Welcome to English 1!

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**Class Overview**

The theme for this year’s English 1class is **Identity: Define Self,**  **Become Resilient.** You will be challenged in this block to investigate who you are by exploring your thoughts, experiences, and beliefs, and you will also help your peers question their beliefs and what they have been told. Additionally, you will think about the person you want to become, and we will look at how you can build the perseverance, strength, and vision that you will need to successfully go after your dreams and goals.

 Together we will read The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie, as well as an anthology of thought-provoking and controversial short stories and poems. The authors of these articles are from the American Indian, Latino, and African American cultures. These authors—and these stories—may have powerful messages for you. Somewhere along the road, someone told these authors: “You can’t do it. You’ll never amount to anything. You’ll never make it—the odds are too high.”

 But guess what? They made it.

*Why* did they succeed, when everyone was telling them they would fail?  *What* “X-factor” allowed these writers—and others like them—to beat the odds? Their struggles, their ordeals, and ultimately, their victories, ask the question: “How far will people go to get what they want out of life? What will it take?”

I issue you a personal challenge. Dedicate yourself to trying your hardest in this class. Attack the readings and the assignments with your full heart and energy. Do not be afraid to “go deep”—in your writing, in your thinking, and in your discussions with your peers.

Not only for the ‘A’—but because if you do, you will come away from this class at the with a clearer picture of who you are, who you want to be, and the special purpose you have on this planet that only you can fulfill.

The readings and assignments in this class are designed to open up discussion about real issues and questions that you have. Please be respectful of the diversity of others’ experiences. Aim to understand and to help others along their journeys: no one grows by being judged.

I am going to risk right alongside of you—because that is how true learning happens. I look forward to teaching you, and to learning from you in turn.

 Please feel free to contact me or speak with me after/before class throughout the block if you have any suggestions, comments, concerns, or circumstances I need to know! Here’s to all this block will be!

 **Class Expectations**

* **Rules:**  Be Ready for each class.

**R**espect yourself, your peers, your teacher, and your environment.

**E**mbrace mistakes as learning opportunities.

**A**ccept responsibility for your choices.

**D**o your best work always.

**Y**ou are a team player willing to participate and help others.

* **Student Helpers:** Every week, student helpers will assist in starting and wrapping up class. If a student helper is absent, someone else from class must step up.
* **Class Setup:** Classwork consists of two main sections: reading-work related to our novel and writing-work related to the selections from the ID curriculum. Class will start with a slideshow or short reading from the literature anthology, followed by a class discussion and fifteen minutes of silent journaling. Writing time is \*SACRED.\* This is an opportunity for you and your peers to reflect on the class themes or to process what is going on in your own life, and I expect this time to be taken seriously. Each day, we will also read from our novel and participate in a writer’s workshop, a block of time during which you will plan, draft, respond, revise, edit and finalize your class writing assignments.
* **Routine Writing and Feedback:** We will be writing every day in class. I will collect and respond to your journals on a weekly basis. If you would like immediate feedback (required writing or not)—please place the writing on my desk at the end of the class period, and I will write you a comment by the next day.

\***A note on confidentiality**: I will not share your journals with anyone else unless you give me permission. **However**, if you write *in school* about being hurt, hurting yourself or someone else, or anything related to gangs, alcohol use, or drugs, be aware that I am **required by law** to report this information to the school.

* **Conferences/Revision:** Your peers and I will conference with you several times before you turn in a final copy of your paper. Writing—though fun-- is also hard work. Revisions are necessary and expected.
* **Library:** You are more than welcome to sign out books from my class library using the sign out system. At the end of two weeks, you must re-sign for the book if you have not finished it. Please let me know if you would like to discuss the book after you’ve finished it!
* **Absences:** If you are absent, it is your responsibility to check with me or with another student to see what work you missed and how you can make up that work.
* **Contests and Publication:** I will post writing contest information! Check it out! I am also a published and professional writer: if you are interested in publishing your work, please talk to me about Teen Ink and other venues.
* **Homework:** For full credit, homework must be turned in the day it is due. Three missed homeworks result in a phone call or note home. Most work will be completed in class; however, if you do not finish the work by the end of class, you will be expected to finish the assignment for homework.

**Most importantly: We are a community of writers. We will share our stories and listen to others’ ideas. We will respect each other at all times. We are not here to judge… but to understand.**

**Grading**

 I do not “give” grades: you earn them! Grading takes into account ability *and* effort. You will do quite well if you complete all of the work on time and participate in all steps of the writing process. Specifically, you will be graded as follows:

 **Points Possible** **Expectation**

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| **Daily Journaling** (15%) | 150 Points | At least one full page (all lines used, reasonably spaced and sized handwriting) of original and thoughtful response to daily prompts |
| **AIMS Activities****(**6%) | 60 Points | Complete the test prep activities correctly and on time |
| **Writing Process Assignments****(**25.5%) | 255 points | Poetry and Reflective pieces respond to the prompt in appropriate length; narrative and expository projects go through the complete writing process |
| **Novel Work**(28%) | 280 points | In-class novel work is fully completed on a weekly basis |
| **Weekly Comprehension Quizzes**(10.5%) | 105 points | Comprehension quizzes of the novel will be given on a weekly basis. |
| **Final Presentation/Speech**(5%) | 50 points | Thoughtful, complete, on time project synthesizing the class material is presented in speech format during the final week of the course |
| **Final Exam****(**10%) | 100 points | The final exam will consist of a multiple choice test covering vocabulary, roots, and course material, as well as short answer and essay sections |

 1000 Total Points

**A Note on Plagiarism:** ‘Plagiarism’ occurs when you use someone else’s ideas or EXACT WORDS without using correct citation or references. Plagiarism will result in a conference and a phone call home; additionally, you will be required to redo the assignment completely to avoid getting an incomplete. NO CREDIT will be given for ANY paper that has been even partially plagiarized.