

ENGLISH 10/HONORS

Practices and Policies

Welcome to your sophomore year English class: **English Language Arts 10 Honors!** As detailed in the WMHS Program of Studies (2021-2022), students in this class “should be able to work independently and think abstractly. Students should also be strong independent readers and writers who require a decreased level of guidance, as abstract analysis will anchor most of what is written. Those who genuinely enjoy reading and writing are most successful at this level of study.”

As such, our English class will be a venue for not only honing our skills as readers, writers, and critical examiners of the world at large, but for doing so with genuine passion and curiosity. After all, those who hope to truly delve into the English Language Arts will need to be especially inspired if they want to do so to the best of their abilities.

Ray Bradbury echoes this very sentiment in his essay “The Joy of Writing,” which is found in the collection *Zen in the Art of Writing*. In this essay, Bradbury declares that “the first thing a writer should be is – excited. He should be a thing of fevers and enthusiasms. Without such vigor, he might as well be out picking peaches or digging ditches; God knows it’d be better for his health.”



In addition to being enthusiastic, each student in English 10/Honors is expected to approach the class with an open mind and willingness to consider unfamiliar perspectives. While the course materials are worthwhile in their own right, they are imbued with even deeper significance when we use them to analyze the world around us. By practically applying our reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, we will be better prepared to investigate all aspects of our lives – the personal, professional, societal, and even those beyond these confines.

To this end, I will lead our literary explorations by serving as a facilitator of thought. What this means is that instead of simply spoon-feeding information, I am going to set us on the pathways that lead to knowledge and development, all while encouraging you to explore them in your own ways. Therefore, you must come into each class ready to think, share ideas, receive feedback, and actively engage in intellectual processes.



While the preceding offers a general overview of the course ethos, there are a number of important elements worth emphasizing.

READING

With the primary concern of English 10/Honors being the development of critical thinking skills via literary investigation, it stands to reason that reading is an absolute cornerstone of the course. Consequently, the expectation is that every assigned text will be read thoroughly and judiciously so as to ensure productive discussions during class. To achieve this heightened level of textual engagement, class members should re-read texts multiple times, carefully annotate texts, and actively consider which elements of the texts they hope to explore during our daily meetings.

Online resources such as SparkNotes are not to be used as substitutes for the readings. Relying on these resources is absolutely unacceptable. Remember, the most important part of completing the assigned readings is not simply learning

what they are about, but exercising mental faculties while considering *how*, *why*, and *to whom* they were written. After all, it is only when readers go through the process of asking questions, making inferences, and forming opinions that genuine textual interaction has occurred.

Lastly, we are going to approach reading as an activity of the utmost importance. Yes, reading *can* be done for leisure, and reading *can* be done for practical purposes – and both of these perspectives are worth adopting. However, the ability to read is also inextricably tethered to the ability to promote free thought and advocate for progress. Consider, if you will, the revelation Malcolm X describes while learning to read in prison:

“Let me tell you something: from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk...months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life.”

WRITING

This course is instructed with the assumption that students are dedicated to working on their writing skills. Therefore, we will be spending a considerable amount of time, effort, and focus on developing the good writing habits. To this end, significant emphasis will be placed on the idea that writing is, in fact, a craft, and it is something that *everyone* can get better at as long as they put in the necessary work.

To complete aforementioned “necessary work,” we will spend the year disabusing the notion that excellent writing is produced in a single, often frantic, session. Instead, we will become comfortable with viewing writing as a process that entails brainstorming, drafting, revising, further drafting, and, eventually, a submitting a product.

Finally, there will be ample opportunity to write for purposes other than end-of-unit assessments. These opportunities may include journaling, warm-up activities, responding to blog posts, documenting informal research, and creative endeavors.

GRADING

We will be working with a points-based system this year. As such, each assignment will be worth certain number of points (as opposed to percentages), with major assignments being attributed more points than minor assignments. With that being said, no assignment should be neglected simply because its point valuation is lower than another.

Provided below are some examples/approximations of point values:

Major Assignments (Tests/Essays/Projects): 50-100 Points

Reading Check Quizzes: 10-30 Points

In-Class Work: 5-10 Points

Homework/Journals: 5-10 Points

** NOTE: Point values may be changed at the discretion of the instructor. Any time that this occurs, students will be notified in advance.*

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES

Unless otherwise formally noted, all assignments are due by the date/time listed on Google Classroom.

If you believe you will need an extension, contact me before the day the assignment is due; otherwise, I may not accept your work.

TECHNOLOGY

As students in the year 2021, you have likely used electronic devices for most of your education. As such, you should be relatively comfortable with utilizing technology during our day-to-day interactions. Given that we have the distinction of living, working, and learning during unprecedented times, it is absolutely essential that we utilize technology in ways that promote active, positive engagement.

In other words, our devices must always be used responsibly.

Although cell phones are now a ubiquitous part of daily living, our digital activities are designed to be completed on laptops/tablets. As such, **cell phones are not to be used during our class meetings**, regardless of if said meetings are in-person or remote.

At your earliest convenience, please visit (and bookmark) the digital loft for our class:

www.DrinkwaterOnline.com

ABSENCES

Absences are bound to occur throughout the school year. However, it is your responsibility to make up all assigned work. During your absence, you should contact me, check Google Classroom, touch base with classmates, and refer to my website. Parents and guardians may also contact the Guidance Office for assignments (this may be necessary during extended absences).

Additionally, it is important to remember that we are still living in a moment of precarious public health. Given this context, please make sure to not only take care of your own wellness, but also be mindful of how your health may impact others. In other words, while attending school is essential, it is also of paramount importance that we do not jeopardize the well-being of others by going to school if sick.

MATERIALS

You will need some basic materials every time we meet - no exceptions!

- BYOD Laptop/Tablet – Please bring your device and its charger!
- Headphones – Required – please let me know if you do not have access to headphones!
- Book(s) – Please bring whichever book we are currently reading!
- Pen/Pencil – Please stick to blue/black ink for pens!

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

As high school sophomores, you know what is considered acceptable classroom behavior and what is not. Furthermore, since this is an honors-level course, classroom conduct must be adjusted accordingly so as to reflect the elevated academic expectations. In short, make sure that you conduct yourself in a manner that is not only respectful to your peers and the classroom, but yourself as well.

The above paragraph is a perennial staple of the “Practices and Policies” guidelines. However, if we are hoping to transition back to more of a “normal” mode of learning after a year of COVID-inspired challenges, it is more important than ever that we are mindful of how our behavior may impact others.

OFFICE HOURS

I will be available for additional assistance after school most days of the week. Although an option less popular with many students, I can also be available for assistance before the school day begins. Additionally, keep in mind that I will sometimes have other obligations to attend to, but will do my best to provide support.

Given that we are still navigating our way through a pandemic, it is my intention to also offer "Office Hours" via the digital realm. As such, these meetings can take place via Zoom.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This is *your* sophomore year experience, and it is up to you to make of it what you will. During this year, we will read and write with purpose, honing our skills so as to become fully developed investigators of the written word! Provided that you are engaged in class, mindful of out of class obligations, and respectful of the classroom environment, we should be poised for a successful year of English!