

## Sophomore Linked English Course Overview and Expectations

Teacher: Ms. Becker

Room: 2208

Blocks: E and F

J blocks/help: Mon. and Thursday

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Hello and welcome to 10<sup>th</sup> grade *Linked English* at Newton South! In this course we will consider some of the major questions, ideas, and patterns in world literature by exploring texts from a variety of genres. We'll evaluate leadership and kingship in the ancient world in the Bible and the Greek tragedy *Antigone*; we'll think about social customs and power structures in *Things Fall Apart*, and resistance to authority in *In the Time of the Butterflies*. You'll write your own persuasive speech for the Sophomore Speech contest, and, by the year's end, you'll know what, and who, Robin Goodfellow is.

We will continue to develop our skills as active readers and critical thinkers by looking for patterns in and asking questions about what we read, and as analytical writers, using the text to support and help articulate our ideas. Writing assignments will vary from the reflective and the creative to the analytical, and you will further develop and hone your writing skills with vocabulary and usage practice throughout the year. One outside reading text is required per term; more details to follow.

### ***How is this class different from 'regular' English?***

In some ways, it's very similar; we'll be reading many of the same texts, and discussing them in similar ways. But, unlike regular sophomore English, this course will ask you to consider what you read through a variety of lenses, including sociological, cultural and historical ones. In both this class and Ms. Soo Hoo's, we will focus our attention on year long ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS and explore varied and complex responses—in literature and history—to these questions.

You'll also have English and History back to back on Mon and Tuesday. We will combine classes when it's important to do so. Ms. Soo Hoo and I will also communicate with each other about your work and meet weekly to discuss lesson plans, etc. We'll also get together as a linked community (joined classes) throughout the year for social and academic events. But maybe the best thing about this class is that you'll periodically get the benefit of **historical context**; that is, really understanding the conditions which influence a writer's choices.

### **Essential questions:**

- Who has power in a society and why? Who doesn't and why?
- What are the promises and perils of innovation and change?
- What makes a successful, functional society? Why?
- What role do individuals and groups play in changing or shaping their society?
- What happens when individuals and groups with different values or goals interact? Why?

## **Reading:**

texts for study will include:

*Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell

Excerpts, *Intro to Biblical Literature* (ed. O. B. Davis); *The Bible as/in Literature* (ed. Ackerman) and supplementary material.

*Antigone* (Sophocles)

*Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe)

*In the Time of the Butterflies* (Julia Alvarez)

Selected poems, short stories, and essays.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (William Shakespeare)

\**Midsummer* is the only text I require you to purchase (for around \$6). If, however, you want to build a library, or write in and mark up other texts, feel free to purchase any of the above. Check with me to make sure you get the same edition.

**I expect you to come to class having read closely and thought deeply about what you have read. If you haven't done the reading, please let me know privately.**

## **Required Materials**

- A 3 ring binder with dividers and pockets (We'll have three basic sections: literature/notes; grammar/vocab; writing handouts and returned papers. It will be your responsibility to maintain these sections).
- **Loose-leaf COLLEGE RULED notebook paper**
- Pens, pencils, highlighters, etc.
- A flash drive for storing documents, images, etc (these are now really inexpensive and indispensable)
- A googledocs account
- A turnitin.com account

## **Discussion/Classroom demeanor**

Like most teachers, I expect you to participate regularly, to ask questions of each other, to look for answers, and to listen carefully to what your classmates have to say. You'll learn much from them. Doing work from other classes and/or text messaging during class is unacceptable. Clean up your messes if you make them.

## **Homework**

Homework assignments are listed on the weekly assignment sheets, and also appear on the website. I don't assign busy work. Expect to spend a maximum of 45 minutes nightly on your English homework. Bring thoughtfully completed homework to class the next day; we will use it!

## **Support:**

Please ASK QUESTIONS or see me if you get stuck or if directions are unclear to you. I'm generally good at responding to questions via email; J block is your friend. ☺ When you write an email, please address it ("hi Ms. Becker," is fine) and sign it with your name.

### **Miscellaneous:**

#### **Sophomore Speech:**

All sophomores write an original persuasive speech (5 min. or so in length) on a topic of their choosing and deliver it to their classmates. We will work on this primarily in December and January. More details to follow.

#### **Vocabulary:**

Vocab this year will include lists 7-12 from the roots/stems lists; some of you may have seen these last year. Learning roots and stems will help you better understand words you already know, and decipher new words in the future; roots and stems work like a decoder ring, or a map key. Words are awesome; find out what they mean, use them, play with them.

#### **Grammar/Usage:**

We'll review and build on previous learned concepts through on-going mini-units, with an emphasis on sentence structure and design. The best architectures need a variety of tools and raw materials to design the best buildings; so too with writers and sentences.

### **Nuts and Bolts**

**Grading:** Your grades will be based on writing assignments (roughly 60%), quizzes, projects, homework, participation and class work (roughly 40%). I use a point system for grading; for example, an essay might be worth 100 points, a vocabulary quiz, 20 or 25, and a homework assignment, 5. At the end of the term, I will divide your total points by the total number of points possible to determine your final grade.

**Make up work/late work/extensions/revisions:** see separate handout.

**Plagiarism.** Passing off someone else's ideas or writing as one's own is an act of academic dishonesty and will not be tolerated in any form. We will be using Turnitin.com as a way to peer review, edit, and submit work. Inauthentic work will receive zero credit, and in some cases, will result in disciplinary action. If you are EVER in doubt, fall behind, or have a question, ASK for help. Most people get caught. It's not fun for anyone. ☹

#### **One last thing:**

I know that many of you have many other obligations that make the school day (and week) exhausting; I also know that you've chosen to take this class because you're interested in looking for connections between history and literature. You should know that online book notes (Sparknotes, etc) a) won't really come in handy, since they just touch on plot details and b) aren't that much fun. I've tried to read them. They bore me. They should bore you too. If you find yourself cutting corners, come talk to me, and we'll figure out a plan.

Looking forward to a terrific year,

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I have read and understand the above expectations and will do my best to meet them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(your name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(a parent or guardian's name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(your signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(a parent or guardian's signature)

Sincerely,  
Rachel Becker  
rachel\_becker@newton.k12.ma.us

The short short version:

- Work hard, be nice, do your best, clean up your messes.
- Come prepared to be at school (with your book, etc).
- Ask questions if you have them.
- You might not love everything we do in this class. That's ok. Hopefully, you'll find something in the course that you do enjoy.