Find out the ways in which you are intelligent.

Work to expand those intelligences.

Discover habits that help you succeed in areas that are difficult for you.

Question everything!

Think about what you want to know. Develop questions that you want answers to.

Learn ways to find out that information.

Become thoughtful and aware of what you believe to be true.

Understand who you are; expand that definition by increasing your knowledge and awareness of the world (every time I come to know something, it increases me - I know about poetry, I am a different person. I understand and know about the universe, I am a different person. My understanding of myself changes as my knowledge of the world changes because we understand ourselves in relation to the world around us.)

Use technology regularly, become comfortable integrating it into your daily life.

GETTING ONLINE

home

school

elsewhere: laptops, libraries, cafes

You are not wrong, but you have to explain why.

What questions do I need to ask so that my students ask the questions that will help them discover what they need to know?

We are all responsible for the success of this classroom. As the teacher, I will to some extent lead the classroom, and I will to some extent enforce the rules we establish as a community, but if something is not working for you, if you are bored or confused or unhappy, you have the responsibility to speak up, and, what is more, you have the responsibility to work to fix it, always with the support of myself and your classmates, but hard work is required of each one of us.

This means that you are not only free to question me but that you have a responsibility to question me. You are not only free to question the texts we read, but a responsibility to. The same goes for each other, for society, for rules, etc.

Questioning, however, is not belligerent. It should be done respectfully and with an open mind and an honest desire to improve the experience for yourself, for your classmates, for me.

We will have several ongoing assignments that will require you to decide when and how to complete them. We will work together to develop time management strategies so that you do not get behind.

REPORTINGS

Twice each month, you will be responsible for reporting on a current event to the class.

1. Get in the habit of reading newspapers and online news sources and/or watching or listening to the news. I will provide newspapers for the classroom. Find what works best for you: radio, tv, newspapers, online.

2. Find a story that interests you and is relevant to you or your community (local, state, national, international). Sports scores, movie reviews, etc. will not count for credit unless you can come up with a really great account of why it is relevant to you/community.

3. Write up: Write a one paragraph summary of the story and a one paragraph reaction (why you found it interesting, what you think about it, how it is relevant to you, etc.). This will go into your commonplace book/blog (see below).

4. Cite your source in proper MLA format in your write up. We will talk more about this later.

5. Present your story to the class. In 30 seconds to 1 minute, tell your classmates about your story. We will talk more about presentations later.

6. Engage with your classmates’ stories. Ask questions, offer comments. This portion of the assignment will be included in your overall participation grade.

INDEPENDENT READING

Each semester, you are expected to read 800 (12th)/400 (9th) pages on your own. This reading is in addition to reading required for class. You can read whatever you like.[[1]](#footnote-1) I am happy to make suggestions, as is Ms. Moskewitz in the library!

On block days, we will begin class with 20 minutes of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). To meet the requirements, however, you will have to read at other times as well.

Goodreads.com: Goodreads is like Facebook for books! It allows you to keep track of books you have read and want to read and to rate the books you have read. You will keep track of your independent reading on this site. We will create profiles in class. Each time you start or finish a book, note it on your Goodreads profile. Each time you finish a book or decide not to finish a book, rate the book using the Goodreads star system and write a review of at least one paragraph that describes what you liked or didn’t like and why. Make sure to note when your review contains spoilers!

You can also talk about the books you read, or about ideas you get from them, in your commonplace books/blogs (see below).

COMMONPLACE BOOKS and/or BLOGS

MEMORIZATION AND RECITATION

You will be required to memorize and recite at least 28 lines of poetry each semester (the equivalent of 2 sonnets). This can take the form of one longer poem or two shorter poems. You will receive extra credit for doing more than 28 lines.

We will read poetry in class that you can choose from or you may find other poems on your own. I am also happy to help. Other forms of writing, such as excerpts from speeches or plays, the preamble to the Declaration of Independence, etc. can also be used for this assignment. Please see me to discuss your choices.

We will talk more about techniques for memorization and recitation at a later date.

What is the purpose, as you see it, of English class? What has been the purpose of past English/Language Arts classes you have taken in the past? What have you gotten out of them? What would you like to get out of this one? What would you like to get out of English classes throughout your high school career?

What questions do you have? Big ones, little ones. Specific ones, general ones. Examples: Why is the sky blue? Why is there violence in our world? What color blood does a beetle have? Did the Egyptians worship cats? How do I talk about the way I feel right now? Do we know how big the universe is? If I drop an egg into water from 20 feet up will it break? Why is my sister such a b\*$@#?! How do you roast a chicken? How long would it take for me to sit down and count to one million? How do I get into college? What should I be when I grow up?

Alternate journal topic.

Who am I today? Sometimes we just need to take some time to re-situate ourselves, to acknowledge who we are. If you ever feel the need to do this, you may use this as an alternate journal topic. Write about this instead of the topic on the board.

What is a text? What can be a text? What can we “read”?

What does it mean to “read”? What do we do when we are faced with a text? Being literate: knowing what to do with a text, what questions to ask it.

Graphic Novels and Comics

Maus

A Contract with God

The Sandman

Maira Kalman

Dinosaur Comics (template comics)

Political Cartoons

Tropes in various comic genres (e.g., Uncle Sam for US,

How are they different from traditional books? From TV/Movies?

Multimodality

1. However, the numbers are based on books that have approximately 250 words per page. I reserve the right to increase the number of pages you must read if your books have far fewer words per page. Almost all books will be fine, though, including most graphic novels! [↑](#footnote-ref-1)