

May 16, 2011

Dear New AP Student,

Contrary to what you may think, AP Language is not just a class; it is a transformation. Yes, it is meant to be a class where you're held to a standard and where you're expected to perform, but that is a given of life. We are all held to standards – like clothing and bathing – and we are all held to expectations – like getting a job or going to college – but AP Language doesn't just placidly set those expectations in front of you and say, “go for it kiddo,” what it does is prepare you for the times when you are simply told, “go.” In an unexpected, winding thread of spider webs this class is able to prepare you without you knowing it; it is a secret weapon. Instead of simply being another class, or another AP credit, this gadget of a class is a tool, a means of establishing not only yourself and your writing ability, but your aptitude to think and process. It is a key to your future.

Well I would just like to start off by saying that you learn a lot about yourself and what you're willing to say to an authoritative figure. I started off, one of my very first assignments of the school year, by insulting my teacher. It was not intentional, but I was having a bad day and I had to write a letter about how the class was going so far. I told my teacher it was great, except for the fact that I thought she had absolutely no care for us, the students, as individuals, young adults or human beings. I cannot even begin to say how wrong I was. The first semester was a trial and error; it was a do your best but next time do this; it was also much, much more than a learning experience. I would like to say that I was never scared and that my constant talking during Socratic Circles meant I was self confident in my literature ability, but I would be lying through my teeth if I did. Sure, you're scared of making a fool of yourself; you don't know everyone and you don't want to make a bad impression. The inevitable truth is you will. That's how life is. There is no reason to hold yourself back simply because you are afraid. You will overcome any fear that seems to manifest itself in your thoughts, and you will know, soon enough, that fear can lead to the greatest insight and the most spectacular outcome.

“So Jimmy, what did you learn in school today?” “Nothing.” BUZZ, wrong! While there may be times that you think to yourself, “why am I doing this,” there is always a reason behind the madness. For me, I can't really say what the most valuable lesson I learned was. I came into this class with strong, but flexible beliefs and with the ignorant thought that I was able to put myself in other people's perspective and understand their actions simply by thinking about it. Whenever I made a statement in my mind that was questioned by someone else I thought I was wrong. I think what I truly took from that class was the ability to see something, form an opinion, hear what someone has to say, and still stick with my opinion. It wasn't exactly self-confidence, but a sense of reassurance that you can have a differing opinion and still be correct. Standards aren't as set in stone as they used to be just as conformity is no longer a social norm. Being different is what sets you apart, obviously, but it is what separates the thinkers from the doers.

Success isn't everything, but if you want an AP credit it certainly does matter. Read. Read. Read, and did I mention, read? If you are told to read a book, or an article, or speech or anything there is a reason. Not only is that piece a grade, and mostly like more than one, it is

vital to your development. Study. I know what you're thinking, "how do I study for a lit class?" Well, besides reading the three hundred pound text book or falling to sleep with a recording of the encyclopedia, there are other ways. Learn your vocabulary; you cannot enhance your voice if you cannot enhance your vocabulary. These are all fine and dandy but the bull in the china shop has just arrived. Procrastination. The ugliest word in a student's world. You may think you are capable of typing four three-hundred word responses to a Socratic Circle the night of, and some of you might be, but the majority of you either won't or will do a very poor job. Not to insult your BSing abilities, because I know the gifts some of you are endowed with, but in order to truly prepare and pass in an acceptable manner you must not procrastinate.

All this said and done, AP Literature is an incredible class. You will learn about yourself about history, about others and most importantly about understanding. The world is no longer black and white. It is up to us to embrace the colors we are given and to create colors of our own. We are all responsible for changing the world, and you are one of us.

Sincerely,

Erin Chizmar