

Freshman English A

Freshman English A has a thematic arrangement. The first half of the term revolves around the river theme. A river is such a natural metaphor for so many things in the human experience. Rivers are, of course, important to us here in the great Northwest where we have some of the most beautiful and powerful rivers in the world. But rivers play a key role in the songs, stories and lives of people everywhere.

Throughout the first half of the term we'll be reading and responding to various writing tied to this theme. We'll read poetry by Robert Frost and William Stafford, essays by Barbara Kingsolver and Kathleen Dean Moore. We'll read some fiction by River Why author, David James Duncan. I also hope to introduce students to people whose daily lives are tied to the river, including author and Columbia River bar pilot, Deborah Dempsey.

Activities and assignments in the second half of the term revolve around the theme, Love and War. The major work studied will be Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It's a story involving two young lovers from warring families. Shakespeare wrote it approximately four hundred years ago, yet all a person has to do is pick up the daily newspaper to see that the love and war theme is still alive and well today.

Students will be expected to keep a writing/reading journal which will serve as, among other things, kind of a rough draft for pieces that will eventually appear in the portfolio at the end of the term. More on the portfolio later.

You can expect to write several full-length essays throughout the term. The first will be a mini-research paper written in response to the question, Who owns the water? You'll write two narrative pieces, one fiction and one nonfiction. During the Literature Circles segment of the class you'll write a book review. During the *Romeo and Juliet* segment, you'll write another mini-research paper, this time on love at first sight.

The goal of the class is to foster a love of language. That's where communication—both written and spoken—begins. If you attend class regularly, complete all the assigned work, and give your best effort, you will receive, at the very least, a grade that reflects that effort.

M. Mizell