

May 15, 2011

Dear New AP Student,

The world you're about to enter is different from your own. It crawls with syntax and ripples with the voices of those writers you may come to loathe or love. To guide you through this land is a magnificent being whose name varies between citizens. Some peasants know her as Mrs. Buchanan and others shorten it to Mrs. B, but to us she's momma. She's there to set us straight and make us learn at the expense of her sanity. AP Language is a mystifying place waiting to challenge you. Yes, there will be perils amongst the way, some of your fellow explorers may give up and return home. It's not easy, but the rewards are great and you'll learn more in this English class than you ever thought possible. It's a plunge. You either learn to swim or you drown. And really, swimming isn't all that hard.

There's a lot to say about the first impression of this class and it only develops further as the first quarter progresses. For me, it was a very quick eye opener. I had never been in a single AP class and I was the type of student to assume that this class was going to be easy, nothing to worry about. I was wrong. It hit me in the gut pretty well with the first reading assignments alone. I was lucky that we had done Socratic circles the year before or otherwise I would have keeled over like a dog and run away with my tail between my legs. The first nine weeks forced me to try harder than I ever had in a literature class. It became clear that if I didn't develop some sort of spine and actually speak, not to mention prepare before class, I wasn't going to pass. Luckily for me an amazing teacher was guiding our class and kept me on track until I got my footing. This time was definitely a much-needed wake up call.

Don't be afraid to say anything. I learned that it doesn't matter what other people think or if you think it may sound ridiculous or heaven forbid 'stupid', if you have a point to make, make it. You may be surprised at the unexpected results it may bring. Also, the podium is not a scary place. Sure the thought of standing up in front of everyone used to terrify me, but now I don't believe there's a reason to be afraid. The people in your audience, whether you like them or not, become your family, and personally family isn't too scary. It had taken a debate, a speech, an impromptu, and a final honest moment to understand that fear wasn't my real obstacle; rather it was my fervent denial that the audience existed. When I realized they were there and not scoffing at everything I was doing, speaking suddenly became relaxing.

While this has been said more than once, one of the most important things to be amazing in AP Language is to not procrastinate. If momma is even half as lenient as she was at the beginning of our year, you will not take the open late policy as an excuse to slack off until the last day. Having to read and annotate "Civil Disobedience" in a single night are not problems you want weighing upon your mind in the early hours of the morning. In fact, another key ingredient of being a successful student in AP Language is to get some decent sleep so you pay attention when important discussions are being held in class. Every word that comes out of Mrs. B when she's in teaching mode should not be held lightly. She's there to help you succeed, but you have to make the effort to get there. This class isn't hard, but nor is it easy. Diligence is key, and you have to want it. If you can just hang on to that notion you will learn what you came for.

Sincerely,

Kylea Kmiciek