[](http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&authuser=0&biw=979&bih=430&tbm=isch&tbnid=uxLj7cnzG5-LkM:&imgrefurl=http://www.peoriabulldogs.com/1/archives/08-2011/1.html&docid=nQ-nK0K_yFSxzM&imgurl=http://www.peoriabulldogs.com/uploads/4/3/9/7/4397552/4282774.jpg?1313540782&w=250&h=179&ei=TybXUZONMa_54AOo7IHwCw&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:42,s:0,i:216&iact=rc&page=5&tbnh=143&tbnw=200&start=40&ndsp=16&tx=87&ty=33)Welcome to English 4!

Miss Talamo [talamo@peoriabulldogs.com](mailto:talamo@peoriabulldogs.com)

**Class Overview**

The theme of this block’s English 4 class is **Personal Transformation, Societal Change.** As an English 4 student, you are in a unique position to start considering a larger view of the world. In this block, we will build on skills you have developed in your previous classes. We will also look at how personal transformation can lead to better conditions for all of humanity. You will be asked to investigate the kind of person you want to become; you will also be asked to contemplate what kind of changes you would like to see in the world.

On this journey, we will read Ernest Gaines’ A Lesson Before Dying, a novel about a school teacher and a death-row inmate who form a life-changing friendship in the 1940s Jim Crow South. This story about what it means to live, and to die, with dignity, may raise some serious questions for you.

To that extent, I issue you a personal challenge. Try your hardest in this class. Always. The readings and assignments are designed to tackle real-world issues that will help lead you to a deeper understanding of yourself and your personal truths, whatever they may be. Be brave and participate in class discussions—to offer your views or to agree or disagree with your peers. The first step in finding your unique voice, after all, is speaking up—and the first step in helping others to more humane understandings to others is to help them question what they have been taught.

Above all, **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. Remember that the readings and assignments in this class are designed to open up discussion about real issues and questions that you have: not everyone has to agree, and not all of your views should change.

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!

**Grading** Grading takes into account ability *and* effort.

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

**A Note on Plagiarism:** ‘Plagiarism’ occurs when you use someone else’s ideas or EXACT WORDS without using correct citation or references. NO CREDIT will be given for ANY paper that has been even partially plagiarized.

**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.**