**ENGLISH 12**

**JANUARY 11, 2018**

Hey, everybody. Sorry I haven’t seen you in a while. I am at home, in bed, with the flu. And I’m contagious, so I’m keeping my distance.

A couple of things:

+ Be ready to start *Macbeth* in class on Tuesday. Have a hard copy of the book (not on your Chromebook) with you in class that day.

+ Please be sure you have completed the usual two workbook exercises for vocab unit 7. We will take a quiz on those words next Thursday.

Here’s the plan for today:

**Revise the essay/chapter you wrote in class on Monday, making it as strong as possible.** If you weren’t here Monday, the assignment is at the end of this document; please do this in class today.

For the revision, consider a few things:

First, you have written a **draft**. That’s an excellent start. Please be aware that a **revision** is much more than fixing grammar and adding paragraph breaks to what you already have. You want to craft the best of what you’ve done into something new and polished. This will probably mean thinking a lot about the structure of your essay. It may mean scrapping something from the original that’s irrelevant to your real focus; some of you may throw out most of what you have written already. It may mean replacing a few general claims with a specific anecdote or example. But you have 90 minutes to create a true revision that is the best chapter you can write.

My general observations:

**+ Focus your chapter!** This is the big one. The more you can narrow your focus, the better. I read a bunch of essays that tried to describe all of high school in about 500 words. How could you possibly get into any real detail or substantive reflection if you’ve condensed four years into a page and a half? Chose a specific moment or theme to focus the chapter.

**+ Give it a beginning, middle, and an end.** Work on your storytelling powers. If your essay currently reads like a stream-of-consciousness—just a flow of unorganized ideas—or if it reads like a list of chronological facts, how can you organize it as a story? Hint: be sure that the end of the chapter ties the whole thing together. If there’s no way to tie it all together, then your focu is too broad.

**+ Organize it into paragraphs.** If your entire chapter is one long paragraph, it becomes a blur of words midway through. There’s no way for your reader to see your organization, and no way for you to control the pace. I’d say this should be 3-5 paragraphs. Each should serve a distinct purpose, and each should tie to your chapter’s central idea.

+ Remember, this is Chapter 10 in a 15-chapter autobiography. There’s still a third of this book remaining—so make sure this one chapter leaves enough of your life open that (if you did write the other chapters) you’d still have plenty to say. **Don’t feel the need to tie together your whole life in this one piece of writing.** Instead, again, do the most you can with a single specific focus.

**+ Don’t make a general comment that you’re not willing to back up with a specific.** Don’t say that you learned to make hard decisions, unless you’re going to give us an example; don’t say that you learned the difference between a real friend and a fake one unless you’re going to give an example of both, and then explain the difference.

**Here are a few good openings from this class, for inspiration.** Notice that each of these has a distinctive voice to engage the reader. Each is focused on something specific. And each sets up some kind of conflict that the rest of the chapter will probably pursue:

Ryan:

This school year had started out in very uncanny way to say the least. It all started out by being kicked out of our house in Tennessee because the people we were renting the house from wanted to move back in.

Mallory:

Eleventh grade. I was now an upperclassman and one long year away from becoming a senior. I was overwhelmed with school work as well as athletics. Basketball was taking up all my time and energy. I was up every morning at 5:50 for practice. It was the same schedule as the past two years of my high school career. It sounds dreadful and it was, but I loved to play the game. However I did not love being ostracized by the team, drained of energy, and changed into a different person.

Anthony:

By the time I turned 16, I was so eager to start driving. The last few months were filled with constant impatience.  I was ready to be able to go where I wanted when I wanted.  I could go to a friend’s house or grab a bite to eat at any time.  The day I turned 16 was also the day I got my license. I couldn’t wait any longer.  But, even as I was excited to drive around and see people, I didn’t have many friends to go hang out with.

**If you missed class Monday, here’s the prompt**. I do not have these from Sam, Nick, Areesa, or Connor. If you’re one of those people and were here Monday and think you shared this with me then, please share again—if not, write the essay today!

**Personal Essay:**

Please let students know that we will be working this semester on some personal writing, including the sorts of essays that are common in college, scholarship, and job applications. In class today they will write one personal essay. It is due at the end of class. Emphasize that it should be as strong an essay as possible, their best representation of themselves.  Here's the prompt:

Imagine that you have written a 15-chapter autobiography of your life, up to this point. What would Chapter 10 say? Please share that chapter. It should be 450-600words and should be written in first person.

This is due at the end of class. Please share it with me as a Google doc. Please title the doc Chapter 10 so it's easy for me to find. In the document itself you are welcome to give it a more specific title.

**THANKS, EVERYBODY. I LOOK FORWARD TO READING THESE.**

If you haven’t already gotten a flu shot this season, go get one today!!